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

Supporting Communities' Mental Wellbeing . . .

Unbreakable Wheel Rolls Out Across Buloke

Following his successful Paddock Run tour across Buloke Shire last year, Warren Davies – known as the Unbreakable Farmer – has re-launched his Unbreakable Wheel of Wellbeing in Wycheproof.

The Unbreakable Wheel, introduced to farmers and community members via the Paddock Run in Birchip, Berriwillock, Charlton, Donald, Nandaly, Wycheproof and Yeungroon, is now featured on posters and drink coasters distributed to local pubs and clubs across Buloke Shire.

Self-Assessment

It is a simple self-assessment tool created to help people reflect on key areas of their wellbeing including mental, social, financial, environmental, and vocational health as well as community belonging and relationships.

Re-launched in Wycheproof on Tuesday at the Wycheproof Royal Mail Hotel, the Unbreakable Wheel of Wellbeing encourages individuals to rate them-

selves from 1-5 to identify areas that need attention, serving as a starting point for support and self-reflection.

"This is a very important intervention as it helps keeps conversations going in familiar spaces, encouraging people to check in on themselves and others," said Terry Mathieson, proprietor Wycheproof Royal Mail Hotel.

Difficult Emotions

"Right now, some conversations in the community are retriggering difficult emotions and creating tension. This initiative provides safe, familiar spaces to normalise mental health discussions and support wellbeing in a more constructive way."

With conversation starters right at the bar, this initiative keeps mental health in focus, helping to foster stronger,

more resilient rural communities.

"This is about breaking down barriers and creating comfortable spaces where people can say, 'I'm not doing so well'—and know they're not alone," said Warren Davies.

The Unbreakable Wheel of Wellbeing can be downloaded at <https://www.theunbreakablefarmer.com.au/the-unbreakable-wheel-of-well-being>

Printed copies can also be requested by contacting Buloke Shire Council on 1300 520 520 or emailing buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au

This initiative is funded through the Australian and State Government's Community Recovery Program and proudly supported by Buloke Shire Council.



• Warren Davies, "Unbreakable Farmer", and publican, Terry Mathieson.

At BCG's Trials Review Day . . .

Maximising Farm Profitability

Managing the rising costs of production to still make a profit will be in focus at this year's BCG Trials Review Day on Friday, February 21, at Birchip.

Peter Newman, Planfarm Advisory farm business consultant based in Western Australia, will highlight how farmers can ensure long term business profitability by making strategic decisions in profitable years.

BCG members will have the exclusive opportunity to hear from Mr. Newman as he draws on his extensive experience, working with both growers and industry, to share insights on how to grow a profitable crop and achieve long-term business sustainability.

Decisions

"I'm looking forward to sharing the characteristics of successful growers and how they make decisions that position them for future success," Mr. Newman said. "First we need to look at operating efficiency and make sure that variable costs match farm income. Then we need to look at below the line costs of finance, personal and machinery. All of these costs are challenging growers at the moment."

Peter Newman has worked for 30 years in agronomy

with a focus on resistant weeds. This experience has informed his move into farm business consulting, where he aids clients near his home town of Geraldton, as well as on the Eyre Peninsula of South Australia.

Focus

Mr. Newman's presentation at Trials Review Day will focus on:

- The importance of making strategic decisions during good years to set up long-term success.
- Understanding operating efficiency, with practical

strategies to manage variable costs like labour, chemicals, fertiliser and insurance.

• Managing costs including machinery and finance repayments by ensuring they are at the right level of investment for each business.

Challenges

Mr. Newman will also address the financial pressures many growers are facing, including the challenges of rising input costs and balancing debt repayments. Attendees will gain insights into:

- The value of benchmarking their business against others, comparing performance across the top 25 per cent, average, and bottom 25 per cent of enterprises.

• Achieving strong returns on investments, including strategies like optimising nitrogen use efficiency.

"Every season comes with its challenges, but there are always opportunities to improve business performance," Newman added. "I'll be sharing practical insights to help growers navigate these complexities while maintaining a focus on long-term profitability."

Insights

BCG's Trials Review Day is a members-only event, providing growers with tools and insights to improve productivity and profitability. This year's program is tailored to support members in navigating complex financial and



• Peter Newman.

agronomic decisions in the current environment of climbing costs and unpredictable weather conditions.

Members are encouraged to RSVP on the BCG website. Become a BCG member today at bcg.org.au or contact the BCG office on (03) 5492 2787.

Community Sessions for Mineral Sands Project

DMS invites community members to the next Donald Rare Earth and Mineral Sands Project (Donald Project) community information sessions in Minyip this February.

Tiger Brown, DMS Managing Director, said the ongoing sessions are a part of the company's continued commitment to community dialogue about the Donald Project.

He said: "After the well-attended October information sessions, we're eager to continue

our conversations with the Wimmera community.

"We encourage people to join us, learn about the project, and share their views. Community feedback plays a vital role as we develop this significant project, which will deliver substantial benefits to our region."

Session Details

Minyip Senior Citizens Hall, 72 Main Street, Minyip. Wednesday, February 26, 2025. Two sessions: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m..

Community members will be able to meet with the project team, hear about the project, ask questions, and provide feedback.

GWMWater representatives will also be on hand to answer questions about water supply.

Community members can drop in at any time during the sessions.

About the Donald Project

Donald Project Pty Ltd, trading as DMS, is a joint venture between Astron Corporation Limited and US-based

critical minerals producer Energy Fuels, to develop the Donald Project in the Wimmera, about 300 kms north-west of Melbourne.

Discovered in the 1980s, the site about 15 kms north-east of Minyip, represents one of the world's largest known mineral sands deposits. It contains titanium, zircon, and rare earth elements essential for ceramics, electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and high-tech applications.

The project has a 42-year lifespan and will create more than 500 jobs, boost economic growth, and strengthen Australia's position in the global critical minerals supply chain.

After 20 years of development and more than \$100 million investment in engineering, design, land, water acquisition and environmental studies, the project is pending Victorian Government work plan approval.

Skills Training Critical to Closing National Employment Gap

[From atWork Australia]

Training is more than a pathway to employment – it's a fundamental driver of confidence, capability and career progression, and is key to enhancing an individual's ability to engage and progress in the workforce.

Employment services provider atWork Australia has identified that long term unemployment is often connected to lower education completion rates. Almost a quarter of atWork Australia's clients living with disability, injury or health condition have faced additional barriers to employment having not completed their high school education.

Therefore, there are many benefits to businesses who invest in workforce development opportunities for their people. In fact, eight in ten human resource managers believe training helps attract and retain talent, an investment that is particularly crucial at a time when businesses are facing growing skills shortages.

However, many Australians face barriers to accessing training and skills development. A report by the Australian Industry Group found that three in four (75%) businesses identify skills shortages as a significant challenge, further emphasising the need for programs that improve workforce readiness. Meanwhile, around 59% of employees report receiving no workplace training, with many stating they primarily learned skills through self-directed learning.

atWork Australia champions the importance of training as a critical investment for both clients and employers. By equipping individuals with industry-relevant skills and practical experience, training not only

The Buloke Times

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opens doors to employment but also supports businesses in securing a skilled and capable workforce.

Over the past two years, atWork Australia has supported close to 54,000 individuals with disability, injury or health condition with training to help equip them to re-enter the workforce. Many of these individuals live in regional areas, where employment options can be limited. A mix of accredited and vocational training has been facilitated, such as driving lessons, barista courses, construction induction training (white card) and language programs, through to accredited Certificate III courses including Business and Medical administration.

With rates of Australian students leaving school before the end of year 12 at a 10-year high, and almost one in five (21%) not completing their full 13 years of education, atWork Australia is doing all it can to help close the gap associated with lower education and the opportunity for employment by supporting individual to complete training.

atWork Australia client Natalie, aged 31 from North Perth, WA, knows first-hand the power of training in rebuilding confidence and securing employment. A registered nurse since 2019, Natalie's career was put on hold when she became unwell two years later.

After facing significant personal challenges, including drug and alcohol dependency and mental health challenges, she made the decision to seek treatment. After completing a residential rehabilitation program, she was determined to return to her profession.

Natalie connected with atWork Australia where she was supported to navigate the complex process of re-registering as a nurse, ensuring she could return to her profession rather than taking a job outside her field.

"It was really important to me that I wasn't pressured to take just any job," she said. "atWork Australia understood my worth and my passion for nursing, and they helped me take the right steps to return to skilled work. They listened to me and understood the importance of this after undergoing such tough times. Being knocked back from work was not easy, but they provided the support I needed."

Through a structured return-to-work program with atWork Australia, Natalie enhanced her skills by completing first aid and mental health courses, a mental health nursing study program at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), and short courses in aged and dementia care.

With renewed qualifications and confidence, Natalie secured a registered nurse role where she now works four days a week in aged care, specialising in dementia care and mental and physical health.

"Do what you are passionate about," she advises others considering training. "I never felt like I wanted to go anywhere else – nursing is my calling. My advice? Go for it."

About atWork Australia

atWork Australia offers tailored services to support individuals facing various challenges, helping them not only enter the workforces but thrive within it. These programs provide individuals with the skills, confidence and support necessary to overcome barriers and build successful careers.

To learn more about atWork Australia's services, visit: www.atworkaustralia.com.au.

Kinder Welcomes Young Learners

Birchip Kindergarten has officially commenced for the year, welcoming twenty-six children into their three- and four-year-old programs, which provide fifteen hours of free kindergarten under the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms.

The Birchip Kindergarten has eight enrolled in the four-year-old Pelican program and 18 in the three-year-old Penguin program, and all the children attend together on Wednesdays and Thursdays for 7.5 hours each day.

The programs led by the dedicated teaching team of Tracey Bennett, Emma Bennett, and Tammy Jans Ward focuses on play-based learning, social development, and school readiness, giving children a strong foundation for their future education.

Birchip has been at the forefront of the three-year-old

kindergarten program, transitioning to 15 hours per week and from 2026, Buloke will begin the transition of four-year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep.

In 2026, four-year-old kindergarten will increase to 20 hours per week, gradually transitioning to 30 hours per week by 2031.

It is going to be interesting to see the impact of these reforms, as the government looks for ways to ensure that every child gets the best possible start in life.



• Back row: Tammy Jans Wad, Noah Walder, Emma Bennett, Arli Foott, Tracey Bennett, Finn Beasley, Rudy Nottle, Knox Rumbold, Luca Haslam, Grady Bennett, Faith Walder, Anna Beasley, Angus Maatman, Felicity Coffey. Centre: Joseph McAuliffe, Harriett McLoughlan, Kiwa Taiwhanga, Lottie Lehmann, Goldie Lehmann, Jed Sheridan, Nina Wheeler. Front: Violet Lehmann, Tessa Noonan, Saffron Atkinson, Charlotte Sheridan, Eleanor Tyler, Eloise Noonan, Daisy Kemp. Absent: Artemisia Samuel.

Maintain Ground Cover to Protect Soils

Isolated dust storms recently are a reminder of how fragile some of our soils are.

They are also a good reminder there is still time to prevent this damage by de-stocking more vulnerable areas of the farm. While dust storms contain mostly mineral materials, they also contain significant quantities of organic matter, one of the most valuable components of our soils.

Wind Erosion

Leaving stock in a paddock for an extra couple of weeks to make use of remaining water supplies can be all

it takes to expose the paddock to the risk of wind erosion.

Dust storms or wind erosion occur when the speed of the wind at the soil surface exceeds the forces holding soil particles in place. Typically, soil particles exist as a small pea sized peds or aggregates.

As these peds or aggregates break down, the soil becomes more vulnerable to erosion.

Once the process of wind erosion starts it can be nearly impossible to stop, as the larger sand grains bounce and

roll across the soil surface stripping remaining vegetation and smashing (or sand blasting) the soil in front of them.

Most Vulnerable

The most vulnerable areas are those with lightly textured soils, little groundcover and shelter belts and topography that exposes them to high wind speeds. Lighter textured soils are those containing a high proportion of sand with little or no clay.

Wind erosion can start anywhere the soil has been disturbed, such as in gateways,

along tracks and around water troughs.

Ground Cover

The key to preventing wind erosion is to maintain as much ground cover as possible and avoiding disturbing the soil. Aim for 80% cover in pasture paddocks and 60% cover in crop stubbles. Ground cover also helps moderate temperature extremes in soil and retains moisture.

Maintaining good ground cover will reduce the risk of wind erosion, but will also reduce damage to pastures and assist with a faster recovery following the autumn break.

Bare soil is also more susceptible to oxidation and microbial activity that can release stored carbon as CO₂. Building the soil carbon levels back up can take years in drier climates. Soil carbon is a valuable soil resource as it improves soil structure, increases water retention and nutrient availability.

When groundcover levels are low, the only practical way to reduce the risk of wind erosion is to remove livestock to other paddocks or place stock in a stock containment area.

Further information on support available can be

found at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons, or by calling 136 186.

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Scholarship Winners

Last week, Birchip P-12 student Les Cooper and eight other Nutrien Scholarship winners were treated to a careers immersion at the Nutrien Boort branch.

Cam Mitchell, the branch manager, gave a detailed tour of the office and merchandise. Nutrien then provided an interactive careers panel which included Cam Mitchell, Teagen Welsh (Kerang manager), Sean Fitzpatrick (Agronomist) and Eliza Perryman (past scholarship winner and now Nutrien trainee). Each panel member had a diverse career journey, but they all concurred about the importance of being enthusiastic, asking questions and taking opportunities.

The day concluded with a formal ceremony where Claudia Cox (NCLLEN) and Sarah Mulligan (Nutrien) presented students with their award, which included a generous monetary amount to help them with their future studies.

Les has a strong passion for Agriculture and intends to study at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, where he will continue to develop his skills and knowledge in the field. North Central LLEN was also very lucky to speak to Les recently for one of our local legend's stories, a very worthy recipient of this award.



Swimming Sports

On Friday the 7th of February, Birchip P-12 School held its annual swimming sports competition. Despite it being a warm day for attendees, it was an enjoyable event for all involved. The day was won by Young House with 460 points, to Fraser House with 393 points. The winning cup was received by house captains Harry Cook and Keira Lowry.

Winners in the Age Group Championships were Des Coffey and Lucy Coffey in the Grade 5 and 6 division, Willow Ryan and Sienna Richmond in the 12-14 years division, Oliver Cook and Asha Lee in the 15-15 years division, and Harry Cook and Eva Coffey in the 17-29 years division. Congratulations to the students who participated on the day, and well done to the staff and students who organised the event.



• Sarah Mulligan, Les Cooper and Claudia Cox with the Nutrien Scholarship.



• House Captains for Young House Harry Cook and Keira Lowry holding the winning cup.

Student Engagement at Record Lows

Victorian students continue to disengage with their education, as new data reveals student attendance has fallen to record lows.

Released recently, data from the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services 2025 has confirmed:

* Victoria is the only state or territory where student school attendance was lower in 2024, than compared to two years prior.

* 53 per cent of Year 7 to 10 Victorian students attended school less than 90 per cent of the time.

* Only 65 per cent of students who left school in 2023 are fully engaged in work, study or a combination of both – down from 91 per cent in 2019.

* The Victorian State Government education funding per student is the second lowest in the Commonwealth.

This continued disengagement comes as the latest

NAPLAN data confirms almost 30 per cent of students are failing to meet basic standards in English and Mathematics, and overall educational outcomes are worsening relative to other states.

Shadow Minister for Education, Jess Wilson, said: "This troubling data shows the depth of student disengagement with their education under Labor.

"Whilst other states are making meaningful progress to strengthen student engagement, Victorian students continue to fall further behind.

"Less time in the classroom and within a school community means poorer educational and life outcomes, yet the Government has no plan to address this growing school attendance crisis that has occurred on their watch."

Call for Art Exhibition Entries

Organisers of Northern Grampians Shire's International Women's Day activities have called on the community to submit artwork for a special exhibition.

The exhibition will be based on UN Women Australia's theme for 2025, "March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls".

Northern Grampians Shire mayor Karen Hyslop encouraged people to submit works of art showcasing a woman they admire.

"We are inviting all members of the public, of any age, to tell us about a woman or girl they admire, and why," she said.

"This person might be a member of your family, someone in your community, a historical figure, a public figure – anyone at all."

Cr Hyslop said the artwork could be of any medium.

"It could be a painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, a

photograph – let your imagination run free," she said.

"We would also like to know why you admire the subject."

At Stawell

Stawell Library will showcase the artworks, with the exhibition's official opening to coincide with the council's International Women's Day event in Stawell.

"International Women's Day – March 8 – falls on a Saturday this year, so we will run events on different days," Cr Hyslop said.

On Wednesday, March 12, Stawell Library will host a panel activity, with guest speakers exploring the "March Forward" theme.

Admission to the event, which starts at 2 p.m. and

includes afternoon tea, is free of charge.

At St. Arnaud

Council staff are also organising an International Women's Day event at St. Arnaud on Thursday, March 6.

"We will have more details about activities soon, so for now, please save the date," Cr Hyslop said. "International Women's Day started in 1911 and involves celebrating women's achievements, raising awareness about discrimination and taking action to forge gender parity.

"Thirty years ago, in 1995, people from every part of the world committed to achieving gender equality when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by

189 governments and endorsed by thousands of activists," Cr Hyslop said.

"The Platform for Action provides a roadmap towards achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and girls everywhere.

"Northern Grampians Shire Council is proud to celebrate International Women's Day and take the opportunity to unite, network and mobilise for meaningful change."

Artwork for the "March Forward" exhibition can be submitted at Stawell Library until March 5. People can call the council's family violence prevention project officer Sandy Bevan on (03) 5358 9009 for more information about the exhibition or International Women's Day events.

St. Mary's Newest Stars!

St Mary's School, Donald, welcomed its newest students to the 2025 school year.

The six Prep students, Erik, George, Madeline, Charlotte, Jack and Percy enjoyed a smooth and exciting start into the Junior Room with their teacher Mr Andy Malcolm and fellow classmates.

Parents and extended family members attended a Mass for all students at St Mary's with the theme of "Belonging" organised by Miss Lucy McNamara on Thursday, February 6, and led by Father Gerry Prunty. Angus in Grade 3, Morrigan in Grade 4 and Quill in Grade 2 were also warmly welcomed to St Mary's, along with new staff members, Lucy McNamara and Liz McIntyre.

During the Mass, school leaders received their leadership badges and Grade 6 hoodies.

The school looks forward to seeing new faces at St. Mary's this year!



• Left to right: Erik Fritsch, Madeline Adams, Charlotte Zoch, Mr Andy Malcolm, Jack Dyer, Percy Burke and George Anderson.

"Times" Crossword

QUICK PUZZLE NO. 8164 - SOLUTIONS

Across - 1, Foreknowledge. 8, Twist. 9, Antenna. 10, Seethe. 11, Severe. 12, Ebony. 14, Fling. 18, Ignore. 20, Target. 23, Heinous. 24, Noise. 25, Pigheadedness.
Down - 1, Fetish. 2, Raise. 3, Kitchen. 4, Opal. 5, Lathe. 6, Dungeon. 7, Elated. 13, Bunting. 15, Learned. 16, Bishop. 17, Stress. 19, Rhone. 21, Grime. 22, Used.

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E-Mailers!

Contributors sending stories and photos to the "Times" via E-mail are reminded to include identifications of any people in photographs.

98 BOB BAKER

27/02/1927

Wishing you a very happy 98th birthday Dad. Thank-you for being such a great inspiration to us all.

Love you heaps, and always.
 —Cheryl, Marni, Brent, Nathan and families.

FUNERAL MULQUINY.—

Mary Veronica

Mass of Thanksgiving to celebrate the life of the late Mary Veronica MULQUINY will be held at St. Joseph's Church, 7 Learmonth Street, Charlton on WEDNESDAY (February 19th, 2025) commencing at 11.00am.

The Funeral cortege will leave at the conclusion of Mass for the Charlton Lawn Cemetery.

For Funeral details, BENDIGO FUNERALS www.smfd.com.au

BEREAVEMENT THANKS

The family of Michael Foott wishes to express deep appreciation for the love and support during the celebration of the life of Michael.

Thank-you everyone for the cards, flowers, food, offers of help, phone calls, your presence, the stories and expressions of sympathy during this difficult time. Michael would have been so touched by the love and support the family received.

Everyone's generosity means so much to us. We are grateful to have such kind people in our lives. Words cannot express our appreciation.

Special thanks to Fr. James Kerr of St Mary's Church, and Mark & Raelene O'Halloran for their guidance and care, in helping us give Michael a beautiful farewell.

—Margaret, Stephen, Vincent, Kieran, Marita and Peter and families.

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Donald Rare Earth and Mineral Sands Project (Donald Project)

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Jeffcott House Defends Swimming Title – Again

On Friday, February 7, the Donald High School Swimming Sports were held under perfect conditions for both swimmers and spectators.

Students throughout the day were eager to put their best foot forward in the pool for their annual Inter House Swimming Sports, making for some exciting viewing.

This year's competition saw Jeffcott crowned victors for the third consecutive year with a total of 319 points. Banyenong finished second with 258 points and Meyer finished third with 157.5 points. On behalf of the Coats family, Damon Coats presented the shield to Jeffcott house captains Abby Griffiths and Indy Gill.

A huge thank you must go to all the House Captains and Vice Captains this year for their excellent organisational skills and encouragement.

It was great to see a number of students competing in many events, including some competing in events they weren't confident with. Many students competed to gain extra points for their house. The spirit and attitude of these people is to be commended.

The age group champions for the day were as follows:

- Junior (12, 13 and 14 years): Samuel Mortlock and Evie Donnellon.



- Intermediate (15 and 16 years): Hugo Funcke and Alyssa Hepworth.

- Senior (17 and open): Geordie Smith and Abby Griffiths.

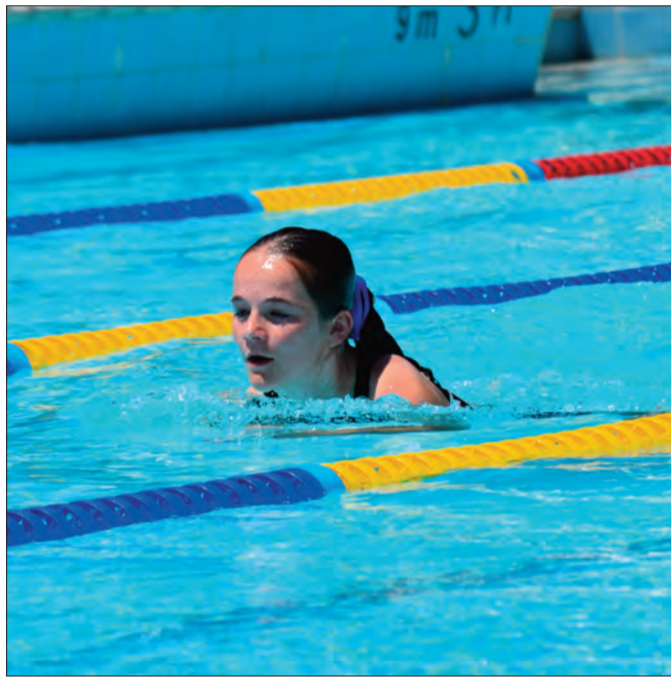


• 2025 Age Champions, right to left: Evie Donnellon (Junior Girls Champion), Alyssa Hepworth (Intermediate Girls Champion), Samuel Mortlock (Junior Boys Champion), Hugo Funcke (Intermediate Boys Champion), Abby Griffiths (Senior Girls Champion), Geordie Smith (Senior Boys Champion).

As always, all students must be commended for their participation and school spirit and thanks to those who attended to support.



• Ellie Burke in the junior freestyle.



• Evie Donnellon in the Junior girls breaststroke event.



• Patience Beavis on the starting blocks.



• Jeffcott House captains Abby Griffiths and Indy Gill receiving the Coats family trophy from Damon Coats.



• Sophie Duynhoven, Liesel Rowe, Luna Hawkes, Holly Goldsmith, Rosie Jones, Indie Goldsmith, Lucia Harris, Annabelle Manifold and Daniel Wilson with Cherie Reilly as coach.

The Future of Tennis

The Donald Lawn Tennis club has recently held beginner tennis lessons with Cherie Reilly.

The youngsters have been honing their skills on the new synthetic courts and are showing terrific improvement.

They all showed a lot of enthusiasm playing fun tennis games, learning forward and backhand skills and each night finishing up with tennis cricket and a well-deserved icy pole.

Thank you to the parent support over the 5 weeks.



Marion Will Be Missed

(Eulogy by Gary Weir)

Marion Bayles passed away on Tuesday, February 4, 2025. Her funeral was on Friday, February 7, 2025.

A daughter of the late Bob and Audry Davison, Marion was born at the Donald Bush Nursing Hospital on March 18, 1948. She was the elder sister to Beth Weir and the late Robert Davison and the siblings grew up on the farm "Walkato", at North Laen.

Marion received her formal education at Litchfield Primary and Donald High School. In 1956, the big wet saw roads out at North Laen impassable by cars or trucks. "Rolly" the resident horse was put to use, harnessed up to gig and driven to and from school by Marion.

After completing her education, she commenced employment at Les Pearce's garage, pumping petrol and some book work, then moved to the Shire of Donald under Mr Smale and Kath O'Connell, then later under Tom Bowles and Kath O'Connell.

Marion was married in 1972, but sadly widowed after 12 months. She married again in 1974 to husband Brian and together they raised a family of 4; Sarah, Rebecca, Joanne, and Andrew.

Family Day Care

During her marriage to Brian, Marion became involved in family day care, where over a number of years, she cared for over 100

pre-schoolers in her home; a time she loved very much.

Her next endeavour was as a carer at the J.G. Homes where "activities" was her favourite role. She adopted many characters in her quest to entertain residents – she was the Queen on the Queen's birthday, the Easter Bunny at Easter and various other roles.

On one occasion, she took a bus load of residents for a drive.

"A wonderful trip", the residents said. "Where did you go?" They were asked. "To the top of Mount Jeffcott", was the reply. Marion then found out that she was not supposed to take the community bus off the bitumen. That, of course, was Marion.

She was involved with the Donald Uniting Church, being an Elder, Congregation Secretary and even the cleaner at one stage, and was a regular attender until recently.

Hockey

Hockey played a major role in Marion's life. She was a foundation member of the Donald Hockey Club and played in numerous premier-ship teams. She had the pleasure of playing with her three daughters and sister Beth against Andrew and was awarded life membership, twice! She became one of the

instigators of "Vic Gold", a team drawn from country Victoria which competed in Masters Games. She played in Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney and Geelong, winning a swag of gold medals.

P.F.A. was big in Marion's younger days. She and friend Ruth Feeny produced a "scandal sheet" under the name "Zippy and Cassius". "Zippy" because Ruth had a dress with a zipper right down the front and "Cassius" because Marion could flatten anyone who disagreed with them.

Marion was one of the organisers of the "Pink Ribbon" morning teas, which had raised about \$10,000 for the Cancer Council during her time of involvement. She was also a regular blood donor, not quite reaching 100 donations due to her medication change.

Marion was an avid reader with a passageway full of bookcases, which were always full, arranged in authors in alphabetical order. She exchanged letters and cards with a pen friend in Nova Scotia, Canada, for many years; a card arriving just last week.

Girl Guides

Another interest was Guiding. Marion started as a Girl Guide, then became a Guide leader for years with Pamela Barber, and obtained her Queen's Guide Award.

Sewing was another hobby. Sewing clothes for the family, patchworking, making "throw overs" and even Deb dresses, such was her skill with a sewing machine.

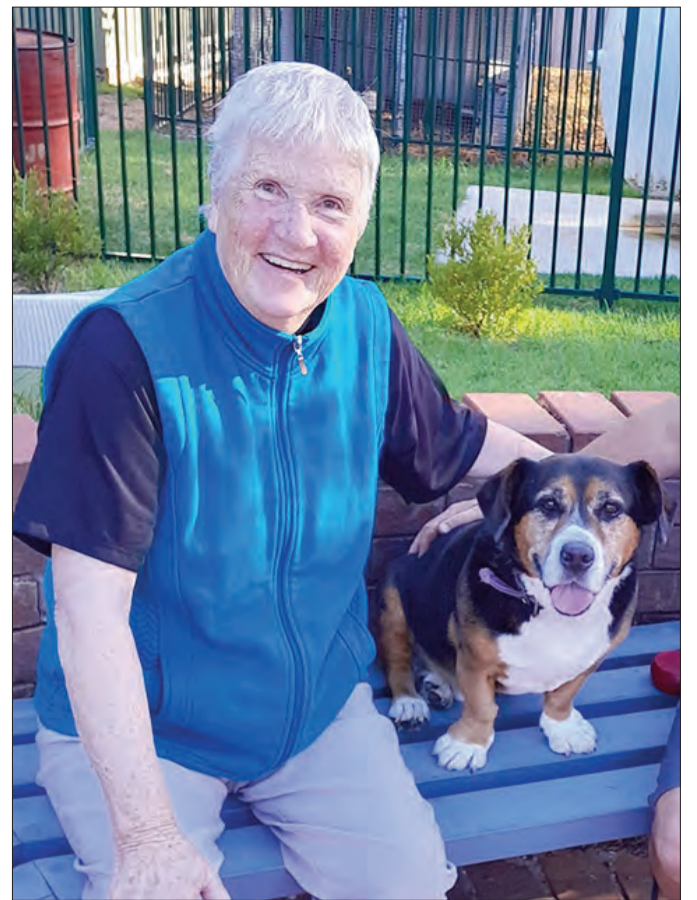
At home, gardening took up any spare time she had and she also had a great love of her pets. Many may have heard her talking about beagle "Boots" in the later years.

Citizen of the Year

In 2011 Marion was awarded Donald's Citizen of the Year for her outstanding service to the community. It took husband Brian another 14 years before he could match the honour.

Holidays were fun times. When the kids were little, camping was the go, up the Murray or Lake Charm in the colourful tent that Marion painted with jungle scenes. Then Ocean Grove, where Marion's grandmother had a house was a popular destination. After the kids had grown up, Marion and Brian ventured to Norfolk Island, New Zealand, seven trips to Tasmania where Rebecca was living and teaching, Kangaroo Island, the Flinders Ranges were among the enjoyed destinations.

The Great Victorian Bike Ride was just another activity this very active lady took on.



• The late Marion Bayles with "Boots".

She did the ride on several occasions.

Dementia wasn't planned in retirement. It affects people in different ways... Husband Brian was tasked with checking the pot plants at the Bowls Club to make sure they were watered. He took Marion with him. He checked the first one ok, the second, ok, the fourth, ok. Marion had followed along and said, "What do you want me to do with this?" Brian looked around to see Marion standing there with the plant from the first pot in her hand.

Having been diagnosed in 2018, Marion was cared for by Brian at home until 2022 when she became a permanent resident of Johnson Goodwin Village, where she received wonderful care and support from the marvellous staff and management until her passing.

Marion was a Donald girl through and through. She had a huge heart which she opened up to many around town and through her contributions. Most of all, she was a loving wife, mother, grandmother and friend. She will be missed.

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Self-Defence and Healthy Eating Sessions: Active Youth Program

Once again, the Mallee Sports Assembly in conjunction with the Birchip P-12 School is conducting another four week program for the Year 9 students, supported by VicHealth under the “Regional Sport Program”.

This program has been designed from the information collected from a survey conducted by the Mallee Sports Assembly for these students. The survey identifies what the students want for their sessions/workshops. The first week (Wednesday, February 5, 2025) was as follows:

Self Defence Session

This session was facilitated by the very experienced and qualified instructor Phill Zdybel of Donald. Rhonda Allan of the Mallee Sports Assembly introduced Phill and thanked him for supporting the Active Youth Program for the Birchip P-12 School. Phill’s credentials are as follows:

- High Performance Coach (Dip Sports Coaching).
- Dip Business (Marketing).
- Cert IV T&A.

- V Degree, International Instructor & Examiner ICC – 17041 (ITF).

- Multiple State and National Champion ITF & WT.

- 7 x World Championship Medallist and 7x Australian Representative at ITF World Championships, National Coach 2018 and ’22.

- ITF Hall of Fame Inductee 2020 International Ambassador.

During the session Phill showed the students the different and correct moves for self-defence. There was plenty of noise and laughter during the session and the students enjoyed this beneficial and energetic activity. Self-defence is a handy skill to have, an alternative way to keep your body fit and alert especially when you visit larger cities when you just don’t know what’s around “the corner”. A big thank you

to Phill for visiting the school and sharing his skills.

Healthy Eating

This session was facilitated by Stacey Keller of the East Wimmera Health Service.

Stacey delivered a very interesting and informative session, including information on the five food groups that are required for a healthy diet and to drink plenty of water. Stacey had handouts on this information so the students could take home to follow. This session was complemented with an informative power point presentation. To conclude the session, all the students had the opportunity to make their own healthy smoothies on the smoothie bike. The smoothies included fresh fruits plus low-fat yoghurt/milk. It was a fun way to make a healthy treat while exercising on the bike.

Rhonda Allan thanked Stacey and the East Wimmera Health Service for the support to the Active Youth Program for the Birchip P-12 School – very much appreciated.



• Qualified Martial Arts instructor Phill Zdybel (far left) with the Year 9 students.



• Stacey Keller from the Eat Wimmera Health Service (back left, standing) speaking to the students of “Healthy Eating”.



• Esther Bourke (left) and Anieka Boyle having fun during the Self Defence session.



• Asha Lee on the “Smoothie” bike.

For Bushfire Affected Victorians . . . More Support Needed

The Grampians – Wallaby Rocks and Little Desert bushfires, which ignited on December 17, 2024 and intensified on January 27, 2025, have now been contained thanks to extensive fire-fighting efforts.

While conditions remain challenging, the focus is shifting from emergency response to emergency recovery, but farmers and small businesses in the region are still waiting to hear if assistance will be forthcoming.

Shadow Emergency Management Minister, Perin Davey, has called on the Victorian and Federal Government to fast-track assessment to expand Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) for small business and primary producers.

“Western Victoria has endured immense challenges, with continued uncertainty and financial hardship.

“Immediate support for councils and evacuation centres have been rolled out, but the expanded support for farmers and tourism operators is waiting on State Government assessment.

“In Australia at the moment, we are seeing the tale of two disasters with businesses in far north Queensland eligible for Disaster Assistance Loans, while businesses in western Victoria are still waiting,” Senator Davey said.

The fires burnt over 230,000 hectares across the regions, causing significant damage, including the loss of several homes, outbuildings, livestock, and wildlife, with lasting impacts on local agriculture and tourism.

“It is vital that both state and federal governments act quickly to restore confidence and support these devastated communities,” said Senator Davey.

Impact

Member for Mallee, Dr Anne Webster MP, has been raising concerns about the crippling financial impact on tourism-dependent communities.

“The impact of these fires on Mallee communities is devastating, not just in terms of property loss but also the long-term damage to local economies.

Halls Gap alone has lost an estimated \$21 million in tourism revenue, with the region conservatively estimated to suffer a further \$19 million hit in flow-on costs.

“While some other disaster affected areas of the country have already received critical disaster assistance, local Mallee communities are still waiting due to Government inaction. The Victorian and Federal Government must fast-track support for our farmers and tourism operators before it’s too late.” Dr Webster said.



• Anne Webster.

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 Enquiries: Rev’d Judi Bird
 0435 593 359

Friday, February 14
 St. Paul’s, Birchip, 5 p.m.

Sunday, February 16
 St. Martin’s, Charlton, 9 a.m.
 St. George’s, Donald, 11 a.m.
 Holy Trinity, W’burn, 3 p.m.

Records Are Made To Be Broken

(By "The Joker In The Pack")

500 is recognised as Australia's favourite card game. It seems that anyone who has ever sat down with a group of people at a card table knows the basics of 500.

Its popularity no doubt stems from its Goldilocks level of complexity – certainly not too simple and importantly, not too convoluted. All of which earns it a 5 Star rating at the Donald Senior Citizens' Club on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons.

There needs to be an element of competition for any game to be successful and our 500 games are no exception. And although winning at all costs is actively discouraged, in equal measure neither is losing positively encouraged. Laughing at one's own mistakes (which are more common than we/I care to admit to) is balanced by laughing along with partners and opposition alike when they commit their own faux pas. All of which adds up to fairly regular peals of laughter.

But this is not to detract from the fact that we boast some expert, savvy players who bid and play straight from the strategist's playbook.

Be In It

We know there are many skilled and not-so skilled 500 players out there looking for a game, who have yet to grace our tables – so why not come along and join us? The card game really acts as a backdrop to the socialising that participation promotes and the banter that accompanies the play is first class. We have assembled an extremely friendly group of people who focus firmly on the fun aspect of play. Drop in on any game day – start time 1:30 p.m..

Competitions

In line with the fun aspect we have 2 parallel competitions to vie for when playing 500. The first is for the lowest ranking worst hand and the second is for the worst kitty. And keep in mind that the game destroying Misere bid is prohibited and that the Ace,

although it has only 1 pip, is still a high card. Additionally, the 4 player variant is the most popular and most played and that the very worst hand in this variant would still yield 52 pips (2 x 4s, 4 x 5s and 4 x 6s). The examples cited come only from either the 5 or 6 player variants.

Dale Funcke still holds his long-standing record for the worst 6 player hand – 52 pips in total and yes, Dale, we are not about to forget that you won a trick with this hand mainly because you're not about to let us forget.

Martyn Moffat, Jenny Dennis's brother-in-law, who was visiting from Canberra staked his claim to immortality with 47 pips in the 5 player variant. Not to be outdone, Bruce Hunt dealt himself 43 pips in the 5 player variant on the very first deal one afternoon – just plain clever! Barry Hepworth then equalled Martyn's 47 pips which was again equalled by Joan Wood on the very last hand of 2024, only to be trumped again in the new year by Bruce with a spectacularly pathetic 38 pips.

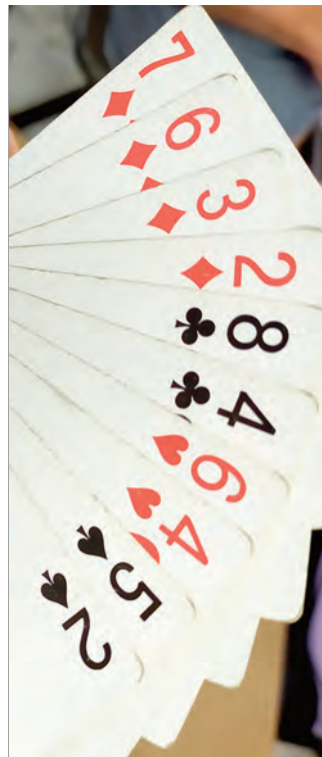
Meanwhile Barry bettered his previous impressive pick up from kitty with a lowly 2, 3, 3!

The "whinge and win" catchcry is often heard because it seems that everyone gets rotten cards all the time, but the conundrum is that there always seems to be a winner.

Incidentally, we were paid a visit by our new police-woman, Sarah, who introduced herself in a wonderful example of community policing. Very much appreciated, Sarah! And by way of acknowledgement some of us elderly recidivist offenders have promised to cease criminal activity for the duration of your Donald posting.



• Barry Hand 47 pips.



• Martyn Hand 47 pips.



• Barry Kitty 2, 3, 3.



• Bruce Best Hand 38 pips.



• Joan Hand 47 pips.

Early Intervention Support... MASP Welcomes Federal Funding

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program (MASP) welcomes the Australian Government's additional funding for three early intervention support services for men, including those who perpetrate or experience family and domestic violence.

Under the funding, "No to Violence" will receive an additional \$1.89 million from 2024-25 to 2025-26 for the Men's Referral Service and the Brief Intervention Service, and Lifeline Australia will receive an additional \$800,000 in 2024-25 for MensLine Australia.

MASP Acting CEO Charmaine Calis said early intervention in family violence plays a key role in preventing men from escalating their behaviour.

"Prevention is always better than cure, which is why it is good to see these national programs receive more fund-

ing in order to protect victim-survivors from immediate and long-term harm," she said.

"MASP staff see the impacts of family and domestic violence every day and the significant impact this has on those within our communities. Everybody has the right to feel safe and secure and we

want to see a world where this is the case."

For more information on MASP's Family Safety Programs in North West Victoria and South West New South Wales and how to access them, go to www.masp.org.au/how-we-help/family-safety/

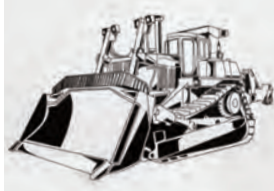


• Bruce Hand 43 Pips

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• An example of a large wooden structure used to improve fish habitats.

To Improve Fish Habitat... Catch A Grant

Victoria's world-class marine, estuarine and freshwater fisheries will continue to flourish into the future with more fish habitat thanks to the second round of a \$2.5 million grants program.

Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) CEO Travis Dowling said the Victorian Government's \$96m investment to improve fishing, boating, piers and aquaculture was backing round two of the Fish Habitat Improvement Fund, which enables the installation of habitat so fish can rest, feed and breed as well as boosting the health of aquatic ecosystems.

"We know improving fish habitat makes a real difference to our fisheries and aquatic ecosystems long-term and we encourage eligible groups and organisations to apply for a grant," he said.

The grants are available through two funding streams – one open year-round to projects from recreational fishing groups for up to \$50,000, and funding for larger scale projects for up to \$200,000 where co-investment is required.

It continues a proud history of fish habitat projects like the installation of kingfish reefs in Port Phillip, shellfish reef restoration, and rocky reef modules in Corio Bay.

Partnership

Among the projects funded through round one of the grants program was a partner-

ship with the Australian Trout Foundation to invest \$49,000 into in-stream and streamside habitat in the Ovens River near Bright, complementing previous habitat improvement above and below this stretch of river.

In Port Phillip, the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club led a large-scale project to build Kayakers Reef, a structure that will provide homes for shellfish and structure for popular recreational species like snapper, King George whiting and calamari.

More Structures

The \$200,000 project will deploy more structures into the water once they are seeded with native oysters, helping to restore lost shellfish reefs once abundant in Port Phillip. The triangle and tower structures are easily accessible for kayak and small

boat fishers wetting a line in our iconic bay, which has been net-free since 2022.

In a further boost to the environment, many habitat projects make use of recycled or re-used materials, such as oyster and mussel shells from restaurants and timber salvaged from storm damage or roadworks.

Organisations eligible to apply for the grants include catchment management authorities, local, regional and statewide fishing bodies, councils, water authorities, traditional owner groups and land councils and community organisations.

Applications for both funding streams are open now, with the larger-scale stream two grants closing on Friday, May 2. For more information, head to www.vfa.vic.gov.au/fishhabitatfund

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Speaker: Laurie Pearse
Baptist Union of Victoria

TCV is seeking input into the development of workforce accommodation for VNI West



We are undertaking a public Expression of Interest process to identify land available for lease, and we want to understand the interests, concerns and questions that communities have in relation to our workforce accommodation approach.

We want to hear from you!

The TCV workforce accommodation web portal will enable people to share feedback on our approach to developing accommodation, and how to reach our team for more information.

We understand that many areas in the VNI West project corridor face housing availability and affordability challenges. TCV is committed to delivering long term housing benefits for local communities impacted by VNI West.

The input we receive via the online portal will inform work underway with the VNI West Social Value Reference Group to understand how we can develop the project in a way that meets local needs and creates long term, permanent housing solutions.

Visit the workforce accommodation portal on the TCV website at: www.transmissionvictoria.com.au/about-vni-west/vni-west-workforce-accommodation

Expression of Interest

In parallel with determining permanent housing solutions, TCV is seeking sites suitable for:

- Temporary workforce accommodation – up to three sites of about 12 hectares each to accommodate between 200 and 300 people each at peak construction;
- Construction laydown areas – up to eight sites of about 5 hectares each; or
- Combined accommodation and laydown area sites.

We are committed to providing landholders with a fair and transparent leasing arrangement that reflects true value and opportunities for use.

Properties that express interest will be assessed as part of the VNI West EES and appropriate options for accommodation and laydowns identified by April 2025. This is an opportunity for landholders with properties they believe may be suitable to express their interest in their site being assessed, with a view to entering into a lease agreement for the site's use.

Expression of Interest responses close 28 February.

Visit www.transmissionvictoria.com.au/about-vni-west/vni-west-workforce-accommodation or scan the QR code to the right.



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Birchip Bowlers' Mixed Fortunes

Birchip bowlers had mixed results on Saturday in the first round of the Tyrrell Bowls finals, with Grey proceeding to the grand final via the short route and Maroons bowing out by the narrowest of margins.

Birchip Maroons took on Berriwillock at Sea Lake in the first semi-final of Tyrrell bowls. Both sides were well matched, which meant the pressure was on from the start.

The first contest saw Wayne Clark, Greg Martin, "Sauce" Hogan and Rhonda Cooper take on the Trevor Emerson-led team. The Maroons were in control early and found themselves six shots up at the break. However, Berriwillock to its credit, bounced back after lunch winning seven of the next eight ends to lead by six shots, with the pointy end of the match still to come. Cream always rises to the top and it was "Sauce" who helped the Birchip team to win two big ends and level up the score. The result came down to the last end, which Maroons won to get up by one shot (22-21).

Andrew Lee, Tony Doran, Darren Barker and Peter Gould found themselves up against "Blue" Wight's boys. "Blue" has been in great form himself of late but "Eddie" sharpened his elbows and was always up for the fight. The contest was tight from the start with the lead changing regularly and scores were tied at lunch. The Maroons came out a different team after the break and stretched the margin out to ten shots at one stage and after the 25th end, they found themselves eight shots up (27-19)

Kevin Reid, Joe Reid, Trevor "Waffle" Grogan and Glen Trollope took on the consistent Peter Brook team. The Maroons jumped out of the blocks and had seven shots before their opposition had troubled the scorers. The "Berri" boys eventually hit their straps though, and from then on they took control of the match. They were ten up at the halfway mark and stretched that out to a thirteen-shot victory (30-17), which was enough to see Berriwillock win overall by four shots. They will now take on Sea Lake in the preliminary final tomorrow at Birchip.

Grey's Day Out

Division 1: A good win by the Des Ryan-skippered team against Rick Stacey's was the key to the Division 1 win by Grey as Liam Scott, Nick Noonan, Owen Reid and Des all bowled well to win 29 to 14. Mark Bowen's team with Grant Cartwright, Mick Spicer and Jennifer Blainey, also had a nice win against Adam Louitt's team, ahead 22 to 19 at the end of play. In the final game, Sea Lake turned the table with Noel Watson's

team that included Carol Watson, Jennifer Simpson and Paddy Smith defeating Richard Haddrick's team of Roger Bragg, Bryan Hogan and Kevin Donnellon, 24 to 20. Grey was the overall winner, 71 (10) to 57 (2), and will await to see the winner of tomorrow's match to see who it will meet in the grand final next week.

Division 2 was much closer but again it was Grey which was the winner on the day. Carolyn Reid's team with Robert Ince, Pauline Bragg and Lesley Whitting fell 6 shots short, against Julie Wight, Coby Wight, Karen Schodde and Harry Wight, but team 2, skippered by Moya Connelly, made up the deficit, keeping its finals dreams alive. Together with Les Blair, Stan Fraser and Geoff Smith, Moya's team played well against Berriwillock neighbours Ian Summerhayes, Athol Ingram, Russell Trollope and Maureen Trollope to win 28 to 19, giving Grey an overall 46 to 43 win.

Scribe's Observations

- Good to see Birchip Grey take the short route to the Grand Final. Division 2 won as well and will play Quamby in the preliminary.

- Locals have been playing a few neighbouring tournaments recently, and it's great to be supporting the other clubs. One carload went to Ouyen and another to Woomelang last Sunday.

- "Frogga" volunteered his mail run car to travel to the Woomelang tournament, but then he wanted stop at every mailbox to see if there was any outgoing mail to pick up. "YouGottaBeUp"



• Moya Connelly delivers her bowl.



• Players and spectators casting an eye over the finals matches.



• John Watson, Kevin and Joe Reid.



• Trevor "Waffle" Grogan.

Birchip Pennant Teams

Birchip Grey to play Quambatook, at Birchip 1.00 p.m., February 15, 2025, preliminary final.

Division Two

L. Blair, S. Fraser, M. Conolly, P. Hogan (s)
G. Smith, P. Bragg, R. Ince, C. Reid (s)

Emergency: L. Whitting.

Meet at 12.30 p.m.. Afternoon tea please.

North-Central Pennant Bowls

This Week's Selected Club Teams



DIVISION ONE

Semi-Final, Saturday, February 15

St. Arnaud v. Donald Golf
DONALD GOLF

W. Livingston, G. Geddes, A. Humprey, D. Pettifer (s)
M. Frank, R. Adams, R. Reseigh, G. Rigby (s)
G. Stopps, B. Murray, S. Hollis, P. Hibberd (s)
Cars: Livingston, Rigby, Murray. Leave 12.20 p.m.
Emergency: O'Shea.

ST. ARNAUD
Teams not available

DIVISION TWO

Semi-Final, Saturday, February 15

St. Arnaud Country Club v. St. Arnaud
ST. ARNAUD COUNTY CLUB

L. Watkins, C. Webb, K. Meade, J. Needs (s)
B. Medlyn, G. Shaw, N. Robinson, A. Bond (s)
G. White, S. Atkinson, P. Mullins, P. Elliott (s)
Cards: G. White. Manager: J. Needs.
Emergencies: Pole, Coloe, Bales.

ST. ARNAUD
Teams not available

Support services

Adult

Lifeline: 13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14
lifeline.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
suicidcalbackservice.org.au
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
beyondblue.org.au/forums
MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
mensline.org.au
StandBy Support After Suicide
1300 727 247

Youth

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
kidshelpline.com.au
headspace: 1800 650 890
headspace.org.au
ReachOut: ReachOut.com

Other resources

Head to Health: mental health portal
headtohealth.gov.au
Life in Mind: suicide prevention portal
lifeinmindaustralia.com.au
SANE: 1800 187 263 (10am-10pm)
online forums: saneforums.org
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: 13YARN.org.au or 13 92 76
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex: 1800 184 527 qlife.org.au
Culturally and linguistically diverse: embracementalhealth.org.au

Camera at the Cricket



• Birchip batter Rylee Smith 86 runs and 3/16 St Mary's wicketkeeper Daniel Westerland, square leg umpire James Paley.



• Birchip bowler Jonty Randall in full flight 4/15. – Photo Blake Lee.



• Charlton's Billy Sexton flicks this shot legside on his way to top score for Charlton with 29 runs.



• Charlton's Cooper Boyle (3/40) bowls to Ryan Bath. The umpire is Glenn Pearse.



• Ryan Bath bowls down this delivery which resulted in his fourth wicket, ending with bowling figures of 4/6 (2) and also made 82 runs with the bat. The umpire is Patrick Sait, and Charlton's non-striking batter is Angus Johnstone who finished on 12 not out.



• Nick Toscano is dismissed by a strong delivery from Rylee Smith – Photo Blake Lee..

Field and Game Memorial Shoot

Donald Field and Game is back at it for 2025, and what a weekend to start off the year of shooting.

It was a warm one! Starting an hour earlier and setting stands up amongst the trees made the day a little more enjoyable for the 48 shooters.

means 150 out of 150 clays smashed! Keep an eye on Donald and Minyip FG's Facebook pages for updates.

memberships will be up for renewal by March 31.

It is hoped to see all of you shooters at the Poachers' Weekend.

Field and Game Australia

February is the club's Memorial Shoot, to formally remember Doug "Blue" Sellick, Colin Frankling, David Falla, David Pearce, Gladys Elsom and Paddy Bloomfield.

Thank you to the Sellick family, the Elsom family and McKenzie Transport for sponsoring the day and their continued support of the club. Thank you to the kitchen volunteers for brightening shooters' day with a smile and food!

Congratulations to Doug Longmuir who secured Highgun after a shoot off, beating Geoff Newell and Roy Schram. All other tied scores were decided on count back due to the extreme heat.

High Gun: Doug Longmuir (Minyip) – 64.

AA: 1st Geoff Newell (Minyip) – 64, 2nd Roy Schram (Grampians) – 64.

A: 1st Stephen Krause (Minyip) – 63, 2nd Nicholas Petrie (Donald) – 60.

B: 1st Adam McKenzie (Minyip) – 59, 2nd David Elsom (Donald) – 56.

C: 1st Tom Manifold (Donald) – 51, 2nd Jason Giddings (Donald) – 49.

All other results include handicap:

Ladies: 1st Katrina Fallon (Minyip) – 72, 2nd Mia Chace (Ararat-Stawell) – 68.

Veterans: 1st Ken Schurmann (Minyip) – 69, 2nd Lyle Streeter (Dunolly) – 67.

Juniors: 1st Ben Krause (Minyip) – 67, 2nd Brendan Winter (Donald) – 55.

Poachers Weekend

Next shoot is Poachers' Weekend; Donald and Minyip's combined major Field and Game event for the year. This year Poachers will be Saturday, March 1, in Donald and Sunday, March 2, in Minyip. Massive weekend, lots of prizes available including a 40L Engel Fridge as the overall lucky door prize valued at \$1500. New this year, a cash prize of \$2000 awarded to any shooter who cleans up both days; that



• Sponsor David Elsom (busting the photo snapper) with Peter Chace shooting, with daughter Mia Chace watching on.

Donald Back in Tennis Top Four

Donald has re-entered the top four on the NCLTA ladder with a narrow win over Nullawil at Nullawil on Saturday.

Even though the final 8-2 scoreline in favour of Donald appeared to be rather lopsided, this really didn't reflect the closeness of the match, with only six games separating the two sides at the finish. Donald trailed for much of the day until a strong performance in the mixed section saw the away team storm home and finish with a narrow victory.

Men's

In the men's section, Donald won five of the seven sets played. Derek Hollis and Richard Reilly kicked off a strong start to the day for Donald by defeating Daniel Watts and Tony Bartram 8-5, while Mark Mortlock and Joe Melino defeated Dianne Wayman and Jacob Bath 8-4. Derek and Mark followed up their first set win with an 8-4 victory over Daniel and Dianne, while Richard and Joe defeated Tony and Jacob 8-5. In the lower men's section Braxton Hollis and Samuel Mortlock defeated Taya Bartram and Jessie Fawcett 8-6. Taya struck back in her second set when in combination with Dane Bartram, defeated Max Reilly and Myles Hollis 8-2. Dane also had a win in his second set by combining with Jessie to defeat Samuel and Myles 8-4. The final score in the men's section was Donald 46 games (2 points) to Nullawil's 38 games. (0 points)

Women's

In the women's section, Nullawil turned the tables, winning five of the seven sets played. In the top women's section, Melissa Gilchrist and Georgia Sheahan defeated Annabel Melino and Stuart Potter 8-5. Mother and son combination, Cherie and Jack Reilly, defeated Di Sheahan and Ella Sheahan in a tiebreaker (8-7). Jack won his second set when he and Stuart defeated Georgia and Ella

Sheahan 8-5, Melissa and Di defeated Annabel and Cherie 8-1. In the bottom women's section Meaghan King and Katie Gillahan lost to Nullawil's Marcia Pollington and Tessa Sheahan 8-2. Marcia followed this up with another solid win – this time combining with Lana Fawcett to defeat Meaghan and Carmel Lowry 8-2. Tessa and Lana won their second set by defeating Katie and Carmel 8-3. The final score in the women's section was a 23-game win to Nullawil. Nullawil 52 games (2 points) defeated Donald 29 games. (0 points).

Mixed

With a 15 game deficit going into the mixed, Donald was in danger of not only losing the match, but also was facing the possibility of dropping a vital match that would jeopardise its finals hopes. Derek Hollis and Annabel Melino started the section with a narrow 8-7 win against Daniel Watts and Melissa Gilchrist. Tony Bartram and Georgia Sheahan had a very good 8-1 win over Richard and Cherie Reilly; however, this was matched by Mark Mortlock and Stuart Potter who defeated Dianne Wayman and Di Sheahan 8-1. Jack Reilly and Joe Melino won their third sets of the day by defeating Jacob Bath and Ella Sheahan 8-4. Meaghan King and Braxton Hollis defeated Taya Bartram and Marcia Pollington 8-1, while Samuel Mortlock and Katie Gillahan dominated their match against Dane Bartram and Tessa Sheahan. Max Reilly and Carmel Lowry finished off the day by winning 8-6 against Marg. Pollington and Lana Fawcett. The overall final scores for the mixed section were 49 games (2 points) to Donald and 28 games (0 points) to Nullawil.

The final match scores were Donald 8 points (124

games) defeating Nullawil 2 points (118 games).

Three set winners for Donald were Derek Hollis, Mark Mortlock, Jack Reilly and Joe Melino, while Braxton Hollis won both of his two sets played.

This coming Saturday, Donald is at home to Wycheproof. Could all Donald players please be at the courts by 1 p.m. at the latest ready for a 1.15 p.m. start. Afternoon tea please.

Tournament

It's now only four weeks until the Donald Lawn Tennis club's 71st Labour Day Weekend tournament.

Entries for the tournament on the 8th, 9th and 10th of March, 2025, are now open. The 2025 entry form (both in PDF and Excel form) can be found on the tennis club's website at www.donaldtennis.com.au, as well as a link that will take you to an online entry form via Tennis Victoria's website. It is preferred that players enter via this link if possible.

Singles, doubles and mixed doubles are again all on offer with competitions in a range of grades from Open right through to 13-and-under events. The club also has a new event – an U10s competition under the auspices of Tennis Victoria. Once again the Veterans' Doubles event (for all those over 40) – is again being held. The Veterans event will be a "rotating partner" format, with the overall winners being determined on number of games won overall.

Entries close on Thursday March 6, 2025, in order for draws to be constructed before play begins on the Saturday. It is hoped to see plenty of returning and new players entering this long-running tournament.



• C grade winners: Tom Manifold and Jason Giddings – go Donald!



• Shoot off for Highgun with Doug Longmuir in the stand.

The NCLTA ladder after Round 11 is as follows:

	Total pts	Games For	Games Against	%
Wirrim	76	1034	860	120.23%
St Arnaud	73	1150	903	127.35%
Kara Kara	71	1126	967	116.44%
Donald	54	1169	1192	98.07%
Charlton	54	891	939	94.89%
Birchip	52	976	935	104.39%
Nullawil	46	1001	1056	94.79%
Wycheproof	14	676	1171	57.73%



• Members of Wycheproof, Donald Golf, Wedderburn and St. Arnaud contested the second semi-finals, played at the Boort Bowling Club.

Donald Golf Into Grand Final

North Central Playing Area's midweek pennant semi-finals were contested at Boort on Tuesday, with Donald Golf defeating Wycheproof by 11 shots to advance to the season's grand final, to be played at Boort on Tuesday, February 25.

In the other semi-final, Wedderburn comprehensively accounted for St. Arnaud, and will now meet Wycheproof in the preliminary final, to be played at St. Arnaud next Tuesday.

Boort is to be congratulated on the manner in which it presented its synthetic green and club facilities, and its generous hospitality hosting semi-final day.

Donald Golf led from very early in its semi-final, with Wycheproof continually striving to reduce the deficit.

Geoff Rigby led his rink superbly and repeatedly saved

the end with his precision bowls to thwart the best efforts of Dale Groves and his team.

At the half-way mark, Golf held a 14-shot advantage, in front on two of the three rinks, the Rigby and Peter Hibberd combinations leading the way.

Despite Wyche.'s best efforts, Golf continued to hold its opposition at bay, eventually winning all three rinks by a combined margin of 11 shots.

Geoff Rigby's rink was able to avert a potential disaster, after a second half fight back by the Dale Groves combination, to win by the narrowest of margins.

Peter Hibberd's rink answered a searching challenge from Jono Grylls's combo, and after the gap was closed to a couple of shots, eventually won out by 7.

Shane O'Shea's rink trailed narrowly at the half-way break against Matt Nicholls, but fought back well to gain the lead and eventually prevail by 3 shots.

Wedderburn dominated its semi-final against St. Arnaud from start to finish, and carried the day by 44 shots.

Alan Jackson's rink made life extremely uncomfortable for Lloyd Goddard, only conceding 9 shots whilst racking up 33 of its own.

Laurie Witham's team, which also scored 33 shots, enjoyed a big winning margin of 14 shots over Phil McRae, while Andrew Caserta's rink won by the narrower margin of 6 shots, but was always in control.

Details:

Wycheproof 62 lost to Donald Golf 73.

Cheryl Rayes, Lynette Nicholls, Alan Jones, Dale Groves (s) 21 lost to Colleen Raynes, Marilyn Frank, Joyce Hollis, Geoff Rigby (s) 22.

Andrea Coatsworth, Shirley McKenna, Aaron Mead, Matt Nicholls (s) 18 lost to Corozon Stopps, Shirley Evans, Robert Re-seigh, Shane O'Shea (s) 21.

Carol Jones, Des Nicholls, Jeannie Grylls, Jono Grylls (s) 23 lost to Bill Livingston, Sue Donnellon, Brenda Dixon, Peter Hibberd (s) 30.

Wedderburn 92 d. St. Arnaud 48.

Robina Little, Sandra Standfield, Amy Roberts, Laurie Witham (s) 33 d. Andrea Tyler, Diane Ostarcevic, John Prendergast, Phil McRae (s) 19.

Lance Standfield, Judy Matthews, Sandra Steel, Alan Jackson (s) 33 d. Heather Stevenson, Margaret McIntyre, Laurence Goodwin, Lloyd Goddard (s) 9.

Helen Stephenson, Joan Murnane, Ruth Hall, Andrew Caserta (s) 26 d. Anne McNally, Margaret McRae, Paul Micallef, Allan Welsh (s) 20.



• Helen Stephenson delivers her bowl. Watching on is Margaret McRae. In the background are Robina Little, Alan Jackson and Andrea Tyler.



• Sue Donnellon from Donald Golf delivers her bowl. Watching on are Des Nicholls, Carol Jones and Bill Livingston.



• Charlton Bowling Club's singles champion, Lynne Southwell.

Mother and Son to Play Champion of Champions

Charlton Bowling Club Singles Champion for 2024/25, Wayne Southwell, will play Champion of Champions on February 16th at Wycheproof.

Wayne's mother, Lynne Southwell, has won Charlton Ladies Singles Championship for 2024/25 defeating Eily Rosewall and Wendy Laffin in a round robin play down.

Lynne will travel to Wycheproof to compete in the Ladies Champion of Champions.

Congratulations to you both on attaining this accolade for the first time, and maybe not the last.

Church Notices

DISTRICT CATHOLIC CHURCHES

"East Wimmera Parish"

Birchip	8.30 a.m.
Boort	10.30 a.m.
(Livestream in)	
Banyena	No Mass
Charlton (Sat.)	7.00 p.m.
Donald	10.30 a.m.
(Livestream out to churches without Mass)	
St. Arnaud	10.30 a.m.
(Livestream in)	
Wycheproof	10.30 a.m.
(Livestream in)	

Fr. Gerry Prunty
0419 247 779

Parish Co-ordinator
- Noeline Hogan: 0476 617 976



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Saints' Day On Birchip Courts

North Central tennis returned on Saturday after an extended break, with Birchip hosting Kara Kara and Wirrim welcoming St. Arnaud for Round 11.

It was a challenging day for both Birchip teams, which managed to secure two points each, as St. Arnaud and Kara Kara edged closer to the top of the ladder.

Wirrim v. St. Arnaud

Men's: As expected, St. Arnaud's men were in formidable form, winning all seven matches in the section. Brothers Sam and Jake Male secured an 8-4 victory over Jon Haslam and Russell Christie. Unfortunately, an injury forced Chris Lee and Dale Hinkley to forfeit their match, handing eight games to St. Arnaud.

Matt Goode and Owen Lowe continued the visitors' strong performance with an 8-4 win over James Goldsmith and Matt Ryan, while Matt Goode and Greg Simpson sealed an 8-5 victory against James Goldsmith and Denley Tyler. St Arnaud's consistency throughout the section saw the Saints claim the two points, 56-27 games.

Women's: Wirrim's women provided a much-needed lift for their team, securing Wirrim's only two

points for the day with a 46-39 game victory. The top pairing of Don and Katie Erwin proved too strong for Fiona Best and Steph Coffey, delivering an 8-2 win. Ben Greenaway and Sharyn Erwin fought hard against Kelly and Tylah Haslam, securing an 8-6 victory.

Fiona Best and Kelly Haslam managed to salvage a win for Wirrim in the top women's section, triumphing in a tiebreak. Wirrim's bottom women – Carling McEvoy, Georgie Warne, Beau Haslam, and Des Coffey – delivered emphatic 8-1, 8-3, and 8-4 victories, ensuring Wirrim took the section.

Mixed: St. Arnaud proved its worthiness of a finals position by winning all but two matches in the mixed section against the ladder leader, Wirrim. Sam Male and Don Erwin defeated Jon and Kelly Haslam with an 8-2 win, while Jake Male and Katie Erwin were victorious in a tiebreak against Russell Christie and Fiona Best.

Dale Hinkley and Carling McEvoy provided some relief

for Wirrim with an 8-3 win, and Denley Tyler and Des Coffey followed up with an 8-4 victory. However, St Arnaud's overall consistency saw it claim the mixed section 47-36 games, bringing the total games won to 142 compared to Wirrim's 109.

Three-set winners for St. Arnaud: Sam Male, Jake Male, Thomas Watts, Matt Goode, Owen Lowe, Katie Erwin, Sharyn Erwin.

For Wirrim: Carling McEvoy.

Birchip v. Kara Kara

Men's: Kara Kara set the tone early with a dominant 8-0 victory from Will Jackson and Bailey Durward over Tim McClelland and Dave Ferrier. The visitors maintained their momentum as Luke Jackson and John Goode edged out Birchip's Josh Hamilton and Sam Noonan, 8-6. Further commanding wins of 8-1 and 8-3 solidified Kara Kara's early lead.

Its dominance continued in the bottom section, where Bruce Hando, Ben Batters, and Jack McRae secured 8-1, 8-3, and 8-4 wins over Robbie Lee, Ben Samuel, and Matt Rickard. With a total of 56-18 games, Kara Kara secured the two points of the section.

Women's: Birchip's women responded emphatically, sweeping their section to claim the two points with a convincing 56-22 game win. The top duo of De Ferrier and Julie Coffey secured an 8-2 victory over Rogan Hando and Trudie Jackson, while Blake and Jo Lee achieved the same result against Sarah Collins and Mitch Bourke.

In the bottom section, Stacey Hamilton and Asha Lee delivered an 8-4 win for Birchip, followed by Stacey Hamilton and Rebecca Botheras overcoming Kim Nevill



• Will Jackson returns a forehand during his mixed match with Trudie.

and Millie Hando in an 8-6 battle. Asha Lee and Rebecca Botheras sealed the section with an 8-2 triumph, narrowing Birchip's overall deficit to just four games.

Mixed: Kara Kara carried its strong form into the mixed matches, where Will and Trudie Jackson dominated with an 8-0 win over Dave and De Ferrier. Bailey Durward and Rogan Hando followed with an 8-4 victory against Tim McClelland and Julie Coffey, while Luke Jackson and Sarah Collins defeated Blake and Robbie Lee, 8-6.

Birchip put up a fight, with Sam Noonan and Jo Lee, along with Ben Samuel and Asha Lee, both securing 8-4 wins. However, it wasn't enough to turn the tide, as Kara Kara claimed the mixed section 48-34 games, bringing its total for the day to 126 compared to Birchip's 108 and securing a total of eight points.

Three set winners for Kara Kara: Will Jackson, Bailey Durward, Luke Jackson, Bruce Hando, Jack McRae.

For Birchip: Jo Lee, Asha Lee.

Progressive Dinner

After a day of competition, the tennis clubroom was transformed into a lively Italian-inspired venue, welcoming over 80 guests for an evening of great food and entertainment. The atmosphere was set by the talent of local musician Bambi Navarro, whose live performance added to the ambience of the night.

Georgie Warne led the catering, supported by Tim McClelland, Josh Richmond, and Blake Lee, along with waitresses Tylah Haslam, Beau Haslam and Asha Lee. Guests enjoyed a delicious selection of Italian-inspired dishes including arancini balls, Florentine steaks, squid, prawns, and risotto with scallops. To finish, an array of desserts including tiramisu, cannoli, and gelato was on offer.

The night was a major success, with the celebrations continuing well into the early



• Julie Coffey prepares to hit a forehand.

hours. The night was a testament to the dedication of the volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes and on the night – planning, preparing, working behind the bar and ensuring everything ran smoothly.



• Tim McClelland returns a backhand.



• Rogan Hando hits a forehand.



• Carling McEvoy serves.



• Ben Greenaway serves.



• The victorious Wimmera-Mallee team, left to right, umpire Darryl Broughton, Will Noble, Riley Doran, Jonty Randall, Elliott Fitzpatrick, Cooper Anderson, Koby Westerland, Jim Duxson, Dylan Shelley, Nic Baird, Jayden McCartney, Ty Colbert, Luca Rice, and umpire Chris Guthrie.

Wimmera-Mallee Wins Rep. Clash

A fine team performance on Sunday has seen the Wimmera-Mallee senior representative cricket team overhaul the target of 191 set by Grampians on the Jeffcott Oval.

The visitors were best served by Zac Marrow with 67 not out, including seven fours and a six. Solid contributions from Matt Heffer 36, opener Aiden Graveson 30, and Nic Pell 20, and Grampians would have been fairly content with 190.

Dylan Shelley was the pick of the bowlers for Wimmera-Mallee, sending down a lively spell and capturing 3/15. Single wickets were taken by Jonty Randall 1/20, Cooper Anderson 1/26 and Koby Westerland 1/23, while young spinner Luca Rice gained valuable experience at this level.

In reply, Wimmera-Mallee's innings was built around a brilliant innings, by

the left-handed Nic Baird, who reeled off 68 runs comprising eight fours, two sixes and a five! Ty Colbert produced 25 runs and this player is improving in leaps and bounds. All batsmen reached double figures, with Jimmy Duxson 11, Cooper Anderson 16, Will Noble 10, Riley Doran 16, Koby Westerland 23 not out, enabling the target to be reached with four overs to spare. Zac Marrow was the only bowler to grab more than one wicket with 2/61 (8 overs).

Thanks to umpires Darryl Broughton and Chris Guthrie for officiating, and the Donald-Jeffcott Cricket Club for hosting.

RESULTS Wimmera-Mallee d. Grampians GRAMPIANS

M. McMahon, c T. Colbert b D. Shelley	12
A. Graveson, b D. Shelley	30
Z. Marrow, not out	67
C. McIntosh, c E. Fitzpatrick b D. Shelley	6
M. Heffer, b C. Anderson	36
L. Stevens, c N. Baird b K. Westerland	5
N. Pell, b J. Randall	20
J. Hosking, not out	4
Sundries	10
TOTAL (for 6 wickets)	190
Fall of wicket: 28, 49, 56, 123, 147, 176	

Bowling: J. Randall 1/20 (6), E. Fitzpatrick 0/27 (5), D. Shelley 3/15 (4), J. McCartney 0/29 (5), C. Anderson 1/26 (8), L. Rice 0/23 (4), R. Doran 0/23 (5), K. Westerland 1/23 (3)...

WIMMERA-MALLEE

J. Duxson, c Z. Marrow b B. Carter	11
C. Anderson, c L. Stevens b J. Hosking	16
T. Colbert, c L. Stevens b Z. Marrow	25
N. Baird, c N. Pell b Z. Marrow	68
W. Noble, run out	10
R. Doran, c A. Graveson b N. Pell	16
K. Westerland, not out	16
D. Shelley, not out	22
Sundries	7
TOTAL (for 6 wickets)	191
Fall of wicket: 19, 36, 88, 121, 148, 154.	

Bowling: V. Hamman 0/36 (7), B. Carter 1/15 (6), J. Hosking 1/21 (6), G. Cosgriff 0/35 (5), Z. Marrow 2/61 (8), N. Pell 1/21 (4)



• Wimmera-Mallee's Cooper Anderson (1/26) bowling, watched by umpire Chris Guthrie.



• Finishing off the job is Wimmera-Mallee's Koby Westerland with 16 not out.



• Nic Baird (68 runs) in full flight against Grampians.