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The Buloke Times

Est. 1875

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PRICE (inc. G.S.T.) \$2

For the Shire of Buloke, and the districts of Birchip, Charlton, Donald, St. Arnaud, Watchem and Wycheproof

Lunches Bring Communities Together

The Birchip Neighbourhood House and Birchip Conference of St Vincent de Paul have been working together to provide regular and free communal meals at the Old Shamrock in Cumming Avenue throughout 2024, and the last luncheon for 2024 was hosted on Friday.

The final Christmas-themed lunch, complete with festive sandwiches and fruit cake, shortbread and mince pies and limoncello spritz, highlighted the spirit of the season and the joy of shared experiences.

The guests concluded their luncheon with a visit to Santa's Kingdom and were delighted by the snow, dancing Santas and the Christmas ornaments.

The lunches have been taking place at the Birchip Neighbourhood House and they have coincided with other events and celebrations over the year, including Easter, loneliness week, get on line week, mental health month and various other awareness raising campaigns.

Funds

The lunches have been supported by a funds from a Community Recovery Well-being Grant from the Buloke Shire Council and a FRRR Strengthening Rural Communities program grant to enhance health and social wellbeing and foster inter-generational connections.

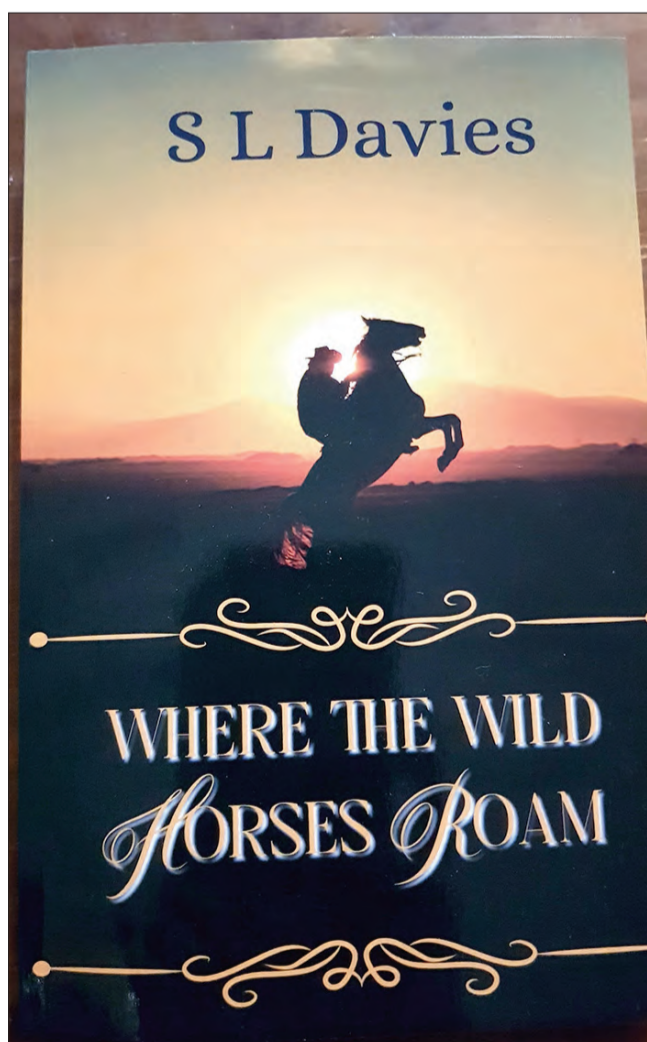
The community luncheon program has significantly contributed to the health, resilience, and overall wellbeing of the Birchip community.

The meals bring community members together, particularly those who are working in Cumming Avenue, retired (or transitioning

• Continued on page 2.



• Judith Barclay, Beryl Fietz, Lorainne Lea, Dot Reid, Anna King, Warren King, Florence Darby, Janice Randall, Jean Smith, Lois Hallam, and Faye Cumming.



• Samantha Davies with her latest novel "Where the Wild Horses Roam" on sale at Donald's Shared Shop.

Sam's Stories are for All to Share

Late November 2024 a small crowd gathered in Donald Shared Shop to attend a book launch of one of the shop's vendors.

Samantha Davies has written over 30 novels, and most are available to purchase at Donald's Shared Shop.

Sam writes about many different genres under three different pseudonyms.

The launch revealed her latest novel "Where the Wild Horses Roam", a fictional work set in a rural Mallee backdrop, telling the stories of a family life set in the 1920s.

The sons go off to war, and the daily life reveals interesting characters and incidents that form together a superb novel that tells a moving and thoughtful story about family, love and hardship.

Call into the shop at 81 Woods Street and see the selection of novels available. Sam is very happy to sign any books purchased.



Letters to the Editor



The Debate Continues

Dear Sir. – I am writing in response to the “Open Letter to the Wimmera Southern Mallee Community” from Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) CEO, Chris Sounness.

Firstly, a little background to set the scene. In the years preceding landholder and community knowledge of the VNI West Transmission Lines and associated renewables, plans were being hatched that were going to turn our lives upside down!

The WSMD formerly the Wimmera Development Association, were actively lobbying stakeholders for renewable infrastructure to invest in the area. When I say stakeholders, they did not include the most important ones being the landowners and their communities. The most integral part of these projects was never offered a seat at the table. We never mattered, but our land did.

Moving on, to say I was shocked reading Chris’s open letter is an understatement. So much so, that I had to read it again. It was a bag of mixed emotions. I was bewildered, insulted and then very angry. I began to wonder what really has prompted Chris to write this letter and what business is it of his to be telling us how we should be thinking and feeling whilst our government and corporations peck at us like crows. It stumped me for a while but then I arrived at “pressure”. Chris is under pressure, nothing is happening fast enough. The Western Renewables Link Transmission Line being held up by a determined united community for more than four years, is cause for frustration. So too,

is the ever increasing push back against the VNI West project.

The lobbied renewable companies need something to plug into. If it doesn’t come fast enough they leave, move on and game over. Throw in some pressure from the State and Federal Governments and now Chris has a thumping headache; indeed, you reap what you sow.

So my thinking is that Chris takes the line of an open letter as more of a demand to our communities albeit with a smile on his face. Pivoting, trying to be the solution when in fact he and WSMD are the actual problem. I am surprised he did not hurt himself trying to straddle both sides of the fence. But then the letter begins to unravel. He talks of “respect for each other” and “transparent, meaningful engagement”. Hello, anyone home? Where was this years ago? Where was WSMD’s meaningful engagement then? Oh that’s right we weren’t invited!

But here’s the clincher, the one that makes that little vein pop in your temple. Chris says, “threats of violence, guns and intimidation are unacceptable”. Boom! A scurrilous, unfounded statement aimed at portraying those who oppose these renewable projects as rednecks. And that was it for me.

I cannot stand by and have this type of public mischief (that’s being polite) being spread in the media to suit an agenda. It can and is now being called out. Sadly, I now think that Chris’s position is untenable. The public anger and mistrust this letter has caused will continue to linger and not be forgotten.

It is time for the community to start questioning your council’s affiliation with the WSMD. Not only does the WSMD receive some government funding to exist, but it also receives ratepayer funding. Yes! Some of your taxes and rates are being paid to the WSMD! How many of you knew this? This group needs to reflect community values and consultation. Somewhere along the way this has been lost. The Northern Grampians Shire Council has removed its membership from this group subsequently. I need to say no more!

And finally I am beyond proud of my community. They are extremely well informed, united and we have so much more than the greed of any external factor. We have each other and that trumps all. You do not fear, you do not falter, you do not yield....keep fighting!

Yours sincerely,
Anne Bryce
Traynors Lagoon Vic 3477

CFA Funding

Dear Sir, – I want to set the record straight on reports regarding the CFA’s funding. I know it has caused some fear and anger in our regional communities.

Reports of an almost \$70m cut from the CFA are wrong.

Every year, a certain amount of money within our emergency services’ budgets is earmarked for specific projects and services – like funding for the rollout of 18,000 new Motorola radios to brigades.

Setting aside these funds isn’t a cut. Every dollar of these quarantined amounts is spent on CFA – directly bene-

fitting the CFA and its volunteers.

Government departments manage many of these projects and they pay the bill. It streamlines administration and takes the burden off emergency services so they can focus on what they do best – keeping Victorians safe.

This year, more than \$337 million in CFA base funding has been allocated – an increase of almost \$17 million on the comparable figure last year.

This doesn’t include the money we invest on top of this on new trucks, uniforms and upgrading stations.

The Fire Services Property Levy funds almost 78 per cent of the CFA’s total funding needs – not 25 per cent.

I know National Party members are out there with their negativity trying to spin a false narrative about cuts. They should support, not scare country communities, and stick to the facts. Labor has delivered 80 new tankers since 2018, 22 are being built and 15 pumpers are on order. The Nationals didn’t fund a single truck in their last few years in government, and they slashed \$66 million from the CFA budget whilst in office.

It’s disappointing that I must correct this unhelpful misinformation, but it’s a further opportunity to recognise and thank our amazing CFA brigades and all emergency services – I want you to know our Government will always give you what you need to continue keeping Victorians safe.

Jaelyn Symes,
Minister for Emergency Services.

Northern Grampians “Hits Ground Running”

The new Northern Grampians Shire Council is off to a flying start, with councillors hitting the ground running after being sworn in last month.

The current Council has four first-time councillors, Crs Justine Hide, Jack Blake, Jenny Greenberger and Karen Probst.

First-time mayor Karen Hyslop was elected to the council in 2022, while Cr Murray Emerson has served since 2012.

Cr Hyslop said councillors had been undergoing extensive training throughout the past few weeks to help them perform their roles to the best of their abilities.

“We had our first council meeting in St Arnaud on Monday and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing from each councillor during the councillor report section, as they detailed how they had spent the past few weeks representing their community,” she said.

“We have a diverse group of councillors, with different backgrounds and experiences, but we are keen to work together to progress Northern Grampians Shire – that was evident to anyone who attended or tuned into our first council meeting.

“It has been wonderful to see a unified group, with all decisions made to date being unanimous.”

Meeting Dates

At St Arnaud, the council set its meeting dates for 2025. Meetings are generally on the first Monday of each month and the venue alternates between the Perry Room, Town Hall, St Arnaud, and the Council Chamber, Pleasant Creek Historic Precinct, Stawell.

The 2025 council meeting schedule is as follows:

- Monday, February 3, 12.30 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, March 3, 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.
- Monday, April 7, 12.30 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, May 5, 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.
- Monday, June 2, 12.20 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, June 30 (Budget adoption), 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.
- Monday, July 7, 12.30 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, August 4, 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.
- Monday, September 1, 12.30 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, October 6, 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.
- Monday, November 10, 12.30 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, November 10 (statutory meeting), 6 p.m., Stawell.
- Monday, December 1, 12.30 p.m., St Arnaud.

All council meetings are open to the public, live-streamed and recorded on the council’s YouTube channel. People can visit www.ng-shire.vic.gov.au for more information.

At this week’s meeting, the council also appointed councillor and officer delegates for 2025. The involved committees, organisations and groups exist for a variety of purposes, such as providing advice to the council; making particular types of council decisions such as planning decisions; have been delegated a power or duty by the council; are required by legislation; or have been established to provide a regional focus on a particular issue.

Committees

The committee representative delegates for 2025 are as follows:

- Internal council committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Cr Hyslop and Cr Probst; CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee, all councillors; Queen Mary Gardens Advisory Group, Cr Probst (chair); St Arnaud Recreation Advisory Group, Cr Emerson (chair) and Cr Probst; Stawell Recreation Advisory Group, Cr Hyslop (chair) and Cr Blake; Stawell Aerodrome Advisory Committee, Cr Blake and Cr Greenberger; and Walkers Lake Advisory Group, Cr Probst (chair) and Cr Emerson.

- External committees: Stawell Gift Event Management, Cr Emerson and Cr Hyslop; Stawell Harness Racing Club Community Grants Panel, Cr Greenberger; and Sunraysia Highway Improvement Committee, Cr Probst.

- Memberships: Grampians Tourism Board Inc (CEOs only), Brent McAlister; Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Cr Emerson (delegate) and Cr Blake (substitute); MAV Board, Cr Emerson; Rail Freight Alliance, Cr Blake; Western Highway Action Committee, Cr Blake; and Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Transport Group, Cr Blake.

- Supported groups: Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) Board of Management, Cr Blake; North Central LLEN St Arnaud, Cr Probst; Great Western Futures Committee, Cr Hide; Halls Gap Residents and Ratepayers Association, Cr Hide; Lake Fyans Recreation Area Committee of Management, Cr Hide; Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), all councillors; and St Arnaud Community Access Network (SCAN), Cr Emerson and Cr Probst.

Lunch Brings Communities Together

• Continued from page 1. to retirement), living alone or are new to the community.

This collaboration between the Birchip Neighbourhood House and the Birchip Conference of St Vincent de Paul

has been a wonderful community initiative, cultivating meaningful connections, particularly for people living alone.

Special Thanks

Special acknowledgement

goes to Christine Richmond and the St Vincent de Paul team for their contributions throughout the year, and to all involved for creating a welcoming space that promotes resilience and well-being. Initiatives like these showcase

the power of community-driven efforts in strengthening social ties and improving lives.

Judging by the happy faces on Friday, the lunches have been a great success.



• Jean Smith, Lorainne Lea, Beryl Fietz in the snow in Santa’s Wonderland.



Letters to the Editor



Open Letter “Confuses”

Dear Sir,— I refer to the Open Letter to the Wimmera Southern Mallee Community from Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) CEO, Chris Sounness, in regards to new — “transmission lines, wind energy parks, and mineral sand mines” projects as published in “The Buloke Times” Tuesday, December 3.

I am genuinely confused by the intention of this letter. Mr. Sounness acknowledges the feeling that these projects are being imposed on us and it has “led to deep frustration and anger” which at times is correct; however, he continues by saying, “Threats of violence, guns, and intimidation are unacceptable. These actions divide us further and make it harder to work towards solutions”.

These comments are insulting to us landowners by depicting us as violent people. Our opposition to these projects does not warrant to work towards a “solution”.

On a side note, there are many of us who have contributed legally by financially contributing to a supreme court case to appeal against the Victorian Government’s ministerial orders to fast track the construction of 500,000 volt transmission lines of VNI West and Western Renewables Link projects.

Mr. Sounness seemingly wants us to conform and work with these companies willing to engage meaningfully with our communities; however, from our direct experience with Transmission Company Victoria (TCV), this is not possible as they have informed us of the proposed project and completely ignored our concerns.

Our personal concerns of environment, radiation, fire, electrocution, safety, farm practice, devaluation of land and insurance are all valid.

Furthermore, many of us also object to these projects as wind, solar and battery projects do not provide adequate baseload power and are unreliable and not cost effective energy sources.

To hear that TCV liaisons have visited and harassed via phone calls 8 times a day to elderly and vulnerable people for landholder signatures, and played neighbour off neighbour by incorrectly informing them that their neighbour “has signed up” is of alarming concern and demonstrates they have no moral or ethical values. Their pop up sessions in our towns have demonstrated they cannot answer the questions put to them, and they do not feed back the objections to their project.

TCV has recently offered us money to relocate from our home to allow the transmission line to proceed on their “preferred route” near our houses and straight through the middle

of our productive agricultural farm, effectively cutting half our farm in two. Of course we have rejected this offer as it is our land and we love where we live on our farm, and do not want to move!

The Donald Mineral Sands (DMS) meeting I attended in Donald on the 10th October demonstrated further communication breakdowns as this company continues to not answer questions, repeatedly saying “we’ll get back to you” and never do!

Their current December newsletter including their “mining mythbuster” tells us that mining does not create excessive dust, does not ruin farmland, does not drain local water supplies; radiation does not pose health risks and rehabilitation will be adequate etc.. History from previous mining projects tells us otherwise! For those who haven’t yet – please watch MINE-FIELD: The mining invasion of Victoria’s rural communities on YouTube:- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7eJuTVJkKc>

More recently wind turbine company ACEN Australia cancelled their meetings in Wycheproof, Donald and Birchip due to “safety concerns” however, afterwards our Buloke Shire Mayor reported that ACEN had been informed in advance of the venue’s unavailability. Seemingly another lie from this ACEN company too! The trust towards these companies is just not there!

Our communities are becoming divided as a small number of hosts of renewables secretly sign contracts, only for their neighbours to be contacted afterwards by the project companies to inform them; complete blindsiding! The effect on neighbours is devastating.

Jacinta Allan’s recent announcement of a \$370 million solar project near Horsham came as a huge surprise to land neighbours, Horsham residents and the Horsham Rural City Council. Why so much secrecy if these projects are supposedly supported?

After a soil drilling rig was stumbled across on the dirt roadside between our two paddocks, a community meeting with Buloke Shire was held in Donald on the 11th April, with Buloke Shire residents opposing the support of renewables at the cost of Buloke Shire farmland – remembering 75% of Buloke Shire rates come directly from farmers! Perhaps it should be considered and encouraged for our Buloke Shire financial support to be withdrawn from the Wimmera Southern Mallee Development if our views are not being truly reflected by them?!

Mr. Sounness’s final paragraph encouraging us to work together reads like the rosy positive comments we see in the media from renewable companies, which couldn’t be further from the truth. There is much opposition for transmission lines, wind turbines, solar projects and mineral mining in our communities. He is not even considering the devastation it is causing to generations of farming families and their uncertain futures, or their neighbours.

Is Mr. Sounness trying to encourage the community to sell us landowners out for easy money grabs?

These companies want to proceed at all costs and have access to funding to continue.

It is our right as landowners and community members to object and oppose these renewable projects which will be of no benefit to ourselves as our power prices and state debt continue to rise and will do so in to the future, affecting us and our next generation – our children. Our current Labor Government is supporting this push for Net-Zero; however, at what cost?!

Yours sincerely,
Emma Burke,
Jeffcott.

Donald DVD

Dear Sir, – Congratulations and a huge thank you to Allan Postlethwaite for his DVD on Donald.

This 40 minute tour of Donald is narrated by Allan as he films local business, industries, sports places, schools, churches and points of interest around Donald.

The dialogue gives a brief history and overview of everything that makes our town tick, starting from the founder of Donald and first traders going through to today’s businesses and facilities.

The video footage is quite stunning from the angles and locations that Allan has chosen, and the content included.

You can buy a copy for only \$20 and have a piece of history that proves our people are dedicated and committed to making Donald a great place to live.

The proceeds of DVD sales go towards Donald 2000 for future project funding.

You can also view the video from the window of William’s shop in Woods Street, however you miss the audio conversation. Congratulations again Allan, great job.

Kind regards,
Kez Duncan

Community Update Buloke.

Protect Yourself From Mozzies

With mosquito season upon us, it’s important to take steps to protect yourself from mosquito bites and the diseases they can carry, such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus.

Tips for Staying Safe:

- **Cover Up:** Wear long, loose-fitting clothing to reduce exposed skin.
- **Use Repellent:** Apply insect repellent containing DEET or picaridin to skin/clothing.
- **Eliminate Breeding Grounds:** Empty standing water from buckets, pot plant saucers, and other containers around your home.
- **Install Screens:** Use fly screens on windows and doors to keep mozzies out.
- **Stay Indoors:** Limit outdoor activities during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- **Know the Symptoms:** If you experience symptoms such as fever, rash, joint pain, or fatigue after being bitten by mosquitoes, seek medical advice promptly. Early detection is key.

For more tips and resources on how to stay safe this mozzie season, visit: betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Keeping Us Safe

Council’s Immunisation Service offers free vaccinations under the National Immunisation Program Schedule.

The 2025 schedule is now available to you to book and manage individual and family appointments online. Receive reminders for future appointments when you or your child is due for the next vaccine.

Second Tuesday of the Month:

- Sea Lake: 10:00am - 11:00am (Complex Drive, Sea Lake)
- Birchip: 1:00pm - 2:20pm (39 Fraser Street, Birchip)

Third Tuesday of the Month:

- Donald: 9:30am - 11:30am (8-12 Houston Street, Donald)
- Charlton: 1:30pm - 3:30pm (St Joseph’s Primary School Multipurpose Room, 25 Watson Street, Charlton)

Fourth Tuesday of the Month:

- Wycheproof: 9:30am - 11:30am (367 Broadway, Shire Hall Supper Room)

For more information, visit Council’s website, visit: www.buloke.vic.gov.au/immunisation-services



Facilitated by: **jumpleads** in partnership with: **BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL** and **VICTORIA**. This program is funded through the Australian and Victorian Government’s Community Recovery Fund Program.

Got An Arts Project Idea?*

An art class delivered by the fantastic team at Sea Lake Neighbourhood House and Creative Recovery Artist, Kristie Dean, has created stunning wheat paste-ups.

This is such a fantastic step toward supporting local art and fostering collaboration!

Have you got a creative idea or project like this, you’d like to explore further?

Join this FREE 3 online workshop, to kickstart your idea or bring your project to life! Learn how to structure your project, find support and get people involved.

When: 18, 19 and 20 February 2025, from 12 noon to 2pm (via Zoom)

These interactive sessions will teach you how to structure your project, find support and grow participation all from the comfort of your home or your desk. Delivered as Lunch and Learn sessions.

Don’t miss this opportunity—register now to secure your FREE spot!

** This initiative are funded by the Australian and Victorian Government’s Community Recovery Program.



BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL

Phone: 1300 520 520
www.buloke.vic.gov.au



Council’s service arrangements are outlined below:

Stay up to date via Council’s website and social media.

Please note that Council will be closed from **12:00 noon on Tuesday, 24 December 2024 until 8:30am Thursday, 2 January 2025.**

For emergencies, please call 1300 520 520 and follow the prompts for the service response required.

Pools: will be open on days where the temperature is forecast to be 22°C or over except for Christmas Day when all pools will be CLOSED. Any unscheduled pool closures will be advertised on Council’s Facebook Page.

Council Maternal and Child Health Centres: will be CLOSED from 12:00 noon Friday, 20 December 2024, reopening on Thursday, 2 January 2025. Contact the 24-hour Maternal and Child Health Line on 132 229, or for urgent concerns please call 000.

Library Services: will be CLOSED from 12:00 noon Friday, 20 December 2024 until Monday, 6 January 2025. Allowances will be made for borrowings that fall due over this period. Please call 1300 520 520 or visit the Council’s website www.buloke.vic.gov.au/libraries for updates.

Kerbside Collection and Landfill

For all kerbside and recycle collections please ensure bins are out the night before collection and accessible to the garbage truck. Services are as follows:

Friday 20 December 2024

Normal garbage service for Donald and Corack Rural

All Landfills and Transfer Stations Open

Wednesday 25 December 2024 (Christmas Day)

All Landfills and Transfer Stations CLOSED

No Kerbside collections on Christmas Day - Recycling service for Nullawil, Culgoa, Berrinwillcock, Sea Lake and Nandaly will be moved to the Thursday. Residents of these towns will need to put BOTH BINS out on Christmas Day evening (25 December)

Thursday 26 December 2024 (Boxing Day)

Normal garbage service for - Nullawil, Culgoa, Berrinwillcock, Sea Lake and Nandaly - Wycheproof collection will be later than usual

DONALD Landfill and Transfer Station CLOSED

Friday 27 December 2024

Normal garbage service for Donald and Corack Rural

All Landfills and Transfer Stations open -

EXCEPT CHARLTON CLOSED

Monday 30 December 2024

Normal garbage service for Charlton, Watchem and Birchip

All Landfills and Transfer Stations open

Tuesday 31 December 2024

Normal garbage service for

All Landfills and Transfer Stations open

Wednesday 1 January 2025 (New Year’s Day)

All Landfills and Transfer Stations CLOSED

Thursday 2 January 2025

DONALD Landfill and Transfer Station Open

Normal garbage service for - Nullawil, Culgoa, Berrinwillcock, Sea Lake, Nandaly and Wycheproof

Monday 6 January 2025

All Landfills and Transfer Stations open - **EXCEPT BIRCHIP AND SEA LAKE CLOSED**

Employment with Buloke

Council is an equal opportunity employer. Our roles are non-gender specific, and Council encourages all suitably qualified applicants to apply. For more information on equal opportunity, call Human Resources on 1300 520 520.

Lifeguards EOI

Council is seeking expressions of interests from pro-active, focused and motivated individuals of all ages to join our Pool Lifeguard Team for the 2024/25 swimming pool season. Positions are available at our seven outdoor pools located in Berrinwillcock, Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake, Watchem and Wycheproof. → **EOI closes 5pm Monday, 16 December 2024.**

You can find all current employment opportunities at www.buloke.vic.gov.au/employment

You may lodge your applications by mail to PO Box 1, Wycheproof VIC 3527; or email to recruitment@buloke.vic.gov.au.

“Times” Classifieds

Phone Donald 5497 1222, Birchip 5492 2735
Email admin@buloketimes.com

Deadlines:—

Tuesday's Issue:

Classified advertisements (single column), 10 a.m. Monday.
Display advertisements (2 or more columns), 3 p.m. Friday prior.

Friday's Issue:

Classified advertisements (single column), 10 a.m. Thursday.
Display advertisements (2 or more columns), 3 p.m. Wednesday prior.

DEATH ALLEN.— Pat

It's not what we write
It's not what we say
It's how we remember you
in our own special way.
Treasured brother and
uncle. Deepest sympathy
and much love to Nelia
and Alyssa.

—Kathleen Prebble, Sally,
Renee and family.

DEATH WERNER.— Greg 15/11/57 - 1/12/24

Our brother, brother-in-
law and uncle.

How we will miss your
cheeky smile and the way
you made us laugh.

Rest easy Greg.

—Love always, Susie and
Glen, Marty, Sophie,
Ellie, Darcy and Percy.

A huge thank-you to the
wonderful staff at the
Goodwin Village and
DCIRS for taking such
good care of Greg.

His Funeral will be held
at the Nhill Lutheran
Church at 1p.m., Tuesday
December 17. Burial to
follow at Nhill Cemetery,
then refreshments at the
Winiam Hall.



AMBULANCE PHONE NO.
000

IN MEMORIAM BAIRD.— Beryl Anne

Dear Mum,
Today is 12 months since
we said our goodbyes.
Not a day goes by that we
don't think of you with a
laugh or a tear.
We miss your love, the
chats and fun times.

Love and
God bless you Mum xxx

—Daryl & Penny,
Harry & Mitzi, Patsy &
Gary and your 9 loving
grandchildren.

Take care on the roads —no one
is safe from careless drivers.

WANTED Pop-top Caravan, Ph. 0418 304 930.

DONALD 2025 CALENDER NOW AVAILABLE \$20

AT LOVE SHACK GIFTWARE

All proceeds back
into the community



Donald & District Australia Day Committee

is calling for **NOMINATIONS FOR**

- Citizen of the Year 2025
- Young Citizen of the Year (Under 25) 2025
- Event of the Year

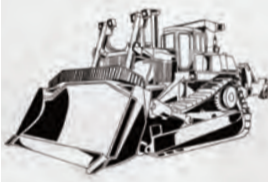
Nominations should include a summary of supporting information.

Post nominations to Donald 2000, Box 200.
Applications close January 19, 2025.

R. & L. DOUGLAS EARTHMOVING

BULLDOZER WORKING IN THE DONALD AREA

- Filling in dams channels
- Digging new dams
- Shed pads
- Farm clean ups.



For all your earthmoving needs
CALL ROSS 0447 883 111



SOLICITOR

116 Napier Street,
St. Arnaud

**Experienced
practical advice
in plain English**

Appointments also
available in Charlton,
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MOBILE DIESEL MECHANIC AVAILABLE

- all machinery experience
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0401 228 417**



DoB in a friend
If you know someone celebrating
a birthday, or wedding anniversary
or some other special occasion, let
us know and we'll let the world know!

- Dec. 13, Julie Milner
- Dec. 13, Des Wood
- Dec. 14, Lyric Davis
- Dec. 14, Marilyn Connell
- Dec. 16, Ailsa Hegarty

If you know someone celebrating a special anniversary, let us know at
Donald Newsagency & Emporium
For all your Greeting Cards, Wraps, Ribbons and Stationery needs.
37 Woods Street, Donald. 'Phone 54971510.

MICHAELS OF DONALD

November Service Special WINNER
Graeme and Bev Jardine

WHAT'S HAPPENING!



**DONALD JEFFCOTT CRICKET CLUB INVITES
DONALD AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES TO:**

EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Joker Poker 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
DONALD HOTEL
Current Jackpot **\$900**



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

Final round of cricket for 2024
Christmas Party to Celebrate!
LIVE Band "Diesel 'n' Dust"
from 7 p.m. til late

JEFFCOTT OVAL - ALL WELCOME!



Nakyra
ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, DONALD

Mensland

OUTFITTING MEN SINCE 1959

NEW SEASON



at
Mensland

Just ring or email mensland@inet.net.au and we will deliver your order.

For Promotions, Specials and
Competitions, us on Facebook

Find us on

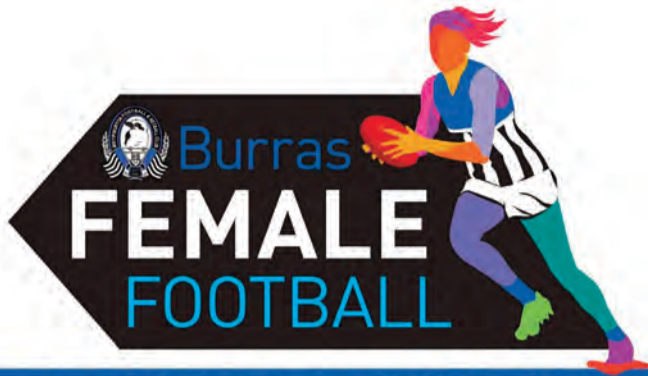
70 Woods Street, Donald — 5497 1211

CONTRACT SPRAYING

Mallee Spraying Services

CASE IH 4430 self-propelled sprayer available
Fully licensed and insured | Available all areas
Phone Tim Coffey 0431 057 117 or
Dan Coffey 0448 989 604

"Times" Classifieds



COME & TRY NIGHT!
All ages, all abilities,
all welcome

WHEN: Wednesday 11 December 2024
WHERE: Murtoa Football Oval
TIME: 6pm



Public Notice for Temporary Road Closure

The public is advised that **Morrison Street, Birchip between Cumming Avenue and Taverner Street** will be **closed on Sunday 15th December 2024 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.** for the annual Community Christmas Party organised by Birchip Neighbourhood House. The public is asked to take note of detours and roads closures that will be in place.

Wayne O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

ON THE LAWN @ VRI
Sunday 15th
DECEMBER 2024
5:30PM-7:30PM
Walker St Donald
St Arnaud Brass Band
BYO CHAIR OR RUG
Sausage Sizzle, Zooper Dooper
& Soft Drink Provided

BIRCHIP MEDICAL CLINIC

26-28 DUNCAN STREET, BIRCHIP, VIC, 3483

Dr Daniel Owa of the Birchip Medical practice wishes to advise that the Birchip Medical Practice will be closed from **1pm Monday December 23rd, 2024 and will reopen on Monday January 6th, 2025.**

Patients will require enough scripts to cover them during this period. If scripts are needed, please make an appointment with Dr Owa prior to **Monday December 23rd, 2024.** Patients who require INR's will need to make an appointment to organise these tests at the EWHS Birchip Campus.

The following arrangements have been made;

EMERGENCIES;

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL 000

URGENT MEDICAL ISSUES:

EWHS Birchip Campus (03) 5477 7100

Dr Daniel and the staff of the Birchip Medical Practice would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a safe, happy and prosperous New Year.

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Insurance premiums unlikely to rise for wind farm neighbours

We understand insurers do not have specific concerns related to insuring properties that neighbour clean energy infrastructure according to Insurance Council of Australia.

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Wind farms have their own public liability insurance which will cover damage to local properties caused by the wind farm should that occur.



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03 5421 9999



EWHS Reviews Another Busy Year

(From the East Wimmera Health Service Board)

Following a meeting held on Monday, November 16, 2024 at Charlton, the Board reviewed and discussed various responses to the expanded need for staff accommodation that currently exists.

Under the Victorian Health Services Plan it has been proposed that EWHS sit within the Grampians Local Health Service Network and the Board is committed to ensuring that the people of our communities have appropriate support for their hospital care.

The Board reviewed our approach to the EWHS staff survey (People Matter Survey) to consider opportunities for ongoing success in the coming year.

The EWHS AGM was conducted at 6 p.m. at Charlton Campus on November 25, 2024. Thirty-six people attended the event. Board chairperson, Julianne Clift, provided a report on operations for the 2023-24 year and Philip Sabien, chairperson of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee provided the financial report for the year.

A number of EWHS staff were recognised for long service and Jane Hosking, CEO of North Central LLEN (Local Learning and Employment Network) was the guest speaker for the evening. Jane provided insight to the priorities for the NCLLEN and spoke about opportunities for partnership between our organisations for creating resilient young people and career pathways.

Full Report

The full report of operations presented by the Board chairperson is provided here:

While the focus of an AGM is to celebrate successes over the last year, it is also important to acknowledge both our most pressing challenges and our top priorities moving forward.

Providing health services is about the people – the people who provide care, the people who receive care and the people in our communities, working together to support wellness and healthy lifestyles.

Our future direction continues to be focused on our community and our vision of seeing sustainable improvement in the health and wellbeing of our community. We want to be known for our safe and quality care and in providing services that meet the needs of our community.

Strategic Plan

The East Wimmera Health Service Board and Executive continue to implement strategic priorities in line with our Strategic Plan for the 2021-2025 period. This means that the strategies are regularly reported and reviewed to ensure that services address the needs of the community and ensuring that we work in partnership with our communities to design our care to improve health outcomes.

East Wimmera Health Service's healthcare role is not just within the hospital setting; we are extending health care and promotion in the community with new ways of delivering care to people, to improve access and equity. By understanding and analysing our population health and wellbeing needs, allows us to develop and implement a plan that is our roadmap to improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

The Plan guides the Board of Directors and Executive in striving for an innovative model for a small rural health service into the future. We look forward to consulting broadly over the next 6 months in preparation for the development of a new strategic plan to commence in 2025.

"Primary Care Transformation"

East Wimmera Health Service has launched what we call the "Primary Care Transformation" project. The aim of the project is to widen the range of locally available

primary care services, to improve the consumer experience with our community-based services, along with the integration of our teams and with our general practices.

Alongside this, has been the transition of home support services from the Buloke Shire, the appointment of our first Nurse Practitioner and support for the first new trainee Doctor in the region for many years.

Collaboration

We have continued to seek improved service provision through collaboration with regional partners. We have strengthened our commitment of Indigenous Health, Gender Equity, Disability, Diversity, Family Violence and Mental Health. We installed new medical imaging equipment at St. Arnaud to support our partnership with Maryborough District Health Service.

EWHS has implemented a communication and engagement strategy as we continue to enhance our communication with our communities. We have established a PhD position with Federation University. Our Reconciliation Action Plan has been approved by Reconciliation Australia.

Accreditation Survey

The Board can report that in June 2024 East Wimmera Health Service underwent an accreditation survey against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards for our hospital services. All our EWHS residential aged care facilities continue to have short notice assessments by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. The survey results in both areas reflect that EWHS continues to meet hospital and aged care standards and ongoing quality improvements.

We take our environmental impact seriously and maintain an environmental sustainability plan. We continue to seek ways to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and our energy usage. We continue to implement solar projects and transition to more efficient resource practices.

The Committee

In July 2023, the Victorian Department of Health commissioned an Expert Advisory Committee (the Committee) to examine the design and governance of Victoria's health services system. Over 10 months EWHS was actively involved in discussions related to the Victorian Government's Health Services Plan where the challenges experienced by patients, communities and our health workforce within the system were examined.

Key Pillars

The Committee has now developed the Health Services Plan, which provides a number of recommendations for a more connected system that delivers the right care, at the right time, in the right place, for all Victorians. The Plan is

outlined through 3 key pillars of reform:

- Establishing Local Health Service Networks (Networks) – geographic groupings responsible for planning and managing care so that it meets the population health needs of their communities.

- Formalised relationships between each Network and a women's, a children's and a major tertiary hospital, ensuring every Victorian has seamless access to specialist care and expertise when they need it.

- A Victorian Role Delineation Framework, which will set out the roles and responsibilities of each health service site, aligned to their size and capability.

Recommendations

The Government accepted 21 recommendations in full, and accept in principle 5 recommendations:

- Recommendation 7.2: Hospitals will not be forced to consolidate to form LHSNs.

EWHS will continue to work with the Department of Health on the accepted recommendations.

Key outcome of the Health Services Plan is that we continue to be a more cohesive system through formalised regional partnerships that undertake collaborative planning and shared delivery of services. Sharing experiences, gaining knowledge, contributing to a broader network than just our local catchment area really helps us in providing the care we can provide.

Partnerships is also a key component of our strategic plan.

EWHS has a number of strong relationships between health related organisations to local community groups. EWHS has commenced conversations with Federation University to conduct research into the history of our health services with a view to considering what our future health services look like going forward.

Projects Completed

Infrastructure projects completed during this period have included the:

- Painting works at Wycheproof, Donald and St. Arnaud.
- Concrete path upgrades at St. Arnaud.

- Replacement carpet and vinyl flooring at Donald, including room re configuration to ensure all rooms are single.
- Wireless network upgrades at all sites.

- IT infrastructure planned replacements.
- Purchase of furniture and fittings to give our residential facilities a more homely feel.

Fit for Purpose

The Board of Directors continued to advocate to the Victorian Government to ensure our services and facilities are fit for purpose going forward.

The Board of Directors has a fiduciary duty to ensure that EWHS public funds are well managed and have a stable financial position. We are efficient and productive with our



• Julianne Clift.

funding to deliver services. This year with the combined funding from the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government, we continue to deliver financial improvements and sustainability to ensure we remain a relevant and valued presence in our communities.

Above and Beyond

We are aware that staff have gone above and beyond, not only in responding to the various demands, but to continue to provide safe, quality care in what continues to be difficult circumstances in recruitment of a skilled workforce. We are actively continuing to recruit in a resource limited environment and provide support to our dedicated, resilient, and positive workforce.

Fundraising

We would like to recognise the significant support of the fundraising groups that provide vital support to East Wimmera Health Service. These groups are prolific and hardworking and provide direct support for the five health service campuses.

East Wimmera Health Service depends upon the contribution of our volunteers to assist our communities. We recognise and thank those who volunteer their time as community representatives on our various committees. Your input provides immeasurable input into shaping our decision making and policy development.

Volunteers

Chairperson Julianne Clift also took the opportunity to recognise volunteers not directly involved with EWHS, but who were recognised at the recent Victorian Public Healthcare Awards for thirty years of service, this includes Harry Brindley, David Pollard, Gordon Risk and Gary Larmour, and was in recognition

of their services to the Charlton and District Ambulance Auxiliary, well done, and thank you.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hospital Executive who continue to respond to the ongoing challenges of small rural health services and lead our strategic direction through the operationalisation of those visions," she said.

"I would like to thank all Board Directors for their collaborative approach and commitment to the strategic leadership of our Health Service. As Chairperson, I am very grateful for their support and their shared vision of better, healthier communities."

The Board welcomed Ross McKenzie, Carolyn Stewart and Shane Molloy as new Directors from July 1, 2023. The new Directors have provided important perspectives for the Board. We thank Shane Molloy, who unfortunately could not continue beyond March 2024, and in particular Ruth Jabornik, who completed her 9 years as a Board Director for EWHS in June 2024.

"It continues to be an honour to work with our hospital executive and board members to strengthen EWHS position to deliver efficient, high quality health care to our communities despite ongoing challenges that persist," said Julianne.

"I am certain that EWHS will continue to lead positive change in our communities through collaborative efforts, innovative care delivery models and commitment to continuous improvement.

"To our communities, who place their trust in us, either by receiving care, by working with us and our volunteer workforce, auxiliaries and fundraising groups, we thank you."

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10-10

"He just joined the S.P.C.A.!"



Mental Health – Suicide and Suicide Ideation.

Dear Sir, – Many people ask the question: what is suicide and why does a person commit suicide?

Suicide is the act of ending your own life on purpose and there are many reasons why a person suicides.

Statistics tell us some 65,000 Australians attempt suicide each year and more than 3,200 Australians died by suicide in 2022; this is more than double the national road toll. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Australians aged between 15 and 44 years.

Who is more at risk of suicide:

Children and young people; Suicide is the number one cause of death for people aged 15 to 24 years.

Men: Men make up 3 in every 4 deaths by suicide in Australia and males are more likely to die by suicide than females. This may be because males may be less likely to seek help from friends, family or professionals when it comes to their mental health.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people: The suicide rate among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is higher than in the general Australian population.

Previous suicidal behaviour: People who have previously attempted suicide are more likely to die by suicide than those who have not. It is the largest single factor that can predict future suicide risk and death by suicide. Therefore, it's important to keep supporting anyone who has previously attempted suicide due to the risk of re-attempt that remains high throughout their lives but is a lot higher in the first year following their attempt.

People with mental illness: There's a strong link between suicidal behaviours and many mental health conditions, such as depression, schizophrenia, alcohol and other substance abuse disorders, personality disorders.

Sexually and gender-diverse (LGBTIQ+) people: Stigma and discrimination experienced by some gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex youth can significantly impact their mental health. It can contribute to social isolation or in many cases, family rejection. This can increase the risk of suicide.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people: People from CALD backgrounds may be at higher risk of suicide due to social isolation, separation from family and community, language barriers that reduce access to services and in many circumstances financial stresses.

Older people: Suicidal behaviours also includes thinking about suicide (known as "suicide ideation" or "suicidal thoughts"), making plans to end one's life, attempting suicide and, in the most tragic cases, death by suicide. Declining health, chronic (long-term) pain, social isolation, loneliness, loss and bereavement among older Australians, may lead to suicidal thoughts.

The risk of suicide for older people increases when they don't seek help for mental health issues. This is more common in men, as stigma and lack of access to, or knowledge of, the available services may play a role. Therefore, it is so important we pay attention to the wellbeing of older people in our family, neighbourhood and community.

Veterans: On average, there have been three deaths of serving and ex-serving defence members by suicide every

fortnight, it is estimated one veteran has a suicide-related contact with police and paramedics across Australia every four hours. For example, in more than 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan we lost 46 servicemen in deployment, over a similar time period – 1997 to 2020 – at least 1600 serving and ex-serving ADF members died by suicide. In the year 2020, 79 veteran deaths by suicide were recorded.

The agricultural industry: Statistics show that between 2009 and 2018, there were 370 farmer suicides reported, this equates to one farmer taking their own life every 10 days in Australia. Between 2009 and 2018, the average suicide rate for farmers (18.3 per 100,000) was almost 60 per cent higher than non-farmers (11.5 per 100,000). The suicide rate for farmers has trended upwards in this time, increasing to 22.2 per 100,000 in 2018, which is 94 per cent higher than non-farmers. This data although old still gives us a broad overview of on-going plight of the agricultural industry in general.

Risk Factors

Risk factors contributing to the suicide rate include lack of control over environmental factors such as crop yields, trade markets, interest rates, increasing production costs, not to mention the droughts and floods in recent years have placed huge financial stress on farmers and small business owners. Social and personal risk factors include isolation, high workloads, individual stoicism, stigma and lower rates of help-seeking behaviour.

Mr. Editor, the figures above give a clear warning something is drastically wrong, the question is, why so many deaths and what are the causes? In many cases, a person is contending with several stressful life events or circumstances at once; their thoughts and emotions connected to these experiences become overwhelming for them. Suicidal thoughts and feelings can be triggered by any life event – bullying for example – cyber, peer and workplace or any form of abuse, emotional, physical or sexual; past or present, any significant loss (the death of a loved one), relationship breakdown or living in remote areas or in social isolation.

These are some in an extensive list of triggers that bring people down to the suicide level. Added to this, suicide does not discriminate when it comes to a person's identity, gender, race, sexual orientation or age. It's important to note, people from marginalized and farming communities may experience bullying, discrimination, exclusion, lack of access to resources, and stigma, all of which can and in many circumstances increases the risk. This was clear during the rural downturn during the 1980s. A time I can relate to only too well.

Often people considering suicide are dealing with a combination of mental ill-health and difficult life events. Symptoms such as very low mood, negative thinking, severe anxiety, and psychosis can lead to suicidal thoughts or (ideation). Researchers believe that many people who end their own life do not actually want to die but feel there is no other choice to relieve them of their pain. Some might experience a sense of hopelessness and feel that things cannot get better. Those who do take their own life may feel overwhelmed, seeking release from their distress. Often people who are considering suicide are dealing with a combination of mental ill-health and difficult life events.

Why?

Why do people think about suicide? Sometimes, life can present overwhelming situations that can be difficult to deal with. When faced with these situations some people may consider suicide but not act on these thoughts, while others may believe these actions are their only choice to relieve unbearable pain. People contemplating suicide feel hopeless and believe that they are alone in their struggles.

While these risk factors can increase the likelihood of someone taking their own life, there are also many protective factors that can help – providing support and improving a person's ability to cope with difficult circumstances. These may include adaptive coping skills and a sense of competence, effective problem-solving skills, supportive work environment, positive relationships with friends, family and the broader community, access to support and health care or just an empathetic person to talk with. It doesn't end with the individual's suicide, there are tragic ripple effects for friends, families, work colleagues and the broader community. With effective treatment like counselling and medication, social support and time, many who have tried to end their life, or considered ending their life, can go on to live full and meaningful lives.

Mr Editor, as a mental health counsellor my advice to anyone experiencing issues is to reach out for help by talking to a professional or your local general practitioner, there are organisations that provide 24 hour phone service, and support services contact numbers as advertised in this newspaper; remember, there is help available, use it.

Sincerely yours,
Kenneth King, J.P
Southern Mallee Counselling Services.



CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS DRIVE BETTER OUTCOMES SAYS WESTWIND ENERGY

As 2024 draws to a close, WestWind Energy is taking the opportunity to thank the Birchip community for their interest in exploring the challenges and opportunities for the region presented by the Wilkur Energy Park development.

'We really value working with communities that are passionate about their region's future,' said WestWind's Head of Land Tenure, Engagement & Communications, Mark Hudson. 'We believe that challenging conversations always drive better outcomes.'

'Projects like Wilkur Energy Park can make a significant impact locally. It's important to recognise the pros and cons of any development in order to minimise impacts and make the most of benefits for the region.'

The proposed Wilkur Energy Park, featuring approximately 100 turbines, will transform the local landscape. This important project is set to generate enough clean, green electricity to power over half a million Victorian homes, making a significant contribution to a sustainable future.

Beyond energy, the park will deliver direct benefits to the community, contributing around \$200,000 annually in community funding.

Over the project's 25-30 year lifespan, this amounts to an impressive \$5-6 million—funding that can help address local priorities and support long-term community goals.

Future focus

In recent months, WestWind has hosted a series of local engagement events in Birchip, creating opportunities for meaningful and respectful conversations with community members who are passionate about the region's future.

Mark acknowledged the importance of these discussions, 'We deeply appreciate that some community members have concerns about the Wilkur Energy Park, and we fully respect that these concerns stem from a shared desire to protect and preserve local values for generations to come'.

He emphasised WestWind's commitment to collaboration and transparency, 'As the project progresses, our priority is to fully understand and address these concerns. We are dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to the facts they need to make informed decisions about Wilkur Energy Park'.

WestWind remains committed to working hand-in-hand with the Birchip community, building a project that reflects shared values and aspirations.

Strong support for renewables in regional communities

Mark also highlighted that perceptions of widespread concern about renewable energy projects can sometimes be misleading, 'While it might seem that there is significant opposition, in many cases, the majority of people are either supportive or neutral toward these developments'.

Last month, Farmers for Climate Action released new research showing strong support for renewable projects on farmland among regional communities.

The nationwide survey found 70 per cent of residents living in areas affected by renewable projects were supportive

of them, based on findings from 1,000 people across Australia.

'We know genuine consultation is the key to success for projects like Wilkur Energy Park and for the transition to renewable energy overall,' said Mark.

'As we move into 2025, we will keep improving how we engage locally, we will remain open to the community's suggestions, and we will answer questions as quickly and as thoroughly as we can.'

Committed to local presence and sharing factual information

Please drop by our stand at:

Birchip Christmas Party
on Sunday 15 December

We'd love to discuss the Wilkur Energy Park with you.

Over the coming year, we will continue to offer a range of opportunities for the community to engage with the Wilkur Energy Park team in Birchip to ensure any queries and concerns are addressed as quickly as possible. These activities will continue throughout the project's development process.

To help share factual information, WestWind has recently released responses to a wide range of Frequently Asked Questions on its website – visit www.w-wind.com.au/ FAQ or scan the QR code below left.

Interested community members are welcome to get in touch with our project team to ask a question or arrange a meeting. Call (03) 5421 9999 or email info@WilkurEnergyPark.com.au.

You can also visit the project's webpage to find more information or to sign up to the regular project update. Visit w-wind.com.au/project/wilkur-energy-park.

Scan the QR code to visit our FAQ page



Hang Gliders Here for “Big K Week”

For many, the idea of being suspended at 7,000 feet is daunting, but for a number of hang gliding enthusiasts, it's the thrill they eagerly seek year after year.

It's all part of “Big K Week”, a competition that draws participants to the Mallee for a week of hang gliding — aimed at developing their skills and achieving personal bests.

Thirty-six hang gliders, both beginners and experienced, took part in the competition's fourteenth year which was held from November 30 to December 6.

A Lifelong Passion

Neil Hooke first learnt to hang glide at 19 years of age and enjoys taking in the varying sights of the Mallee and the challenges that the sport presents.

“Every day is a different kind of challenge,” Neil said.

“Some days we reach speeds of over 100 km/h, while other days we travel at 60 km/h, but it's always hard

work trying to find the lift,” he said.

Even after 35 years of flying, Neil admits that he still gets nervous before launch.

“No-one can hear you scream from 8,000 feet,” he joked.

Mecca

The Mallee region is considered a “Mecca” for hang gliding, offering vast open spaces that minimise the risk of dangerous landings.

A well-connected road network also makes it easy for vehicles to retrieve gliders who fly long distances while chasing personal bests.

Gliders can also choose to follow a scenic route, launching from Jil Jil and across to Lake Tyrell, then to the Culgoa silos, before returning to their starting point at Jil Jil.

World Championships

Vic Hare has been competing seriously in hang gliding for the past fifteen years, having also been a fighter pilot trainer during that time.

In July, he travelled to Spain to take part in the Pre-Worlds hang gliding competition with the Australian hang gliding team. He hopes to compete in the World Championships held in Italy in 2025.

“The Australian team takes six people but there are nine of us training really hard, so I hope I make the cut,” Vic said.

Social Connections

Big K Week is more than just an opportunity to fly. It's also a chance for participants



• James Atkinson and James McGinty talk tactics before their flights.

to reconnect with old friends and make new ones.

Throughout the week, the hang gliders camped at Tchum Lake, supporting local businesses and enjoying the warm hospitality of Birchip.

Flatter than Flatlands

The hang gliders will return to Birchip on the Easter long weekend for the “Flatter than Flatlands” hang gliding competition.

Whether it's honing their

skills, chasing personal records, or building lasting connections, hang gliding in the Mallee offers both adventure and camaraderie, drawing a range of skill levels back year after year.



• Vic Hare prepares to be launched. (Photos by Blake Lee.)



• Neil Hooke in action as he carries out a running take-off.

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MY 2024.50 Ranger Dual Cab, XLT, 2.0Ltr Bi-turbo Diesel, 10 Spd Auto 4x4, Aluminium, Premium Cloth Seat Trim, Touring Pack **\$65,900** Drive Away

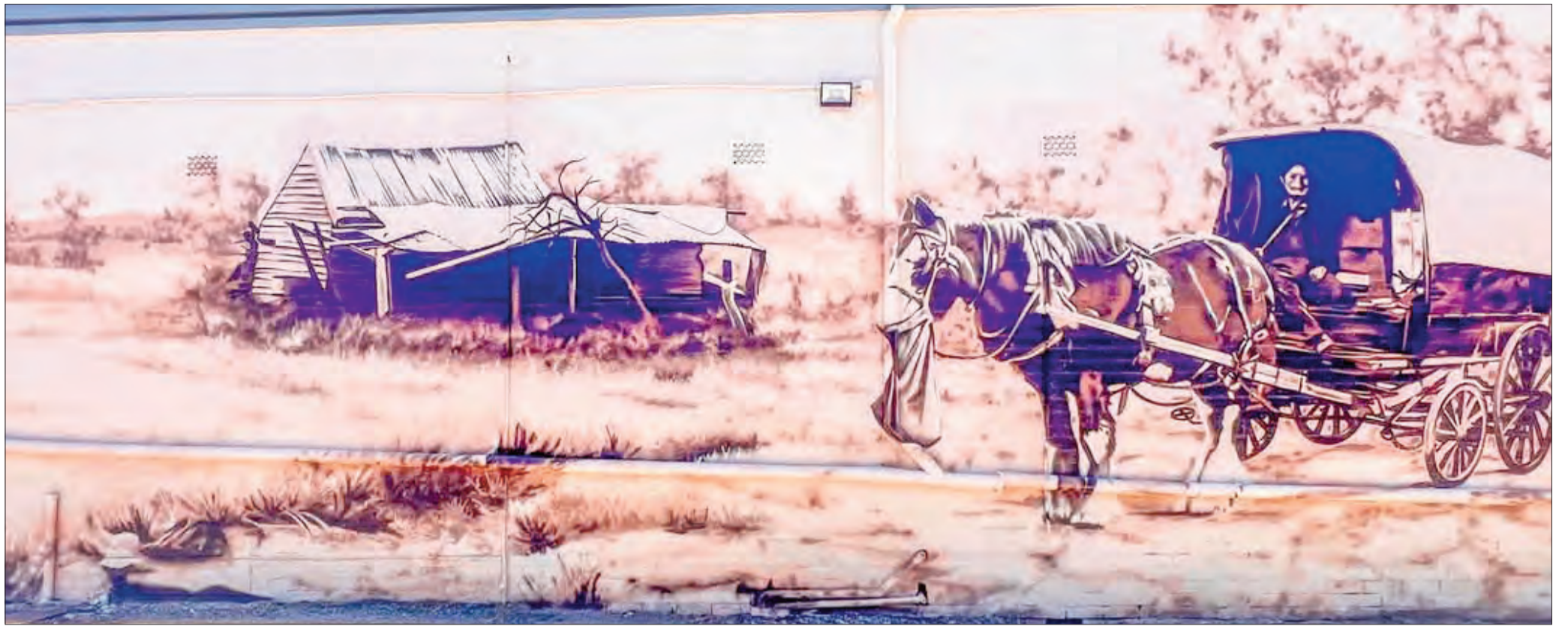
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Please call
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Michaels of Donald
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“Georgie” Immortalised

Georgie Ah Ling, Donald’s famous market gardener has been immortalised on the wall of the town’s “modern market” thanks to a Donald 2000 initiative and the creative talents of Melbourne-artist Heesco.

This incredible artwork tells Georgie Ah Ling’s story and his remarkable contributions to the Donald community. Through Heesco’s creativity, this mural beautifully captures a piece of the town’s history and celebrates the legacy of Georgie Ah Ling’s hard work and dedication.

Georgie Ah Ling, affectionately known as Georgie, but also legally registered as Lau San or Ah Foo Ah Wah, came here in 1900 but went back to China, where he married and had 4 children. He returned to Australia in the late 1920s to look after his cousin, Low Boa Ling’s garden.

Georgie grew many vegetables and bought fruit from markets in Melbourne and Ballarat to resell locally. Produce was delivered by a horse-drawn wagon and watering was done by 2 large watering cans suspended from a yoke around his shoulders, filled from a channel and pumped from the dam in front of his hut.

Donald’s new mural features Georgie in these various poses of work, rest and play, and took only a short time to complete, now decorating the length of the IGA wall along side its carpark. And so far it has only moderately interfered with traffic as pedestrians and motorists alike pause to take in the incredible artwork.

The Artist

Among the myriad of spectators to the progress were Donald’s year 7 students heading out on a street tour to meet the artist responsible for the mural, learning a great deal about him and the subject of his latest work.

Mongolian born, Heesco is an artist mostly known for his large murals and silo art and is used to painting on a much bigger scale. He also actively makes fine art, illustration, and graphic design related works.

Heesco researched Georgie extensively prior to commencement and used the information that he found as

well as what the Donald community gave him for the inspiration for this mural.

The first portrait was made using a grid enlargement technique. Heesco explained to the visiting students the way he counted the bricks to help bring a small sketch to life on a large wall, also using a projector at night to sketch the other parts of the mural for accuracy and speed. There are around 5-7 different paint colours in the mural using spray paint as a hard wearing and quick drying medium.

The students were very impressed with their meeting with the artist, talking animatedly and asking myriad questions on the return walk to the school.

The Initiative

This wonderful new artwork was another successful project from Donald 2000, in particular, Yvonne Brown, who pitched the initial idea to the committee, with grand visions of more artwork to come in the future.

The subject of the mural, Georgie himself, never came into question. With his community contribution, his “friend to all” reputation and historical significance to the town, the vote in his favour was unanimous. Donald’s modern-day embrace of multi-culturalism also makes Georgie’s story relevant to so many current residents of the town, who have ventured to this country from afar; picking up their roots and planting them in Donald to grow and flourish into the future.

And with Yvonne driving this mural to fruition, the first artwork has now been completed, thanks to funding from Horizons Local and Beyond and Esoteric.

The community thanks Donald 2000 and its dedicated members for all the thought, consideration and ultimately the hard work that goes into keeping the township of Donald relevant, fresh, and exciting.



Summer Care, Naturally



In Summer, we all tend to spend more time out-of-doors, which undoubtedly means more time in the sun.

It also means a greater risk of skin damage occurring, which means a sensible approach to dress should always be adopted when spending time in the open air.

Skin damage can occur after only twelve to twenty minutes exposure to sunlight. So, whether you're just walking to the shops, hanging out the washing or enjoying summer-time leisure activities, you must always be mindful of the damage the sun can do to your skin.

To avoid prematurely aging of the skin, wrinkles and the possibility of other skin damage,

such as cancer, it is essential to wear a sun screen, and keep as covered up as much possible, when exposed to the sun. Cool, long-sleeve cotton shirts or blouses and slacks are a must, and also very comfortable to wear in hot weather, and a suitable, wide-brimmed hat will help to protect facial skin.

If you do get caught out in the sun and suffer sunburn, it is important to drink plenty of fluids and herbal teas, such as rosemary and lemon grass, to reduce the possibility of dehydration. The stinging, soreness and pain can be eased from the affected area with any of the following first aid measures.

Apply aloe vera leaf juice straight from the plant to soothe and ease sunburn. Water lily leaves and stems will also give relief. If nothing else is handy you can also dab milk on to affected area. Yoghurt is also effective.

Thin slices of cucumber, placed on the skin and held in place with a loose bandage, will also ease stinging and give relief to painful areas. Or, you can cover the burned area with a paste made from bicarbonate of soda and water.

However, severe cases of sunburn should always be referred to your health practitioner or local medical centre.

If you are only suffering from a mild sunburn, you can ease the stinging and prevent further moisture loss from the skin by applying the following natural lotion. Mix together 50 millilitres of glycerine, 40 millilitres of aloe vera juice and 10 millilitres each of wheat-germ oil and jojoba (pronounced ho ho ba) oil. Store the lotion in a tightly sealed bottle, and shake vigorously before use. Apply generously on to the affected areas of the skin.

For hot, sticky skin that is not sunburnt you can apply this lotion. It will leave your skin feeling cool and delightfully fragrant. Blend together 50 millilitres each of rose-water and glycerine with 100 millilitres of distilled water. Store the lotion in a small spray bottle, shaking well before each use. Spray onto exposed skin as desired, avoiding contact with the eyes.

Remember, too much time in the sun can often cause feelings of unwellness, which is usually a good indication that a person has sunstroke. Symptoms of sunstroke are dizziness, headache, nausea and dryness and redness of the skin. To treat sunstroke, apply a cold water compresses, to which a couple of drops of eucalyptus oil have been added, to the head, the



• Alan Hayes

nape of the neck, and the chest and back. Put the patient to bed and continue sponging with compresses for at least twenty-four to forty-eight hours, and make sure that they drink plenty of water or unsweetened fruit juice. No solid food should be eaten at all during this time. If in doubt, contact your local health practitioner.

This summer, make sure your time out-of-doors is enjoyable and take care to avoid excessive sun exposure – apply plenty of sunscreen, keep covered up with suitable loose, yet comfortable clothing, and wear a wide-brimmed hat and sun glasses.

Visit Alan on the Net - www.itssonatural.com

Police Beat



Theft of Motor Vehicle
1975 HJ Holden. Between 11:00 a.m. and 12:20 p.m. on November 30, an offender has stolen a brown 1975 HJ Holden belonging to an 88-year-old parishioner from a church in Campbell Street, Swan Hill.

Some time later the stolen vehicle caused damage to a parked vehicle in a hit and run in Albert Street, Swan Hill.

At around 1:20 p.m. a member of the public known to the victim has sighted the distinctive vehicle being driven towards Murray Downs, however they were not aware that vehicle was stolen at that time.

Police are following a particular line on inquiry in conjunction with NSW police.

Criminal Damage
Riverside Park, Swan Hill, Christmas Lights

Between 9 p.m. on Nov. 30 and 10 a.m. on December 1, offenders have damaged fairy lights on the Riverside Park rotunda.

The festoon lights had been put up to celebrate the Christmas season; however, they have been cut in various places and destroyed.

Property Damaged Value \$500.

Stradbroke Street Swan Hill, windscreen smashed.

On Thursday November 28, 2024, between 10 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. the victim was in the backyard of his house in Stradbroke Avenue, Swan Hill when he heard a loud bang at the front of his property.

Upon going out to inspect the noise, the victim has noticed a large crack on the front windscreen of his vehicle. The victim did not find any objects nearby or sight any persons within the vicinity.

Damage valued at approximately \$600.00.

Burglary
Rural Property at Dingwall

Between the 27th and 29th of November the victim's farm has been burgled including the theft of a white utility, box trailer, John Deere ride on mower, quadbike and various tools and farming equipment.

Value of stolen items is \$20,000.

Capels Crossing Rural Property (Kerang & Murrabit)

Between 8:00 p.m. on November 7 and 9:30 p.m. on the November 15, unknown offender(s) have broken into the victim's farm at Capels Crossing while they were absent from the property.

The driveway fence had been broken through and both the house and shed have been accessed.

Household electrical items as well as hand and power tools including a compressor, toolbox and other items have been stolen.

A number of stolen items from these recent burglaries have been recovered by Police, however the investigation is continuing.

If anyone has information to assist police in any of the above matters please make contact with local police or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000

Please not these timely reminders for the public:

Rural Properties

Thefts from rural properties have been occurring over recent weeks and months. Police are sending a reminder to property owners to please be security conscious regarding their own properties, lock up vehicles and secure vehicle keys and other items such as fuel and farm equipment. Report any suspicious activity around your properties and your neighbours' properties to police.

Fire Safety

Please remain vigilant of the Fire Danger and risks associated with the summer weather – "You light it, You Own it".

ACEN Australia announces new project: Corack East Wind

What is Corack East Wind? ACEN Australia is in the early stages of investigating a large-scale wind farm project in Buloke Shire in Western Victoria, called Corack East Wind. The development is proposed to be located on privately owned land between Donald, Birchip and Wycheproof.

Where will it connect to the grid? ACEN Australia is investigating opportunities to connect Corack East Wind to the proposed VNI-West interconnector, being developed by Transmission Company Victoria.

What stage is the development at? Corack East Wind is in the Development stage. This stage is expected to take four years. Pending project approval, construction is proposed to begin in 2029, to align with delivery of VNI West.

How will ACEN engage with the community to share information and seek input on the project? ACEN Australia believes it is important to engage early and provide the community with an opportunity to learn about the project, share feedback and information and meet the ACEN team. To achieve this, we will collaborate with host landowners, neighbours, First Nations groups, and the wider community, sharing information about proposed changes and exploring how the project can bring meaningful benefits.

Our goal is to be a valued, long-term contributor to the community.

Who is ACEN Australia? ACEN Australia is the platform representing ACEN's renewable energy assets in Australia. With more than 1 gigawatt (GW) capacity of large scale renewable energy generation in operation and construction and more than 13GW capacity in the development pipeline, its portfolio includes several solar, wind, battery and pumped hydro projects across Australia.

Where can I find out more about the project?

Email:
info@corackeastwind.com.au

Phone:
1800 498 550

Project Website:
www.corackeastwind.com.au

ACEN Australia Website:
www.acenrenewables.com.au



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CFA.VIC.GOV.AU/HOMEFIRE





• GRDC Managing Director Nigel Hart said a new survey showed the grains industry could build trust by actively demonstrating it was listening and responding to the concerns of the Australian public.— Photo: GRDC

Strike Before the Flies Do

Dr Jeff Cave, Agriculture Victoria Senior Veterinary Officer

Flystrike costs the Australian sheep industry approximately \$173 million annually, due to lost production, treatment costs and deaths.

Reducing the risk of flystrike has immense benefits to the health and wellbeing of the sheep and productivity.

The major fly responsible for flystrike in sheep is the green blowfly, *Lucilia cuprina*. *Lucilia cuprina* is thought to be responsible for 90% of flystrike cases.

Lucilia cuprina begins to become active when tempera-

tures are above 15°C and is most active when temperatures are between 26 - 36°C. It prefers calm conditions.

Each female fly can have up to 300 viable offspring and, with a 21-day life cycle, when conditions are optimal, fly numbers can increase rapidly.

The fly has a small flight range, so most of the flies you

see are probably produced on your own property.

The fly is attracted to odour and moisture, so the risk of flystrike increases when there is regular, consistent rainfall that keeps the sheep's skin moist.

The sheep most susceptible to flystrike are those with breech wrinkles, long wool, dags, urine stain, fleece rot, dermatitis and/or wounds.

Plus, sheep that have been previously fly-struck have a relatively higher likelihood of being re-struck.

The prevention of flystrike requires an integrated plan and includes the following:

- Selection of sheep and marking of lambs to produce a flock with a relatively low susceptibility to flystrike.
- Shearing and crutching timed before the peak flystrike risk period.
- Correct use of preventative chemicals timed to give protection during the peak flystrike risk period.
- Worm control and dietary management to help reduce the prevalence of dags.
- Selection of relatively open, windy, dry paddocks
- Removal of infective material and carcasses that may attract flies.

As conditions become more favourable to flystrike, sheep should be monitored more regularly for flystrike.

If a fly-struck sheep is found, the affected area should be immediately treated by clipping close to the skin, dressed to prevent a re-strike, and the sheep should be moved to a hospital paddock to reduce the risk to the rest of the flock.

Any maggots should be collected and killed to help reduce the build-up of fly numbers.

For further advice please contact your local veterinarian or Agriculture Victoria veterinary or animal health officer or visit the websites fly-boss.com.au.

Trust is Key to “Social Licence” for Grain Growers

If Australian grain growers want public support for “social licence” to keep farming, they need to earn people’s trust by listening and responding to community concerns and demonstrating good environmental practices.

This is one of the key findings of a comprehensive survey undertaken for GRDC that involved interviews with more than 2800 Australians for the Community Trust in Grains program.

The survey builds on data collected as part of a three-year program, which identified challenges facing the grains industry as well as strategies to strengthen trust within communities.

The recently released Community Trust in Grains 2024 report highlighted opportunities for improved engagement between grain growers and the public and revealed some positive perceptions the community currently held about the sector.

GRDC Managing Director Nigel Hart, said the grains sector was increasingly aware of the importance of building and maintaining trust with the broader community.

“We understand that trust is not just about ensuring the public understands the grains industry, it’s about making sure we are actively listening to community concerns and demonstrating that our industry is prepared to respond to them,” Mr Hart said.

“This important work gives organisations, such as GRDC, and grain growers a roadmap to build a stronger relationship with the public.”

Specialist social researcher Kieren Moffat from Queensland-based company Voconiq led the survey research for GRDC.

Dr Moffat said encouragingly the survey revealed some positive public perceptions with 84 per cent of respondents, believing the grains industry generated significant local jobs in regional areas.

“In another positive finding, 65 per cent of survey respondents agreed the grains industry was committed to using new technologies and

was innovative in its approach to grain production,” he said.

“Importantly we also heard that 65 per cent of respondents trust Australian grain growers to use pesticides responsibly.”

He said building public trust was critical for grain growers to retain and maintain their social licence to operate in an environment with increasing climate challenges and sustainability pressures.

“Since we surveyed the general public for the first grains focused research in 2021, there has been a significant shift in the factors driving trust, including a renewed emphasis on environmental and sustainability targets,” Dr Moffat said.

The report underscores that the strongest driver of public confidence and trust in the grains industry is procedural fairness – the industry’s ability to listen and address concerns.

Australians expect the grains industry to demonstrate fairness and equality in its operation, and when this expectation is met, public trust increases. Trust has a direct influence on the acceptance of industry, which serves as a proxy for its social licence to operate.

“When people feel that an industry is willing to engage with their concerns and act transparently, their level of trust rises significantly,” Dr Moffat said.

“In 2024, trust has clearly emerged as the strongest driver of community acceptance, showing that fair processes and accountability are essential for the grains industry’s future.”

Australians expect the grains industry to demonstrate strong environmental stewardship, holding the sector accountable for its impacts through operations. This expectation aligns with broader trends, as consumers and communities prioritise sustainability across multiple sectors of agriculture.

Innovation also plays a key role, with the report finding that technological advancements can positively impact public trust and acceptance. Australians want to see that the grains industry is leveraging innovation to address environmental and operational change while improving productivity.

The 2024 report also explored emerging trends reflecting broader societal shifts, such as attitudes towards plant-based proteins. Additionally, employment opportunities in the grains sector remains an area of public interest, specifically in rural communities where the industry serves as a major economic driver.

“As the grains industry continues to innovate, we must ensure that we are not only improving our practices but also communicating these improvements to the Australian community,” Mr Hart said.

“The insights from this report will help us align our efforts with community values, ensuring we maintain and build trust as we move forward. This research is about more than just data: it’s about understanding community concerns and working collaboratively to address them.”



The latest The Fast Break newsletter is now available.

This newsletter details oceanic and atmospheric climate driver activity over the last month and summarises 3-month model predictions for the Pacific and Indian oceans, rainfall and temperature for Victoria.



To subscribe or to view the latest issue, visit the Fast Break newsletter at:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/newsletters/the-break/the-fast-break-victoria>.

What's On

2025 Tri-State Heavy Vehicles and Harvest Forum

A free Heavy Vehicles forum with an agricultural vehicles theme.

Presentations by: NSW and Victoria Police; WorkSafe Vic and SafeWork NSW; Wentworth and Mildura councils; Transport for NSW Local Industry demonstrations and more!

When: January 23, 2025, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Where: Mildura–Sunitafe, 453 Benetook Avenue

Visit the Eventbrite page to learn more and register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-tri-state-heavy-vehicles-and-harvest-forum-tickets-1044569484447?aff=ebdssbdest-search&keep_tld=1

GRDC Grains Research Update

SAVE THE DATE: The GRDC Grains Research Update 2-Day events are for agronomists, consultants, researchers and growers to see and discuss the latest in research and to network with their peers about how to apply new and relevant information to the latest farming systems.

When: February 25-26, 2025, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

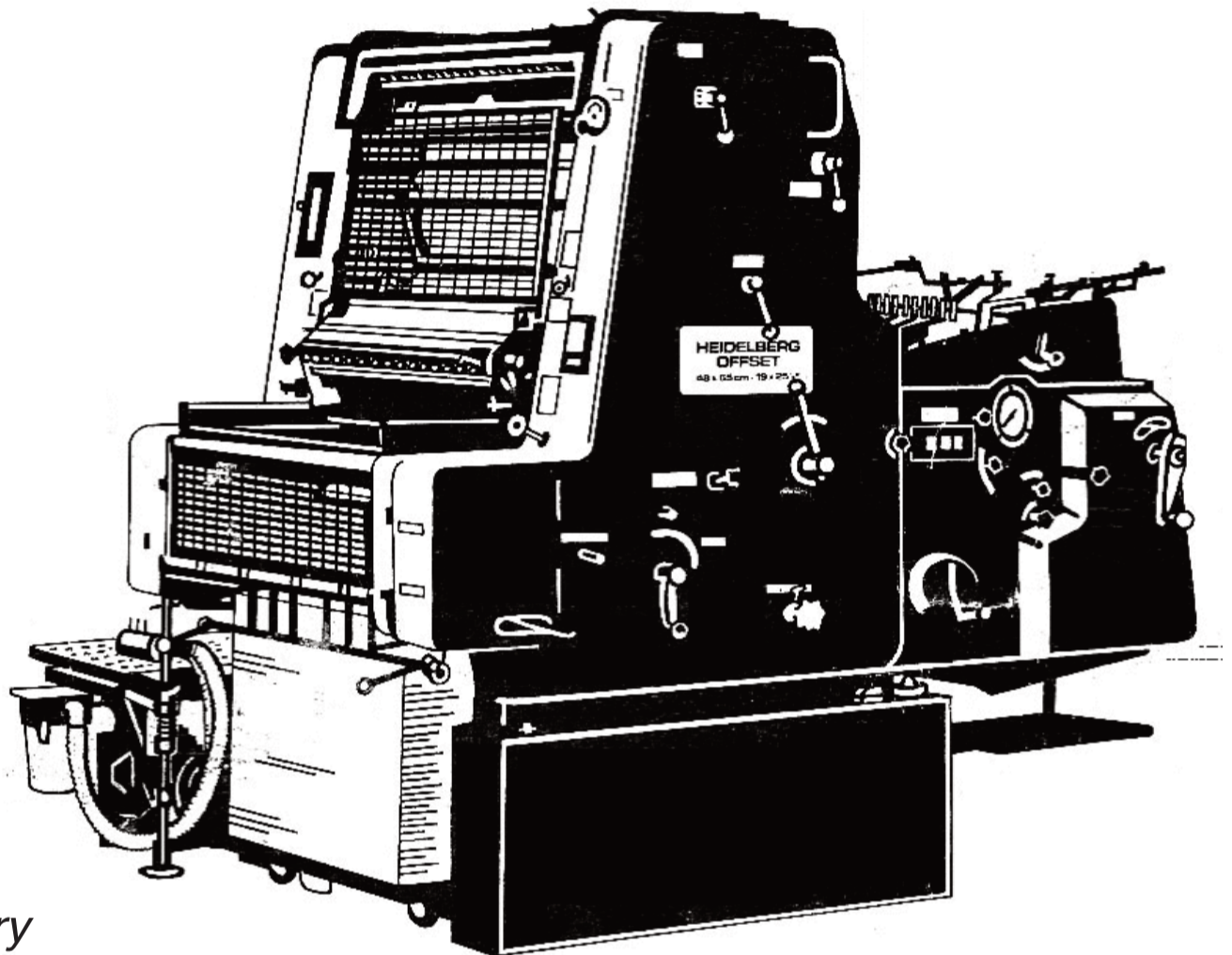
Where: Bendigo–Ulumbarra Theatre, Gaol Road



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Double Trouble for Pennant Teams

Round 9 of North Central Playing Area's 2024-'25 pennant season produced double success for four of the eight clubs, and double disappointment for the other four.

St. Arnaud, St. Arnaud Country Club, Boort and Wycheproof won both their Div. 1 and Div. 2 clashes against Donald Golf, Donald, Charlton and Wedderburn respectively, the feature of the round being losses for Div. 1 ladder leaders, Wedderburn and Golf, at the hands of Wycheproof (currently fourth) and St. Arnaud (third), making for an interesting run to the finals, with just five rounds to play.

St. Arnaud recorded comfortable wins on all three rinks against Donald Golf; Ashley Dyke by 4 shots over Geoff Rigby, Terry McSwain by 11 over Peter Hibberd, and Steve Zsigmond by 6, in a marathon encounter with Daniel Pettifer.

In a subtle change to the usual atmosphere surrounding a bowling green, the background music filtering across the St. Arnaud synthetic was enjoyed and appreciated, by this scribe at least.

St. Arnaud Country Club ventured to Donald, where it secured 11 of the 12 points on

offer, each club securing a win, a draw and suffering a loss. Jason Abbott drew with Hunter Wingfield 22-all, Simon Elliott defeated Bill Hegarty by 4 shots, and Bill Rodger accounted for Norm Hollis by 14.

In the battle of the top 2, Wedderburn at home to Wycheproof, it was the visitors who ruled the day, albeit by just 9 shots overall, and pocketed 10 points to 2.

Damien Mason secured Wedderburn's 2 points when he outpointed Grant Allan by 7, but when Laurie Witham lost to Paul Wellington by 1 shot, and Alan Jackson experienced a rare trouncing at the hands of Jono Grylls, by 15 shots, Wyche. headed back up the Calder Highway full of confidence for the remainder of the season.

Boort maxed out at Charlton's expense, securing a 58-shot victory over the visitors and banking all 12 points.

Laurie Maxted defeated Michael O'Brien by 19 shots, Shayne Morris accounted for Kevin Willey by 19, and Stephen Perry downed Kevin

Depiazza by 20, to complete the clean sweep.

On a happier note for Wedderburn, the bowling fraternity unites in congratulating popular couple, Ian and Ruth Hall, on achieving 65 years of wedded bliss. Steely determination and dedication have been the hall marks of their long and productive association.

Details:
St. Arnaud 89-12 d. Donald Golf 65-0.

Ash Dyke 24 d. Geoff Rigby 20, Steve Zsigmond 26 d. Daniel Pettifer 20, Terry McSwain 29 d. Peter Hibberd 18.

Donald 57-1 lost to St. Arnaud Country Club 75-11.

Hunter Wingfield 22 drew with Jason Abbott 22, Bill Hegarty 18 lost to Simon Elliott 22, Norm Hollis 17 lost to Bill Rodger 31.

Boort 100-12 d Charlton 42-0.

Laurie Maxted 35 d. Michael O'Brien 16, Shayne Morris 34 d. Kevin Willey 15, Kevin Depiazza 31 d. Stephen Perry 11.

Wedderburn 63-2 lost to Wycheproof 72-10.

Damien Mason 24 d. Grant Allan 17, Alan Jackson 12 lost to Jono Grylls 27, Laurie Witham 27 lost to Paul Wellington 28.

St. Arnaud Into Third

St. Arnaud continued its march up the Division 2 ladder, recording a clean sweep against fellow top four team, Donald Golf, by an overall margin of 12 shots.

Lloyd Goddard finished 2 shots ahead of Shane O'Shea in their closely contested encounter, Paul Micallef overcame Lindsay Borden by 6 and Laurence Goodwin outscored George Wood by 4, to complete a productive day for the host club.

Donald could not match the scoring power of the visiting St. Arnaud Country Club, which secured a 44-shot victory and banked 10 of the 12 points.



Donald Golf member Belinda Murray delivers her bowl. In her first year of bowls, Belinda recently won the novice singles. In the background on left is John Prendergast and Golf's Tony Dionosopolous.



Arnold Bond (St. Arnaud Country Club), discusses tactics with Donald's Trevor Farrer.

Trevor Farrer had to lower his colours after Arnold Bond finished 30 shots in front, Beryl Milne suffered a 21-shot loss at the hands of former baker John Needs, while David Romeo was the only Donald skipper to enjoy success, downing Phil Elliott by 7 shots.

Perhaps inspired by his recent wedding anniversary, Ian Hall recorded an 11-shot win over Matt Nicholls, but it was Wedderburn's only success for the afternoon against Wycheproof, after John Grant went down to Paul Connolly by 3 shots, and Lance Standfield could not match the scoring power of Donald Denney and his charges, losing by 10 shots.

Boort almost completed a clean sweep of Charlton, only a drawn result between Joan Earl and John Headon, 23 shots apiece, preventing it from securing all 12 points,

after John Hampson saluted by 25 shots over Doug Finlay, and Greg Smith got the better of Greg Wain by 7 shots.

Details:
St. Arnaud 71-12 d. Donald Golf 59-0.

Lloyd Goddard 24 d. Shane O'Shea 22, Paul Micallef 24 d. Lindsay Borden 18, Laurence Goodwin 23 d. George Wood 19.

Donald 56-2 lost to St. Arnaud Country Club 100-10.

Trevor Farrer 13 lost to Arnold Bond 43, Beryl Milne

14 lost to John Needs 35, David Romeo 29 d. Phil Elliott 22.

Boort 82-11 d. Charlton 50-1.

John Hampson 33 d. Doug Finlay 8, Greg Smith 26 d. Greg Wain 19, Joan Earl 23 drew with John Headon 23.

Wedderburn 59-2 lost to Wycheproof 61-10.

Ian Hall 24 d. Matt Nicholls 13, John Grant 21 lost to Paul Connolly 24, Lance Standfield 14 lost to Donald Denney 24.



Another long term member of the St. Arnaud Bowling Club is Gary Smith. Using the bowling arm has helped him continue in this sport.

NORTH CENTRAL PENNANT BOWLS

Positions of Teams, after round 9

DIVISION 1

	P	W	L	D	Bye	F	A	SD	%	Pts
Wedderburn	9	7	1	1	0	636	490	146	130	80
Donald Golf	9	6	2	1	0	603	496	107	121	72
St. Arnaud	9	5	3	1	0	605	498	107	121	68
Wycheproof	9	5	3	1	0	582	513	69	113	66
St. Arnaud Country Club	9	4	4	1	0	573	550	23	104	57
Donald	9	3	5	1	0	516	626	-110	82	41
Boort	9	2	6	1	0	545	589	-44	92	38
Charlton	9	0	8	1	0	423	721	-298	57	10

DIVISION 2

	P	W	L	D	Bye	F	A	SD	%	Pts
Wycheproof	9	6	2	1	0	628	450	178	139	80
Wedderburn	9	5	3	1	0	625	532	93	117	66
St. Arnaud	9	5	3	1	0	602	516	86	117	66
Donald Golf	9	5	3	1	0	579	532	47	109	64
St. Arnaud Country Club	9	5	3	1	0	594	534	60	111	57
Boort	9	3	5	1	0	520	623	-103	83	39
Donald	9	2	6	1	0	489	658	-169	74	33
Charlton	9	1	7	1	0	474	666	-192	71	27

Your Blood is Worth Bottling

If you are visiting Ballarat or Bendigo and have a bit of time to spare, a trip to the Blood Bank would be a very rewarding experience. You will need to book, by phoning 13 14 95.



A very good member of the St. Arnaud Bowling Club on and off the green, Graham Simpson watches the bowls action.

Fantastic News for Female Football

This Wednesday, a brand new female football league is calling for all those interested in both playing or supporting it to come and visit at the Murtoa Football Oval.

A female football league had been in the works for a while, with it becoming a serious thought earlier this year, the time was right to come together and form this new league.

The need for it has been obvious to anyone invested in the sport, with young girls who wanted to participate playing with the boys in their league.

While this is very early on into making this league flourish, the amount of excitement around it has been palpable, leaving the organisers overwhelmed with support!

While the question of where and who they will be playing is still something to be answered it's important to know there are a lot of

leagues around the region, though some travel could be involved. However it goes without saying that with excitement like this there's a lot of potential for other leagues to start up a bit closer to home, with hopes of the Wimmera region having more leagues in the future to ease travel times.

If you want to help this league bloom, consider coming down to the Murtoa Football Oval at 6 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday). They are asking for people of all skill levels, all ages to come by and have a good time, even if you don't want to play. There's plenty of things one could do to assist this young league grow. For those unsure if they want to play at all, there's also a barbecue dinner for all!

Angling Club's End of Year

Donald Angling Club held its end-of-year presentation night on Saturday, December 7.

The Christmas break-up was held at the clubrooms beside Folletti Lake, where members celebrated the year's achievements and enjoyed an evening of good food, friends and fishing fancies.

Results of presentation night included:

Fishermen of the year, Gary Dunstan and Leigh Nunn – both recorded 12 fish each.

Leigh Nunn seniors longest yellowbelly at 51cm.

Greg Nunn seniors longest Cod at 74 cm.

Harley Roberts junior longest cod 55cm.

Donald Angling Club meets every Wednesday and runs throughout the year. New members will be warmly welcomed in the new year, with many fishing competitions scheduled for 2025 as well as the social aspect of many coming together to share a common interest.



• Joint Fisherman of the Year, Gary Dunstan with a catch of 12 fish.



• Greg Nunn (longest cod) and Angling Club president Shane Sullivan.



• Joint Fisherman of the Year, Leigh Nunn with a catch of 12 fish.

"Times" Crossword

QUICK PUZZLE NO. 8158 - SOLUTIONS

Across - 1, Ventriloquist. 8, Sheep. 9, Cracker. 10, Answer. 11, Remote. 12, Ether. 14, Speed. 18, Oriole. 20, Unsafe. 23, Asinine. 24, Unite. 25, Silver-tongued.
Down - 1, Vassal. 2, Needs. 3, Replete. 4, Luck. 5, Quake. 6, Irksome. 7, Target. 13, Trivial. 15, Penguin. 16, Morass. 17, Legend. 19, Loire. 21, Adieu. 22, Wept.

Trash to Treasure

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Turn your Trash into Cash by advertising it for sale in the "Times" classified pages.

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Wimmera-Mallee Cricket Scoreboard

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Round 7:

"A" Grade

Donald-Jeffcott d. Southern Mallee Giants

SOUTHERN MALLEE GIANTS

L. Hateley, c R. Bath b L. Rice	9
J. Landrigan, c W. Noble b E. Landwehr	6
L. Mitchell, c C. Anderson b L. Rice	50
Z. Robins, not out	42
A. Madhu, c E. Landwehr b L. Rice	0
L. Weir, c W. Noble b N. Atkins	13
J. Cook, c K. Westerland b D. Atkins	6
S. Roberts, not out	2
TOTAL (for 6 wickets)	128
Fall of wicket: 8, 60, 67, 71, 110, 117.	

Bowling: D. Atkins 1/17 (8), E. Landwehr 1/11 (5), C. Anderson 0/26 (4), J. Adams 0/19 (8), L. Rice 3/33 (8), N. Atkins 1/22 (7).

DONALD-JEFFCOTT

C. Anderson, c M. Roberts b A. Madhu	22
A. Schofield, c M. Roberts b J. Moore	24
K. Westerland, b L. Mitchell	1
D. Atkins, c M. Roberts b J. Cook	18
W. Noble, c J. Moore b J. Vanderburg	41
R. Bath, c J. Moore b S. Roberts	9
J. Adams, not out	5
L. Rice, not out	1
Sundries	8
TOTAL (for 6 wickets)	129
Fall of wicket: 43, 44, 55, 79, 121, 127.	

Bowling: J. Moore 1/18 (6), L. Mitchell 1/37 (6.5), A. Madhu 1/11 (3), J. Cook 1/17 (4), S. Roberts 1/26 (4), J. Vanderburg 1/16 (2).

Birchchip d. St. Arnaud

ST. ARNAUD

M. Stones, b R. Doran	0
B. Williams, b R. Smith	22
D. Carter, lbw J. Randall	1
J. Patching, c C. Lee b R. Smith	9
N. Gorrie, lbw C. Lee	2

J. Carroll, run out L. Randall	5
K. Torney, c J. Paley b: C. Lee	1
J. McCartney, b R. Smith	27
H. Torney, b R. Doran	1
L. Patching, c J. Randall b R. Doran	0
C. Torney, not out	0
Sundries	13
TOTAL (for 10 wickets)	81
Fall of wicket: 13, 17, 38, 43, 43, 47, 78, 79, 79, 81.	

Bowling: J. Randall 1/7 (6), R. Doran 3/10 (5), C. Lee 2/40 (8), R. Smith 3/14 (8).

BIRCHIP

C. Lee, c H. Torney b J. McCartney	5
L. Randall, lbw L. Patching	0
J. Paley, c H. Torney b J. Patching	4
R. Doran, not out	45
W. Marks, c H. Torney b J. Carroll	13
R. Smith, not out	10
Sundries	5
TOTAL (for 4 wickets)	82
Fall of wicket: 4, 9, 13, 42.	

Bowling: J. Patching 1/10 (4), L. Patching 1/13 (4.4), J. Carroll 1/36 (5), J. McCartney 1/20 (4).

Marnoo d. St. Mary's

ST. MARY'S

N. Germano, c D. Lang b C. Reading	17
D. Westerland, c J. Duxson b B. Newton	3
C. Schmidt, c Cheesman b J. McAllister	4
W. Allan, c C. Reading b J. McAllister	6
B. Watts, b D. Cameron	29
B. Dennes, b D. Lang	16
N. Priest, c S. Lang b J. Duxson	30
C. Zanker, lbw D. Lang	16
S. Smith, c D. Cameron b J. Duxson	6
A. Keys, not out	0
D. Bryce, not out	0
Sundries	11
TOTAL (for 9 wickets)	138

Fall of wicket: 21, 25, 28, 59, 64, 94, 124, 138, 138.

Bowling: C. Reading 1/28 (7), B. Newton 1/18 (8), J. McAllister 2/37 (5), D. Cameron 1/5 (3), D. Lang 2/19 (6), Fill-in 0/19 (6), J. Duxson 2/8 (5).

MARNOO

J. Duxson, c D. Westerland b B. Dennes	0
D. Lang, c N. Germano b B. Dennes	26
B. Newton, c A. Keys b C. Schmidt	41
D. Cameron, lbw C. Schmidt	40
D. Cameron, c A. Keys b B. Watts	10
B. Cheesman, not out	17
Fill-in, not out	5
Sundries	0
TOTAL (for 5 wickets)	139
Fall of wicket: 0, 37, 96, 115, 132.	

Bowling: B. Dennes 2/34 (8), W. Allan 0/27 (8), N. Germano 0/22 (2), C. Schmidt 2/31 (6), B. Watts 1/24 (5).

"B" Grade

Charlton d. Birchchip

CHARLTON

P. Soulsby, c R. Bennett b K. Hamilton	12
H. Sait, c&b K. Hamilton	1
B. Sexton, c J. Knights b R. Bennett	25
S. Mohanan Sreekala, lbw J. Knights	2
C. Boyle, c R. Bennett b J. Knights	4
E. Fitzpatrick, b R. Bennett	20
P. Sait, c C. Bennett b L. Angel	26
E. Needs, c M. Trollope b C. Bennett	2
E. Soulsby, not out	42
A. Soulsby, c K. Hamilton b C. Bennett	3
Private player, not out	6
Sundries	11
TOTAL (for 9 wickets)	154
Fall of wicket: 4, 22, 29, 37, 56, 75, 90, 113, 124.	

Bowling: C. Bennett 2/25 (8), K. Hamilton 2/15 (7), J. Knights 2/36 (8), R. Bennett 2/24 (8), L. Angel 1/28 (5), W. Ryan 0/23 (4).

BIRCHIP

M. Trollope, c B. Sexton b E. Fitzpatrick	0
J. Knights, c E. Soulsby b P. Soulsby	8
R. Bennett, b P. Sait	2
K. Hamilton, b P. Sait	10
C. Bennett, b C. Boyle	1
W. Ryan, not out	7
L. Angel, b C. Boyle	1
J. Coffey, b C. Boyle	0
Fill-in, b A. Soulsby	6
R. Ryan, c P. Sait b A. Soulsby	0
A. Tyler, c P. Sait b E. Soulsby	0
Sundries	24
TOTAL (for 10 wickets)	59

Fall of wicket: 0, 4, 29, 31, 34, 35, 35, 51, 56, 59.

Bowling: E. Fitzpatrick 1/16 (4), P. Sait 2/12 (4), C. Boyle 3/6 (4), P. Soulsby 1/4 (3), A. Soulsby 2/7 (5), E. Soulsby 1/10 (4.3).

Watchem d. St. Mary's

ST. MARY'S

K. Zanker, b S. Lowry	22
J. Evans, run out	7
Fill-in, c ? b D. Tatarskyj	5
L. Westerland, c D. Slater b C. Boyle	0
M. Hartnett, b D. Tatarskyj	2
P. Roche, not out	16
S. Knorrp, lbw D. Tatarskyj	0
C. Hartnett, not out	0
Sundries	11
TOTAL (for 6 wickets)	63
Fall of wicket: 39, 39, 39, 45, 46, 58.	

Bowling: C. Boyle 1/11 (4), T. Colbert 0/9 (4), S. Lowry 1/13 (4), Fill-in 0/15 (3), D. Tatarskyj 3/10(4), J. Woods 0/2 (1).

WATCHEM

T. Colbert, not out	33
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D. Slater, c K. Zanker b M. Hartnett	14
D. Tatarskyj, not out	12
Sundries	5
TOTAL (for 1 wicket)	64
Fall of wicket: 42.	

Bowling: J. Evans 0/17 (2), Fill-in 0/17 (2), M. Hartnett 1/20 (2), C. Hartnett 0/10 (1).

Donald-Jeffcott v. Southern Mallee Giants

SOUTHERN MALLEE GIANTS

K. Bellinger, b T. Reekie	7
P. Hallam, c C. Anderson b T. Reekie	2
D. Shannon, c ? b J. Needs	9
C. Castleman, c ? b S. Postlethwaite	0
O. Wood, c S. Postlethwaite b J. Needs	1
D. Pulham, lbw J. Donnellon	15
H. McLean, c ? b J. Donnellon	4
A. Decker, c A. Bayles b C. Rice	7
A. Love, st A. Bayles b J. Donnellon	26
Finn Shannon, c Tellefson b J. Donnellon	0
C. Decker, not out	1
Sundries	16
TOTAL (for 10 wickets)	88

Bowling: S. Postlethwaite 1/8 (4.1), T. Reekie 2/12 (5.5), J. Needs 2/10 (5), N. Nanayakkara 0/16 (4), J. Donnellon 4/12 (7.4), C. Anderson 0/6 (3), C. Rice 1/23 (2).

DONALD-JEFFCOTT

J. Tellefson, lbw C. Castleman	2
J. Needs, c ? b C. Castleman	7
A. Bayles, st D. Pulham b H. McLean	15
T. Reekie b O. Wood	22
K. Green, c ? b O. Wood	3
S. Postlethwaite, not out	30
D. Ethakada, not out	2
Sundries	0
TOTAL (for 5 wickets)	90

Bowling: O. Wood 2/34 (8), C. Castleman 2/32 (8), H. McLean 1/14 (2), A. Love 0/9 (1.5).

A Bit Windy, but Not Wet

• Continued from page 16. fours. Giants' bowling honours were shared by Clint Castleman 2/32 (8), Oliver Wood 2/34 (8), and Harry McLean 1/14 (2).

Ladder leader, Charlton, set the Birchip Swans a challenging target of 9/154, with Ethan Soulsby's 42 not out following up solid contri-

butions by Patrick Sait 26, Billy Sexton 25, Elliott Fitzpatrick 20, and captain Patrick Soulsby 12. Sharing the wickets for Birchip were Cameron Bennett 2/24 (8), and Lana Angel 1/28 (5). Then, with all Charlton bowlers claiming a share, Birchip was dismissed for 59 in 24.3 overs, Kobe Hamilton being

the only double-figure scorer. Batting first, St. Mary's reached 6/63, thanks mainly to Kael Zanker 22, and Peter Roche not out. In overtaking that score for the loss of only one wicket, Watchem's Ty Colbert remained 33 not out, while Daniel Slater scored 14, and Daniel Tatatskyj 12 not out.



• Charlton's Elliott Fitzpatrick bowls.



• Nic Atkins in full flight, with umpire Daryl Broughton watching the result.



• A superb knock of 42 not out from the Giants' Zac Robins kept the scoreboard ticking over.



• Giants' Leighton Hatley tucks the ball away.



• Ethan Soulsby prepares to hit big on his way to 42 runs.

Bulls' New Coach Begins

Day one of official pre-season training began for Birchip-Watchem last Wednesday with players taking to the track under the guidance of new coach Ashley Connick.

Although the ongoing harvest prevented players who farm by trade from attending, there was a pleasing number on the track keen to impress their new leader. Skills and tactical drills featured throughout the session along with the running blocks synonymous with pre-season training.

Connick, 50, takes the reins at Birchip-Watchem after concluding a successful five-year stint at Sandhurst in the Bendigo Football League. 2024 was a banner season for Connick as he led Sandhurst to the senior premierships and also coached the Bendigo interleague team.

While he is now a non-playing coach, it is worth mentioning that Connick had a successful playing career in country footy. As an imposing and skilful key position player he played over 300 senior

games, kicked over 600 goals and also had many seasons playing centre-half-back. He played in premierships at Mathoura (1993), Deniliquin (1996), Wentworth (2001, captain/coach), and Mildura (2007, captain/coach).

Connick's experience as a coach is extensive. Throughout his career he has held the top job at Wentworth, Swan Hill, Tooleybuc-Managatang, Mildura, Red Cliffs and Sandhurst. At interleague level he has coached the Sunraysia and Bendigo Football Leagues.

"This appointment has probably rekindled a fair bit of excitement when it comes to coaching for me," he said.

"Going back to country footy where the cars are parked two deep around the boundary, and the whole town

comes out to support the team, I'm really excited.

"The club has been strong under Trevor Ryan, who did a phenomenal job, so I've got big shoes to fill.

"But there are a couple of things I'll implement that they aren't doing currently, which is exciting for me because I love the education side of coaching, like teaching a

gameplan, set-up and structures." Birchip-Watchem's pre-season training will continue on Wednesday nights at 6 p.m. prior to Christmas. Following

this, the club will announce January training dates and plans for a Meet the Coach function for all members and supporters to officially welcome Ashley to the club.



• Instructions from new coach, Ashley Connick (Photo by Blake Lee.)

North-Central is Netball Association of the Year

The winners of Netball Victoria's 2024 Community Awards were announced on Thursday night, celebrating the contributions of individuals, clubs, and associations to the sport across the state.

Five individuals, three associations, and two clubs received honours across eight categories, after being nominated by peers and selected by a panel of up to four in each category. The evening was officially opened and welcomed by Netball Victoria President, Carol Cathcart, during the Community Awards presentation.

The North Central Netball Association (NCNA) was named Association of the Year, a testament to its progressive leadership, innovative programs, and unwavering commitment to its members.

Volunteers

The prestigious accolade was accepted by NCNA's 2024 Board of Management President, Kylie Walsh, on behalf of the Board and its members. In her acceptance speech, Kylie highlighted the extraordinary volunteer efforts that have been pivotal to the association's success. "The countless hours given by our Board volunteers, along with their unique talents and passion they bring to their roles, have set NCNA on a positive trajectory," she said.

After years of careful planning, NCNA transitioned to a formal Board of Management in 2023.

This innovative governance model includes volunteer delegates from each NCNA club, ensuring equal representation and fair decision-making. By reducing the administrative burden on individual clubs, the Board fosters collaboration and sturdiness in its roles, enabling the association to strengthen.

Stability

"The continuity into our second year of the Board has brought stability and a renewed sense of direction," Kylie shared. "This recognition reflects the strength of our governance model and the expertise we've been fortunate to gain, including guidance from AFL Central Victoria during the Board's formation and over the past two years."

Addressing the evolving needs of the association, particularly amongst the top age junior cohort, to name but one area, NCNA introduced a new C Reserve competition in 2024. This grade blends junior and senior players, offering a pathway for juniors to transition into senior netball while regaining confidence and developing skills. Mentorship from senior players in this competition has been pivotal, fostering growth and

camaraderie among all participants. The success of C Reserve has strengthened NCNA's player development pipeline and demonstrated the association's commitment to providing opportunities for players at all stages of their netball journey.

NCNA's Umpire Development Program has become a benchmark for fostering a supportive umpiring culture. Over the past two years, the association has awarded 24 C-badges, supported a B-endorsed tester, and trained three C-endorsed testers, significantly raising the standard of umpiring.

Tireless Efforts

This growth has been driven by the tireless efforts of NCNA's Umpire Co-ordinator, who has dedicated countless hours arranging mentoring, testing, workshops, and collaborating with Netball Victoria. Netball Victoria also recognised NCNA earlier this year and its successful injection of badged Umpires and the Umpire Development Program, which is against the grain of many associations and leagues.

"Our Umpire Co-ordinator Nicole Amos, has been instrumental in creating an environ-



• President Kylie Walsh was online to accept the award on behalf of NCNA.



ment where umpires feel supported and valued," Kylie said. "Her passion, time management expertise to assign NCNA mentors and testers across the association, whilst mentoring emerging umpires, have played a key role in elevating umpiring standards and ensuring the sustainability of the program."

NCNA actively acknowledges the achievements of its members and supporters through a robust social media presence, strengthening community engagement and unity. This has been a particular focus from the Board and a specific role this season, which created an astonishing

media footprint and positive environment for members and supporters alike.

"This award is a well-deserved recognition of the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in NCNA," Kylie said. "It reflects our commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive, and forward-thinking environment for our members and supporters."

ward-thinking environment for our members and supporters."

Congratulations to the North Central Netball Association for this outstanding achievement and being recognised for setting an inspiring example for community sport by Netball Victoria.

A Bit Windy, but Not Wet

Following the frustration of the previous weekend, when all round 6 games were called off due to rain, Wimmera-Mallee cricketers welcomed far better conditions on Saturday. Apart from a gusty breeze, the day was almost ideal for round 7.

In "A" grade, it was second-placed (Marnoo) versus third (St. Mary's) on the Marnoo ground, where St. Mary's elected to bat first. The result was an innings of 9/138, thanks to solid performances by middle-order players Nathan Priest 30, Bailey Watts 29, Brodie Dennes 16, and Callum Zanker 16. Most successful Marnoo bowlers were David Lang 2/19 (6), and Jack McAllister 2/37 (5). Then, following an early hiccup, Marnoo settled in to hit the front at 5/139 in 29 overs. Among the runs were Ben Newton 41, Brylie Cameron 40, David Lang 26, Baxter Cheesman 17 not out, and Darcy Cameron 10, For St. Mary's, Brodie Dennes and Colby Schmidt were both dual wicket-takers.

On the Jeffcott turf in Donald, Southern Mallee Giants' Luke Mitchell, 50, and Zach Robins 42 not out, shared an impressive 72-run partnership, leading the way to a 40-overs total of 8/128. Star of the Donald-Jeffcott attack was teenage spinner Luca Rice, with figures of 3/33 (8). After the break, Donald-Jeffcott openers, captain Cooper Anderson, 22,

and Aaron Schofield, 24, set the foundation for a home-team victory, with a total of 6/129 in 25.5 overs. Having earlier had a hand in two dismissals, teen-age wicket-keeper Will Noble completed the day with 41 runs, including 5 fours. All six Giants bowlers shared the wickets.

Birchip Swans must have looked into their crystal ball before they chose to bowl at King George's Park. Riley Doran took 3/10 (5), Rylee Smith 3/14 (8), Connor Lee 2/40 (8), and Jonty Randall 1/7 (8), and St. Arnaud was all out for 81 in 27 overs. More than half that total was contributed by Jayden McCartney, 27, and Brad Williams, 22. Birchip's reply was not a confident one, but with Riley Doran's 45 not out completing a notable individual double, and James Paley adding 12 and Will Marks 16, the game finished early with the score at 4/82 in 17.4 overs.

"B" Grade

Economic bowling by Donald-Jeffcott's Tom Reekie 2/12 (5.5), Jake Needs 2/10 (5), Sam Postlethwaite 1/8 (4.1), restricted Southern Mallee Giants' progress, be-

fore Jacob Donnellon took to the bowling crease with superb figures of 4/12 from 7.4 overs, ending the innings at 88 after 31.4 overs. Boosting the lower half of the Giants' batting were Daven Pulham 16, and Adrian Love 26. In a steady reply, Tom Reekie 22 and Andrew Bayles 16 set Donald-Jeffcott up for a win, while Sam Postlethwaite finished the job with a hard-hitting 30 not out, including 5

• Continued on page 15.



• Luke Mitchell during his half-century for Southern Mallee Giants' "A" grade.



• A massive dive from Donald-Jeffcott's Ryan Bath couldn't prevent this boundary.