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# The Buloke Times

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



• Water ballet squad, "The Clams" drew a huge crowd to the Charlton pool as part of the festivities, with patrons making the most of a cooling dip after the performance. Pictured either side of the group are choreographers (left) Camilla McKewen and (right) Gabi Barton.

## “OK”! What a Weekend!

(By Jenny Pollard)

As the adrenaline rush from “OK Motels” subsides, Charlton can reflect on how the modest little festival, which began back in 2018, has now grown into a full-on, “all-of-town” experience as 800 visitors descended on the “Friendly River Town” to make last weekend’s event one for the record books.

While financial benefits aren’t the only uptick from an event this size, the original concept – masterminded by photographer Kate Berry as a way of injecting life into retro motels in out-of-the-way places – “OK” has evolved into something of significance for Charlton.

Apart from bringing normally unobtainable indie and

rock bands to the area, the gradual integration of community involvement in the weekend has made for a groundswell of rapport between visitors and locals alike.

### Rapturous Welcome

And it was a rapturous welcome which greeted fans, first-timers and returnees to this year’s gathering with friendships being rekindled

and newbies settling into the leisurely country vibe.

For community organisations it can be a bonanza of a weekend. Despite the hard work (CWA members were up baking scones at 7 a.m. last Saturday), and the juggling of volunteers to support the various activities around town, the economic windfalls are a lifeblood for the community.

### Ultimate Beneficiary

The Charlton A. & P. Society, along with other groups involved, say that the community is the ultimate beneficiary. The Show team covers the catering for the Saturday night dinner at the Charlton Hall, and secretary Wendy Laffin said, “This is a great fundraiser for us and means that we are able to channel money back into improving the Show.”

Serving 350 meals on the night, the committee was assisted by the Charlton College Year 10 work experience students, who also

undertook their own fundraising by supplying breakfasts at the Traveller’s Rest Saturday morning.

Charlton Lions Club were also extremely happy, with a reported takings of around \$3,800 (a combined total from the Sunday breakfast, raffle and site fees for the All of Town Garage Sale), along with the Charlton Op Shop which did “extremely well” according to Manager Gill Gretgrix.

### Record Breaker

The East Charlton Hotel “broke all records” for the number of meals served over

the weekend, while Tia Fanning at “Caffeinated Chaos” tallied up a record breaking 322 coffees on Saturday, along with a clean sweep of food.

Meanwhile Cabbaritta CWA Branch members faced an unending line of patrons at the Bowls Club rooms for Saturday’s morning tea where most of their 800 scones were eagerly consumed. Branch President, Maria Perger said it had been “crazy” since 10 a.m. with the group’s craft stall having been cleared of items in a flash.

• Continued on page 2.

## Speaker Takes Parliament to the Mallee

This week, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Honourable Milton Dick, MP, celebrated visiting 150 schools as part of the Parliament in Schools program, as he visited schools across Mallee with the Federal Member for Mallee, Dr Anne Webster, MP.

Students learned about federation, democracy and the Australian Parliament, as well as hearing first-hand from the Speaker and their local member on what a typical day looks like in their electorate and when they are in Parliament House for sitting weeks.

On Monday, February 24, they visited Holy Trinity

Lutheran College, Horsham; Birchip P-12 School, Birchip; and Robinvale College, Robinvale.

On Tuesday, February 25, they visited Irymple South Primary School, Irymple; and Henderson College, Irymple.

“I am so proud to be celebrating 150 school visits since I launched this program in 2022, bringing

Parliament to schools across Australia – from King Island to Far North Queensland to Nullagine, and now to Mallee,” said the Speaker.

“It is a particularly important time for civics education and engagement. We need to ensure we improve democracy literacy across the nation, and support needs to be

extended to students regardless of their location.

“These students are our future leaders, and it is important that we equip them with the information and tools they need, to go on to be active and engaged citizens.”

### About the Parliament in Schools Program

Launched in September 2022, the Parliament in Schools program is a bipartisan initiative to make civics education accessible to students regardless of their

location. In collaboration with local federal members, the Speaker is visiting schools across Australia to bring parliament to them.

The program is an extension to well-established PEO onsite, digital and outreach education programs available to schools across Australia.

It also complements the existing PEO online and print resources that are curriculum-aligned, for Australian teachers and students.



• Milton Dick, M.P.



# “OK”! What a Weekend!

• Continued from page 1.

## Central Hub

Back in the main street, the Charlton Club was the “OK Motels” central hub, sporting another climate-controlled space, where patrons could pace the start to their day helped along by the Club’s “drink de jour” – a Bloody Mary. As a place to “chill” (literally), there were plenty of people engrossed in board games, a quiet chat, a game of pool or, for the brave, the option of getting a tattoo!

Despite the scorching temperatures outside, the energy buzz across town was in no way reduced. Crowds filled the main street, vehicles lined the roadways, the Traveller’s Rest was full to bursting and a village-type atmosphere of relaxed browsing was apparent as visitors took in the shops, the pop-ups, picked up a coffee or just enjoyed the riverside location.

## Pool Party

With the “Tell Your Friends You Love Them” pool party (complete with DJ) under way by late morning

and The Clams (“Melbourne’s least professional, most clamorous water ballet squad”) scheduled for early afternoon, space poolside was at a premium. The arrival of the vermillion-suited performers, swathed in candy coloured tulle, grabbed the attention as the twenty-two member squad took to the water to perform their act.

Cheering and applause greeted each new formation as the water babes seamlessly floated from one position to another. Following a final salute to the crowd patrons once again plunged back in for a refresh as the temperature continued to soar.

## “Marry Your Friend”

Another crowd-pleaser was the “Marry Your Friend” ceremonies at the Charlton Hall organized by radio / TV personality Marieke Hardy and her friend Emilie Zoey Baker. While also “taking their vows” on the day, Marieke said the late afternoon time slot worked better this year and had brought more focus to the event. Ten

weddings (including couples and throuples) and the inclusion of hair and make-up artists to add a little “sparkle” to the scene made for a very successful outcome. There was also tons of confetti!

“It was quite emotional” said Marieke, “and yes, there were tears! Participants had more time to prepare their vows and the audience could hear what was being expressed without the competition from people eating over dinner, as happened last year.” Op shop treasures also made for some glamorous outfits!

## Evening Focus

As evening progressed the Charlton Motel became the focus with headline bands drawing the audience on into the night.

While this year’s event seemed to attract a younger crowd, patrons were respectful, friendly and were more than happy to be in a location where so many activities were available and within easy reach of each other.

“Often when you go to music festivals,” said one



• Post-punk/noise-rock band “Placement” kicked off the Saturday evening sounds at the Charlton Motel.

Melbourne visitor, “you are stuck in the middle of nowhere and there’s nothing to do but wait for the music.”

For Marieke Hardy, “OK” also ticked many boxes. “Coming to Charlton you

don’t feel like you are invading the town,” she said. “We have been welcomed with open arms. It’s an event where you make friends for life, and it’s also become a great opportunity to help launch

emerging bands.”

Going on the attendance, response and feedback from this year’s three-day festival, “OK Motels” looks set to have a home in Charlton well into the future!



• Charlton Bowls Club member Eily Rosewall (left) met up with Kara Verkuylen – a friendship which was formed during the previous year’s OK Motels event.



• Above: Charlton Club member, Markus Phillips (left), serves visitor, Nicholas Cooper, from Melbourne, with a Bloody Mary to start the day off.



• The air-conditioned Bowling Club rooms and the CWA morning tea was a big crowd-puller as visitors sought sustenance and shade from the hot weather. Numerous patrons praised the CWA scones, which were in great demand.



• The fun “Marry Your Friend” ceremonies held at the Charlton Hall were a big hit with participants, as hair and make-up stylists added to the glamour of the moment. Pictured Emilie Zoey Baker and Marieke Hardy (photo courtesy Marieke Hardy).





• The famous Holden ute.

## Don't Miss Wyche's "Show

Wycheproof Lions are once again holding their annual "Show and Shine" event at the Mount Wycheproof Racecourse on Sunday, March 9.

Members of the the Ballarat Early Holden Club have said they will be attending, and this will provide a chance for Holden enthusiasts to see their wonderfully restored cars.

This year the area for showing cars and motorbikes has been expanded.

It once again will be a great day for owners to show off their precious vehicles, and the public see these cars and motorbikes.

# Fire Services Levy Hike to Hurt Farmers

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says proposed hikes to the proposed Fire Services Levy could see some farmers forced to pay up to 400% on top of the current levy.

VFF president, Brett Hosking said the levy flagged by the Victorian Government would place an enormous and unfair financial burden on those already struggling and farmers who are facing volatile prices, ever-decreasing profit margins and increasing extreme weather events.

"This tax hike is just another cost farm businesses will be forced to pay and it's time to go back to the drawing board and find a better solution," Mr Hosking said.

"A one-size-fits-all approach clearly doesn't work when you've got some farmers facing a hike of up to 400 per cent. There's no way a rise of that much can be justified and for some, it could

be the nail in the coffin for their farm businesses."

Mr Hosking added that while levies which fund our fire services are critical, the current broad-based tax is unfit for use and the Victorian Government must urgently consider an alternative.

"Instead of placing a blanket levy on all property owners, the government should consider a more targeted approach that ensures the funds are distributed where they're needed most," he said.

"Rural Victorians are already bearing the brunt of many challenges, from droughts to fires. This levy will add insult to injury, making it even harder for farmers to recover and thrive.



• Brett Hosking.

"The current approach certainly isn't a solution that supports the needs of country Victorians and we're urging the government to reassess its approach and explore more equitable solutions."

# New Local Health Service Networks

[From the EWHS February 2025 Board Meeting]

The Victorian Government has announced 12 Local Health Service Networks. These have been designed following consultation and feedback from health services, and in response to the Government's plan to improve access, equity and care closer to home.

The Board acknowledged correspondence from the Minister for Health, placing EWHS within the Grampians Local Health Service Network.

This Network includes Beaufort & Skipton Health Service, Central Highlands Rural Health, East Grampians Health Service, East Wimmera Health Service, Grampians Health, Maryborough District Health Service, Rural Northwest Health, West Wimmera Health Service.

This grouping respects the natural flows of patients between local hospitals to the higher capability sites within the Grampians region such as Ballarat.

The Government acknowledged that EWHS also has distinct patient flows to Loddon Mallee Health Network including Bendigo. EWHS will work to ensure appropriate patient flows for local people.

### At Donald

EWHS is pleased to be providing care to increasing numbers of Renal Dialysis patients through our service at Donald. The service is currently providing regular care close to home for six people.

EWHS is projecting to finish the financial year with a break-even operating result.

EWHS is fully accredited for Aged Care services, and

we are currently ensuring that our care is aligned with the new Aged Care standards that commence on July 1, 2025.

EWHS is preparing to develop a new Strategic Plan 2025-2029 and will soon be seeking community consultation.

The Board recognised ongoing environmental management initiatives across the health service, including continued investment in solar power and battery recycling.

EWHS welcomes your feedback. You can provide feedback via the EWHS Website, feedback forms at each campus, email to ewhs@ewhs.org.au or call 03 5477 2100.

**MORE BIG HOLDEN NEWS!**

**Announcing improved styling and new engine features in HOLDEN UTILITY**

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# World Day of Prayer, Friday Next: Granite to Host Service

[From Granite Church]

A World Day of Prayer Service is being held at and hosted by Granite Community Church on Friday, March 7 at 2.30 p.m., with the theme "I made you Wonderful".

"Kia Orana! – Welcome!" Our sisters in the Cook Islands welcome us and will lead us for the Day of Prayer 2025.

This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Māori heritage and a deep connection to nature. Join with us as we pray together and reflect on the theme "I made you wonderful".

World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers.

The preparation for this day is vast; the service begins with the writing country and theme being chosen a number of years earlier. Once written it goes to the International Committee in New York for translation and dissemination to the National Committee in each participating country.

The service is then discussed and edited before being presented nationally, regionally and then locally for Christian communities to make their plans.

Finally, at a church near you, on Friday, March 7, 2025, people will gather to

celebrate the service prepared by the women of the Cook Islands. The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world — through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later. A worldwide wave of prayer... An offering will be taken for the Cook Island Project.

You are invited to join us in prayer at a WDP service on Friday, March 7, 2025, at Granite Community Church, 358 Bish's Rd, Wooroonook.

## Corack East Wind

Renewable Energy from ACEN



ACEN Australia is in the early stages of investigating a large-scale wind energy 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.

Drop-in information Hub  
Every Wednesday 1pm-6pm

Commencing 19 March, 2025

Meet the project team, find out more and provide feedback

Charlton Park Community  
Bank Complex  
Boardroom

Charlton Park Community Bank Complex  
Calder Hwy, Charlton

www.corackeastwind.com.au

1800 498 550

info@corackeastwind.com.au

Corack East Wind



# "Times" Classifieds

Phone Donald 5497 1222, Birchip 5492 2735 Email [admin@buloketimes.com](mailto: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

**ADAMS.—**

Colin "Geoffrey"

Passed away peacefully on February 25, 2025, aged 76 years.

Loving father of Simon & Kylie; Marc & Sara. Treasured Pa and Grandpa of Brayden, Jake, Cody, Lily; Kayla, Jett and Milla.

*Resting Peacefully*

**ADAMS.—** Colin

In grateful memory of our dear friend Colin Adams, who founded the Buloke Bike Riders in 2007. We will miss him at every stroke of our pedals.

**ADAMS.—** Colin

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Simon, Marc and their families.

We have lots of happy memories of our teenage years, family holidays, our children growing up together at school and especially all our fun times at the Tennis Club.

Rest in Peace Mate xx

*Joan, Leigh, Tania, Carl & Steven Hardingham and families*

## DEATH

**BROOKS (Milne).—**

Valerie Myrtle

Passed away peacefully in Donald, on February 25, 2025, aged 80 yrs.

Loving wife of Bill (dec.) and loved mother and mother-in-law of Paul & Loretta; Gene & Jacqui; Carmen & Brad Bath. Adored Nan of Nathan, Travis, Keiarah, Cody; Lana, Zoe; Jordan, Jacob, Ryan and great-nan of Elsie.

*Re-united with Bill.*

## DEATH

**BROOKS.—** Val

Loved wife of Bill (dec.).

*Your life was a blessing.*

*Your memory a treasure.*

*You are loved*

*beyond words.*

*And missed*

*beyond measure.*

Loving mother of Paul, mother-in-law of Loretta. Great friend and Nan of Nathan, Travis, Keiarah and Cody.

*Those we love don't go away; they walk beside us every day.*

\*\*

Mum, forever grateful to have you for 50 years. Your love and kindness will be remembered forever.

*Love you heaps xxx Gene.*

Val, you lived a simple life, filled with loads of love for all of your family. You will be missed.

*Love Jacqui xx*

Thank you for being such a great nan. We loved hearing your latest jokes and will miss your contagious chuckle.

We love you Nan.

*Love Lana and Zoe xx*

\*\*

Loved mother and mother-in-law to Carmen and Brad, adored Nan to Jordan & Meg, Jacob and Ryan and a loving great-nan to Elsie.

It's now that we look back and remember all the wonderful things you did for our family, and we were truly blessed to have had you in our lives. You may be gone, but you will never be forgotten.

*Love you forever xxxxxxxx*

*Now back with Dad.*

## DEATH

**McSWAIN.—** Laurie

15/10/1932 – 24/02/2025  
Passed away peacefully at Skipton Nursing Home  
Aged 92

Father of Rhonda, Douglas (dec.), Neale and Corinne whom he lovingly shared with Heather.

*Printed and published for the proprietors by Robin Letts, at the office of "The Buloke Times", 6 McCulloch Street, Donald.*

## FUNERAL

**ADAMS.—** Colin

A service to celebrate Colin's life will be held in St. Andrew's Uniting Church, Donald, on Tuesday, March 4, at 10.30 a.m. The cortege will then leave for the Donald Lawn Cemetery.

*Funeral recording at [kellfunerals.com.au](http://kellfunerals.com.au)*

KELL FUNERALS  
ST. ARNAUD 5495 1043  
NFDA EST. 1860

## FUNERAL

**BROOKS.—** Val

A graveside service for Val will be held at the Donald Lawn Cemetery on Wednesday, March 5, at 10.30 a.m.

KELL FUNERALS  
ST. ARNAUD 5495 1043  
NFDA EST. 1860

## FUNERAL

**McSWAIN.—** Laurie

A funeral service for Laurie McSwain will be held at F.W. Barnes & Son Funeral Homes, 701 Darling Street, Ballarat on Monday, March 3, 2025 at 2 p.m.

A burial service will be held at St Arnaud Cemetery (Cemetery Rd, St Arnaud), on Tuesday, March 4 at 11 a.m.

## BEREAVEMENT THANK-YOU

The family of Bill Fitzpatrick would like to express heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming love and support following Bill's passing.

A fitting tribute was made to Bill as he travelled his final journey on the back of a truck, reflecting his legendary life in the trucking world.

Your kindness has provided great comfort during this difficult time. We deeply appreciate the many cards, flowers, meals and offers of help. Your presence at the service, phone calls and shared stories have meant so much. Bill would have been truly touched by the warmth and compassion shown by all. The generosity and thoughtfulness has been overwhelming and a true testament to the impact he had on everyone who knew him.

With sincerest thanks,  
— Marie, Billy,  
Paul, Leanne, Julie  
and families.

## SIGNS 'R'US

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## World Day of Prayer BIRCHIP

2 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7,  
ST MARY'S CHURCH,  
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*Guest speaker*

*Afternoon tea following  
the service.*

**ALL WELCOME**

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## DONALD-MINYIP FIELD & GAME

**Poachers' Weekend**

**2 Day SHOOT**

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**DAY ONE**

**Donald, Sat., Mar. 1**

**9 a.m. start**

75 ASF OTG

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**DAY TWO**

**Minyip, Sun., Mar. 2**

**9.30 a.m. start**

75 ASF OTG

*Sponsored by: J&A Shooting  
Supplies, Water Tech Solutions,  
C&R Sheet metal (Maryborough), TUFF Engineering,  
Nutrien Ag (Rupanyup & Murtoa).*

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## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025



Theme: **I Made You Wonderful**

**Cook Islands**

**At 2.30PM**

**Granite Community Church**

**358 Bishs Rd Wooroonook**

Offering for Cook Island Project

Like a Ride: Meet Donald PO at 2.00PM

Contact: Alison 0407313648



**FRIENDS OF EWHS DONALD CAMPUS**

## HELP URGENTLY WANTED

Informal drop-in session for community members who are interested in volunteering to help with fundraising for our local hospital.

See what has been funded in the past whether it be a large or small item, they all help with improving the facilities at the Donald Hospital and Nursing Home.

Volunteers are needed for this organisation to continue. Drop in and have a look any suggestions welcome.

**Where:** Court House meeting room (beside the Post Office). **When:** Tuesday, March 4 between 1 p.m. & 5 p.m.

Please contact Rhonda Laird 0409 955 199, Lesley Pendlebury 0407 861 711 or Marj Summerhayes 0488 491 406 for further information.



*Cultivating Healthy Communities*

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

**Campus Negotiable**

Nurse Practitioner (Rural Generalist)

Clinical Support Nurse

Home & Community Services Manager

**St Arnaud**

Food and Domestic Service Assistant

Associate Nurse Unit Manager

**Wycheproof**

Associate Nurse Unit Manager

District Nurse

Junior Food and Domestic Service Assistant

**Further information available at**

<https://ewhs.org.au/careers>

*EWHS is an Equal Opportunity Employer, we welcome applications to all positions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, LGBTQI+ People, and People of All Abilities.*

## DONALD LAWN TENNIS CLUB

## 71<sup>ST</sup> LABOUR DAY WEEKEND TOURNAMENT 2025

**Saturday, March 8 - Singles & Veterans  
Doubles (40 and over)**

**Sunday, March 9 - Men's and Women's Doubles**

**Monday, March 10 - Mixed Doubles**

Senior Grades range from Open to D-Grade; 16-and-under and 13-and-under categories, boys and girls as well. 10-and-under Green Ball series (Tennis Victoria).

**Location:** DONALD LAWN TENNIS CLUB, Sunraysia Hwy, Donald.

**Entry forms and further details may be obtained from the club website:** [donaldtennis.com.au](http://donaldtennis.com.au)

Facebook: search for Donald Lawn Tennis Club

Online entry at: <https://www.tennis.com.au/vic/tournaments>

(Search for Donald Lawn Tennis Labour Day)

**Enquiries to Derek Hollis 0428 971 709**

Completed print or PDF entry forms can be emailed to:

[secretary@donaldtennis.com.au](mailto:secretary@donaldtennis.com.au)

**Entries close:** Thursday, March 6, 2025

*Enjoyment & Employment —  
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## 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.



Australian Red Cross  
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LIVE MUSIC 3PM-LATE  
DRINK SPECIALS  
BACK BAR  
OPEN 11AM-LATE

# “Times” Classifieds

Wycheproof Lions Annual  
**Show and Shine**  
MT WYCHEPROOF RACECOURSE  
**Sunday, March 9**  
Lots of prizes for those entering cars and motorcycles.  
Enter at the event. **Gates open 8.30 am.**  
**A great family event.**  
**All adults (18 years and older) \$10, children free.**

**FARM CHEMICAL USERS COURSE**  
IN BIRCHIP March 13 & 14  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Subsidised places \$60 (\$12 concession) available for eligible participants.  
Register ASAP directly with  
The Centre 1300 843 236  
or [www.thecentre.vic.edu.au](http://www.thecentre.vic.edu.au)



Neighbourhood Houses  
The Heart of Our Community

**“Times” Crossword**  
QUICK PUZZLE NO. 8166 - SOLUTIONS  
Across - 6, Manufacture. 7, Pier. 8, Harmless. 9, Retain. 10, Hoarse. 12, Grieve. 15, Settle. 17, Advocate. 19, Lead. 20, Catastrophe.  
Down - 1, Increase. 2, Afgahan. 3, Scorch. 4, Pull. 5, Ver-sus. 6, Maize. 11, Antelope. 13, Reduce. 14, Elapse. 15, Sherry. 16, Leave. 18, Oath.

**DONALD NEWSAGENCY & EMPORIUM**

**CHANGE OF HOURS**

**SHOP**  
MON – FRI 5 am to 5.30 pm  
SAT – 5 am to 12 noon  
**CLOSED SUNDAYS & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

**RECYCLE HOURS**  
MON – FRI 9 am to 5 pm  
SAT – 10 am to 12 noon

On Sundays & Public Holidays  
papers will be available at  
Harvest Café  
Weirs IGA & BP Service Station



**CHURCHES**

**ANGLICAN “Parish of Charlton-Donald”**  
Enquiries: Rev'd Judi Bird  
0435 593 359

Friday, February 28  
St. Paul's, Birchip, 5 p.m.

Sunday, March 2  
St. Martin's, Charlton, 9 a.m.  
St. George's, Donald, 11 a.m.  
Holy Trinity, W'burn, 3 p.m.

**BEULAH**  
RECREATION RESERVE

MARCH 8th & 9th 2025

**WIDE OPEN SPACES**  
Festival

A weekend of MUSIC FOOD & FUN

Saturday Sunday

Creekside Market 9am Classic Cars  
MUSIC 2pm to 10pm  
Paul Costa & Band, Rhys Crimmin, Darryn Wardle & Jeff Woodward, Brodie Glen and others...!

Fishing Competition 8am  
Music & Family Day 1pm  
Pony Rides | Duck Race | Face Painting

MUSIC: Darryn Wardle & Jeff Woodward, Elias Lanyon (The Voice), Nicole Matthews & Music for Kids.


All Weekend  
Southern Mallee R C Truckers  
(Remote Controlled Trucks 9-4 & Friday night under lights)  
Food | Coffee | Cold drinks | Bar Available | BYO Alcohol  
Activities for kids | Workshops |  
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# A Swim in Support of Buloke's Pools



• Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, with lifeguards Xav and Keely at Charlton Community Pool.

The Nationals' Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, recently completed a swim in every community pool within the Buloke Shire, which aimed to highlight the importance of retaining these important community assets.

These pools, built following the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, are a cornerstone of our communities and are a place for social connection, recreation, and celebration. However, declining populations and rising maintenance costs have placed their future in jeopardy.

Royal Life Saving research indicates that 68% of community swimming pools are aged over 50 years, with 40% set to reach the end of their functional lifespan by 2030.

"These magnificent pools are more than just places to swim – they are woven into the fabric of our communities. Losing them would be devastating, particularly if they are not replaced," Ms Benham said.

"I've spent countless hours swimming in these pools, and I know firsthand how important they are to local residents. Our rural communities are already battling to keep people here, and removing vital

social infrastructure like public pools would only make that challenge greater.

"By and large, residents support public pools and their maintenance and upkeep needs to be on the Government's agenda.

"Too often, governments tend to tell us what we need rather than actually listening to the people who live here. But locals know how vital these pools are – not just for recreation and social connection, but for water safety and lifesaving skills.

"I'm also a certified Aus Swim teacher, so not only do we need to highlight the importance of retaining our public swimming pools for recreation and social connection, but for many – particularly children and families – this is the only place they will ever be able to learn to swim. In Australia, I believe it is every person's right to learn or be able to swim."



• Jade Benham with lifeguards Keira and Emily, Berriwillock.



## Police Beat



### Gannawarra

**Deception:** Over a 14 day period, the victim withdrew sizable amounts of cash from her bank and gave them to a person who contacted her purporting to be from her bank. She handed over an amount of \$58,000. The person said they were investigating employee theft. Cohuna police were contacted by a concerned business operator in town who thought things didn't seem right. Police intercepted the persons of interest in Margaret Street, Cohuna, unfortunately the victim had already given them the cash. This investigation is ongoing.

**Theft:** Between 5 p.m. Tuesday the 18th of February and 6.30 a.m. the following day, a Makita blower and whipper snipper were stolen from the shed of a business in King George Street, Cohuna.

**Vehicle theft:** Between 10 a.m. on Saturday, the 22nd of February and 9 a.m. the following day, offenders have forced entry to a council yard and stolen a black 2015

Jaguar XF sedan that was being housed in the compound.

**Burglary:** Between 6 p.m. Friday the 21st of February, and 10 a.m. the following day, offenders have forced entry to a yard off the Quambatook-Dumosa Road, Quambatook. They have stolen a trailing 4 tonne 125KPA Welling and Crossley generator. It was towed away from the site behind a vehicle. It appears that the offenders have lost control of the vehicle and left the generator on the Normanville Road.

### Swan Hill

**Theft:** At about 4.30 p.m. on Saturday, the 22nd of February, some cricketers were practising at the Swan Hill showgrounds when they observed someone hanging around the change rooms. They later returned to the changerooms to discover cash had been stolen from their bags.

**Burglary:** Between 6 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. on Thursday the 20th of February, offenders have gained entry to a

home in Pritchard Street, Swan Hill, and stolen bank cards.

**Theft:** Between 3 p.m. on Tuesday the 18th of February and 9 a.m. on the 20th, offenders have stolen a black and blue Gen Tech generator from the rear of a caravan parked in Bambrick Court, Swan Hill. It appears the offenders have also tried to force entry to the caravan. A Waeko fridge was also stolen from the address.

**Burglary:** Between February 4 and 18, offenders have gained entry to a residential garage in Thurla Street Swan Hill and stolen a blue Tebco Discovery electric bicycle.

**Arrest:** On Thursday the 20th of February, a 35-year-old male was arrested in Swan Hill. He was charged with 20 offences including attempted aggravated burglary, numerous theft from motor vehicles, obtaining property by deception and other offences. He was remanded in custody to attend court at a later date.

## Tonight's the Night!

Get ready for a night of trivia, laughs, and friendly competition as the Birchip Tennis & Cricket Club hosts its much-anticipated Annual Quiz Night tonight, Friday, February 28.

There is still room for more tables, so gather your friends and family members and book a table of six with Russell Christie at 0429 922 735 or Riley Doran at 0417 290 731.

There are over \$2000 worth of prizes to be won, all donated by local businesses, and lots of chances to win.

The competitions on the night range from guess the song, to lucky spots and a raffle, so you don't even have to be a quiz genius to win a prize.

The event will take place at the Birchip Community Leisure Centre, starting at 7 p.m. and promises an entertaining evening for participants of all ages.

Entry is just \$10 per head, and attendees are encouraged to bring their own supper to enjoy during the night. Bring along some coins to enter the competitions.

Don't miss out on a fantastic evening filled with brain-teasing questions, competitions, great company, and plenty of fun.

## Birchip's Big Weekend

Birchip is set to come alive on the long weekend of March, with the weekend festivities kicking off with a kelly pool tournament at the Birchip RSL clubrooms.

On Saturday, March 8, the beloved Mali Heart Festival makes its return to the town's Main Street. From 10 p.m. to 2 p.m., locals and visitors alike can immerse themselves in a vibrant celebration of community, creativity, and culture.

### Mali Heart

Start your day with breakfast from local food outlets or a delightful morning tea hosted by the dedicated Country Women's Association (CWA) team in the hall, where you can also admire impressive local photography and Lego exhibits. From there, take a leisurely stroll down Cumming Avenue, where an array of market stalls will be brimming with unique finds and handmade treasures.

Festival goers will have the opportunity to engage with emergency services, enjoy playful interactions with adorable baby goats, and explore the town's rich past at the history exhibit in the museum. Be sure to stop by the Headspace booth for a fun game of cornhole and learn about the important services they provide.

### Mural

A festival highlight will take place at 11:30 a.m., with the grand unveiling of the newest mural on the CBA bank wall. This latest artistic addition is sure to capture the spirit of the community and add to Birchip's growing collection of public art.

As lunchtime approaches, indulge in delicious offerings from local stallholders and food trucks before settling in

to enjoy live music by the talented Grim Fawcner. His soulful tunes will provide the perfect backdrop for an afternoon of relaxation and festivity.

### Saturday Night

Saturday evening festivities will continue at the Birchip Hotel with a night of entertainment, featuring live music from local performers including the ever-popular Brody and Danny Glen and a Texas barbecue.

### Sunday

The weekend is not for the faint hearted, because after a jam packed day on Saturday, locals and visitors alike are encouraged to make their way out to the Birchip Harness Racing Track for the highly anticipated Mallee Bull Cup.

Experience the thrill of live harness racing as top

competitors vie for the prestigious title. Racegoers can enjoy delicious eats while cheering on their favourites and a range of drinks from the "Ally luvs it bar".

Families will also be well catered for, with a range of children's activities available to keep the little ones entertained throughout the afternoon. As the sun sets, unwind and enjoy live music performances, adding a lively atmosphere to the evening celebrations.

With a full day of entertainment, food, and racing excitement, the Mali Heart Festival and Mallee Bull Cup promise to be a fantastic experience for all. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with your community and celebrate the very best of Birchip!

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# Charlton College at Ok Motels

OK Motels weekend is undoubtedly one of the busiest weekends of the year for the Friendly River Town. This year, Charlton welcomed around 800 visitors to town over the weekend.

Charlton College's Year 10 students once again played a key role in the festivities, starting the day by flipping eggs and sizzling bacon at the barbecue breakfast, where they sold nearly 300 bacon and egg rolls.

After a brief break, the students returned to the Shire

Hall, showcasing their hospitality skills as they served a delicious Community Dinner to approximately 400 guests.

This year, the Year 10 students are aiming to raise \$16,000 to fund their upcoming Work Experience week in Melbourne later in the year. A big thank you to all who

**CHARLTON**



provided their support and assistance.



• James Fitzpatrick, Sebastian Zagame, Samuel Olive, Leigh Van Boven, Taylah Giles, Sheena Fitzpatrick, Ruby Radcliffe and Josie Larmour.



• Charlton College students manning the barbecue at the OK Motels event on the weekend.



• Sheena Fitzpatrick, Taylah Giles, Samuel Olive and Tully Bourke.

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# Wycheproof P-12 College

The 2025 student leaders of Wycheproof P-12 College have been officially appointed, receiving their badges at a whole school assembly held recently.

This year's School Captains are Keely Allan and Gracie Humphreys, two Year 12 students who lead by example and embody the school motto of "Be Your Best".

"We are fortunate at Wycheproof P-12 College to have another great group of

amazing students ready and willing to step up and take on leadership positions," Principal Christine McKersie said.

"We know that putting up your hand to volunteer builds important organisational and social skills in children.

"We look forward to another fast-paced year in our school where our children opt-in, rather than opt-out. This builds important life skills and resilience.

"2025 is shaping up to be another wonderful year to raise children in our rural community."



• Student Representative Council President Ruby Ison.



• School Captains Keely Allan and Gracie Humphreys.



• Prep/1 Class Captains Adeline Brennan and Jayden Wright.



• Year 2/3/4 Class Captains Edie Pellegrino and Archie Harri-



• Music Captains Grace McKersie and Tessa Sheahan.



• Year 5/6 Class Captains Tory Pollington and Jewels Barton.



• Calder House Captains Angus Cowell and Jessie Fawcett.



• Year 7/8 Class Captains Harry Humphreys and Ever Harri-



• Year 9/10 Class Captains Lana Fawcett and Dakota Connolly.



# 2025 Leaders Appointed



• The 2025 School Representative Council. Back row: Whitney Jones, Ruby Ison, Libby Thompson, Max Fawcett, Keely Allan, Gracie Humphreys, Jessie Fawcett, Angus Cowell, Tessa Sheahan and Grace McKersie. Middle row: Ever Harrison, Harry Humphreys, Tory Pollington, Jewels Barton, Edie Pellegrino, Archie Harrison, Lana Fawcett and Dakota Connolly. Front centre: Adeline Brennan and Jayden Wright. Absent: Savannah Nicholls.



• School Council members Keely Allan, Whitney Jones and Savannah Nicholls.



• Broadway House Captains Max Fawcett and Libby Thompson.

## Grants Open for Youth Fest 2025

The Nationals' Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, is encouraging young locals to apply for grants to create youth-focus events under Youth Fest 2025.

Grants of up to \$2,000 are now open to schools, local councils and community organisations to team up with young people aged 12 to 25 to create events focused on young people.

The Youth Fest program focuses on events which promote sustainability, mental health, music, sport and much more, helping to connect young people with their communities.

Last year, events across the Mildura electorate included Mildura Rural City Council's Youth Awards, which recognised the achievements of young people aged between 12 and 25 who showed leadership and overcame hardship, as well as youth workers and youth groups.

In Birchip, the Neighbourhood House hosted "Youth at The Centre", where young people engaged in various activities and demonstrations.

Students of Tyrrell College hosted "Sea Lake's Social Games," and Charlton Neighbourhood House featured "Community Lens: Youth Perspectives," a competition inviting entrants across three age categories — primary, secondary, and 18-29 years — to capture their experiences, challenges, inspirations, and aspirations for the Charlton community.

"This is an exciting opportunity for young people to lead the way and make a difference in their community," Ms Benham said. "I encourage all eligible organisations to apply and support initiatives that empower and engage our youth."

Youth Fest 2025 applications are open until March 14. To apply and to find out more, visit [youthfest.vic.gov.au](http://youthfest.vic.gov.au)

### Church Notices

#### DISTRICT CATHOLIC CHURCHES "East Wimmera Parish"

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

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# Leaders Inducted



Last week the Birchip P-12 School inducted their new school leaders for 2025.

Councillor Bernadette Hogan was the guest speaker. Councillor Hogan has had children attend Birchip P-12 School, she runs her own business and has been involved in many organisations in and around Birchip.

Councillor Hogan congratulated all the 2025 student leaders and emphasised the honour it is to be elected to a position of leadership by peers. She then stressed that by accepting these positions each student leader is agreeing to responsibly and respectfully represent the other students in the school.

Councillor Hogan suggested these roles will provide students the opportunity to learn new and valuable skills, skills which will help them to competently carry out responsibilities, both now and in future leadership roles.

Councillor Hogan also identified that the school community now, and their local, national and global communities in the future, need more than just competent, skilful leaders. She said that “we need good, ethical, effective and inspiring leaders. They need leaders who learn from an early age a strong sense of what is right and wrong, what is fair and what is unfair, and who can find the courage to be able to stand up and say so.”

The School Captains for 2025 are Imogen Boyle and Les Cooper. Imogen spoke of how she and Les wanted to carry on the good work of the previous school captains, and to make sure that there were even more opportunities to make the school a connected and inclusive place to be.

The Sports Captains, Student Board Executive, the Junior SRC, and Bus Captains were also inducted by school leadership.

In sports news, sixteen students represented Birchip P-12 School at the North Central Division Swimming Carnival in St Arnaud last Monday. It was a great event for all who participated, and Eva Coffey (17 age group) and Sienna Richmond (12-13 age group) were awarded their respective individual age champion medallions.



• School Captains: Imogen Boyle, Principal Mr Andrew Sayle, Les Cooper.



• Cr. Bernadette Hogan.



• St Arnaud Individual Champions: Sienna Richmond and Eva Coffey.



## 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](http://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](http://www.transmissionvictoria.com.au/about-vni-west/vni-west-workforce-accommodation) or scan the QR code to the right.



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# Important Sessions for Birchip: Headspace, Gym, Drug and Alcohol

The Mallee Sports Assembly in conjunction with the Birchip P-12 School continues with the Active Youth Program for the Year 9 students which is supported by VicHealth under the "Regional Sport Program".

The sessions that were conducted are as follows:

## Bullying

Ex-Birchip P-12 School student, Emily Noonan, who facilitated the session that covered the subject of "Bullying," was welcomed. Emily works with Headspace of Swan Hill.

Bullying is quite common, especially in some school environments. Emily showed a power point on the role of Headspace before getting the students to do a variety of activities about getting to know their classmates better and where they want to be in their life in years to come.

Emily pointed out why some people choose to bully others, such as stress and trauma in their own lives; low self-esteem or experiencing past bullying; social and cultural "norms"; and social combat.

Whatever the reasons, bullying is non-acceptable, and Headspace is an organization that aims to reduce this behaviour through education programs.

Rhonda Allan of the Mallee Sports Assembly thanked Emily for her time

and support to the Active Youth Program for the Birchip P-12 School.

## Gym Session

The students had a great work out with qualified fitness instructor Demi Foott. Demi kept everyone moving well and included some great work out options which is excellent to enhance your fitness for other sports like football, netball, hockey etc.

Demi's session involved 8 different exercises which included using the bench press, Renegade rowing, medicine ball, step ups, jumping and squats, bar bells etc. The focus was on strength and balance.

The students rotated around the different stations; some were outside under the shelter.

The drills were 45 seconds each, with a 15 second break before moving on to the next station. The session concluded with some cool down stretches.

The Mallee Sports Assembly and the Birchip P-12 School sincerely thank Demi for her time and expertise.

## Drug & Alcohol

This session was facilitated by Vic Police officer

Tania Peters (Swan Hill), School Nurse Jeanette Trembath (Horsham) and School Nurse Jacinta Miller (Wyche-proof).

Jeanette commenced the session with the question "What is a Drug?" The answer is: "Any substance that (when taken) changes a person's functionality and psychology".

Jeanette and Jacinta covered the "Health" aspect of using drugs (including alcohol) and good reasons for not using them as follows: Lack of control, health implications, cost, bad experiences, physical and mental health are some examples.

Tania spoke of the legality of using drugs and in particular alcohol and the laws associated with the consumption of it.

Other discussions included "Why do people use drugs and alcohol?" and how poor decision making could change one's life in a split second.

Thanks to Tania, Jeanette and Jacinta for their time and expertise and supporting the youth of today.



• Student Jackson Goss gives the "heads up" for the bullying session facilitated by Emily Noonan (standing), of Headspace.



• Standing left to right, Tania Peters, Jeanette Trembath and Jacinta Miller during the "Drug & Alcohol" session.



• Instructor Demi Foott (centre) demonstrating to the students during the Gym session.

## To Kickstart Their Education... Free Kinder Kits for Kids

The Victorian Government is giving a free Kinder Kit to every child starting three-year-old kindergarten – full of books, toys and stationery to help children get their best start in life.

Member for Northern Victoria, Jaclyn Symes, unveiled this year's Kinder Kits, which over 2,500 children starting three-year-old kinder in the Northern Victoria region this year will receive.

Families have enough to worry about, and the cost of early learning materials shouldn't be one of them. Kinder Kits ensure that all children can enjoy the benefits of Free Kinder, with engaging activities that set them up for a lifetime of learning.

"Victorian families are feeling the pinch, and every little bit helps. That's why we're supporting kids to get the best start to life with these free kinder kits and saving families up to \$2,600 a year with Free Kinder," said Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn.

"With the cost of living rising, many parents are forced to make tough choices about where their money goes. The Kinder Kits ensure that every child, no matter their background, has access to fun, engaging, and educational tools that support their development."

When children and families open their kits, they can get creative with playdough, draw with crayons, play with stacking blocks, plant alfalfa seeds and practice reading with stories from Australian authors.

This year's Kinder Kits double as a backpack which can be opened into a felt playing surface for imaginative play.

Other fun, educational items for kids include timber story rollers, a colouring book, a jumping frog game, a card game exploring maths concepts, and felt stickers that can be used to create stories on the backpack's lining.

Since 2022, the State Government has given

227,000 families Kinder Kits, which are one of the ways it's bringing families together by encouraging an interest in their child's learning. They can be used anywhere whether it's at home, the park or brought along to visits with friends and family.

Every item in the kits is recommended by education experts to support learning through play. More than 50 Victorian businesses have contributed to the kits since 2022 – with products made, designed or printed in Victoria, written by a Victorian author, or produced by a Victorian business.

Kinder Kits are part of Victoria's Best Start, Best Life reforms, which are transforming early childhood education, saving families money and supporting parents and carers to return to work or study if they choose.



• Jaclyn Symes.

"Kinder Kits are a helping hand at a time when every dollar counts – it's about giving children the best possible foundation for life," said Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes.

"By providing these Kinder Kits, we're reinforcing the message that all children deserve access to the resources that support their learning and development."

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# A Great Day for All at St. Arnaud Bowling Club

Maurie Wood, of the St Arnaud Bowling Club, once again approached Rhonda Allan of the Mallee Sports Assembly (Wycheproof) to conduct another All Abilities bowling event for the region.

This initiative fits under the "Access for All Abilities" program (inclusive sport & recreation for all abilities) which is funded by Sport & Recreation Victoria.

The regional bowling event for people of all abilities was conducted on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at the St Arnaud Bowling Club.

"The club is an ideal central regional location that is fully accessible and also has the right equipment to assist participants with limited mobility for the game of bowls," said Rhonda.

Maurie and his team of another eleven club volunteers made everyone feel so welcome.

Thank you to Matt Jolly and "V" (Vedang) Ovalekar from Wimmera Regional Sport Assembly, Horsham, who were also present to assist with the day, which was excellent. Bowls Vic could not attend but provided every participant with a "Certificate

of Participation" to take home.

Participants attended from Stawell, St Arnaud, Nhill, Ararat, Warracknabeal and Horsham. After a delicious morning tea supplied by the bowling ladies, Rhonda then welcomed everyone before the participants moved out to the greens. The bowling was an informal, no pressure activity where everyone enjoyed the social interaction while trying out their bowling skills. The weather was perfect for the outdoor activity.

Following play, everyone enjoyed a barbecue lunch and fresh fruit platters which was also catered for by the club. Rhonda thanked all involved and everyone for attending, especially the club volunteers of the St Arnaud Bowling Club. Overall, 74 people attended the event, which was excellent.

A great day was had by all, and hope to see more attend the 2026 event.

• Right: The ladies working hard in the kitchen are (left to right) Anne McNally, Dianne Ostarovic, Andrea Tyler and Cherie Duncan.



• Lots of action on the St Arnaud greens.

## For All Abilities . . . Water Aerobics Back in Donald

It's all happening again at the Donald Swimming Pool.

After two weeks of cancellations due to excessive heat and staff shortages, a four-week all abilities swim program is now happening there. Staff and participants from Woodbine (Warracknabeal) and local community members attended. Unfortunately McCallum Day Services from St Arnaud could not attend the first session.

The sun was shining, the water was fresh but ideal, and everyone was thrilled to participate in the first week of all abilities swimming session in Donald.

Cert. IV fitness instructor Meg Tonkin has once again juggled her work timetable to be available to facilitate the sessions for this 4-week program. Thank you so much, Meg.

Since the Donald High School students could not attend, Meg arranged for some of her Donald Dolphin participants (Kerry Wood, Helen Amos, Ali Burke and Kim Young) to come along and assist, which was wonderful.

### Support

A big thank you to the Buloke Shire for continued support to encourage increased physical activity participation.

Lifeguards Darcy O'Shea and Tom Ayars were on duty to ensure everyone was kept safe while in the water. Thank you to you both.

Rhonda Allan, of the Mallee Sports Assembly, once again approached Meg and the Buloke Shire to make this happen. It is great that our local Buloke Shire Council supports inclusive sport & recreation. What a "win, win" for everyone! This program is an initiative of the "Access for All Abilities" program

(funded by Sport & Recreation of Victoria) which focuses on inclusive sport and recreation for all levels of abilities.

Meg facilitated a fun, no pressure session, which was backed up by inspirational and motivating music. Different floatation devices were also used during the session.

### Open to All

This program is open to all members of the community, and we are so lucky to have people like Meg Tonkin in our area that can facilitate these sessions. Water exercise is a great way to become fitter, feel better while doing non-weight bearing activities.

It is certainly not too late to join in. The sessions include a lot of fun and laughter, very social and has a laid-back environment to enjoy the water and the many benefits of a

wide variety of exercises. Each class is aimed at increasing or maintaining mobility and flexibility, and overall health and wellbeing. All ages, abilities and fitness levels are catered for and you always work at your own level. There is even a hoist available on site for those participants who require assistance to enter and leave the pool which opens "more doors" for participation for others who have limited mobility. No exercise or swimming experience is necessary, just comfortable swimming attire, a towel and a smile!

So, what are you waiting for? Come along and join in, it's fun and a great way to start your day!

The last two sessions will be held on Wednesday mornings 10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m., March 5 and 12.



• Facilitator Meg Tonkin on the edge with the hoist in front for increased access for participants.



• Fun exercising in the water.



• Left to right: Vedang Ovalekar (WRSA), Matt Jolly (WRSA), Rhonda Allan (MSA).

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# Local Cups Carnival

(By Peter Hibberd)

Over the next three weekends the Boort, Birchip and Charlton Clubs will run their feature meetings with the running of their pacing and trotting cups.

A lot of effort has gone into promotion of these days, so please go along and support these clubs.

## Charlton, Last Wednesday

On a very competitive day of racing, drivers Damian Wilson and Alex Ashwood took the driving honours with each having a double.

In the last race, a horse that was only having its first race start, called Queen Lilibet, I thought was very impressive.

After looking at her breeding, I learned that her dam has had 3 foals to race, all winners. Her grand-dam had 11 foals with 10 of those winning races.

Being regally bred and with the race name of Queen Lilibet, could she ascend to the throne?

## Results

Race one: Its amazing when a horse changes stables and its form goes to a new level. Such is the case of Settle The Bill, transferred to the Damian Wilson stable and with its first start in late December; it has had 8 starts for 5 wins for Damian. At Charlton it worked around to sit outside the leader and proved too strong at the finish.

Race two: The horse with the unusual name of Quirky Character is certainly well-named; did plenty of things wrong yet scored by a narrow margin.

Race three: Trainer David Murphy is a regular attendee at Charlton. His trotter Beach

Heaven, which has a few tricks, put it all together with a solid win. One notable thing about this race was one of the drivers, Connor Clarke (who was unplaced), jumped in his car to drive all the way to Mildura and drove the winner of the second race and also the fourth race. That is dedication to the sport.

Race four: Another horse that changed stables is Likeable Rogue. Originally from the Riverina area in NSW, it is now with trainer Alex Ashwood. It was very impressive winning in very quick mile rate of 1.55.5 – that is very good!

Race five: Owner Len Parker from Maryborough is a very well-known owner and breeder. Many years ago, he had his first ever winner in harness racing at Charlton. Nearly all of his horses have the “Moth” in them. His winner at Charlton was Ideal Moth, which gave Damian Wilson a training and driving double. He came from well back in the field and ran exceptional closing sectionals.

Race six: Charlton trainer Michael Gadsden has certainly found the key to No Emotion, another horse which has had a stable change. With Luke Dunne driving, it has now won three races at Charlton in recent months.

Race seven: The closest finish of the day was between Surfin’ At Midnight and Monsieur Flamel with a nose victory. Driver Alex Ashwood completed a driving double with “Surfin’s” win.

Race eight: The very heavily supported Mister Jimangle scored an easy win. Driven by “Herby” it was back on the inside, but with some brilliant moves was able to come out wide in the straight to win.

Race nine: We might have seen a very promising debut run in Queen Lilibet.

## Coming Up

Boort Cup this Sunday. Local interest in both feature races Alderbaran Demi in the trotters’ cup for Michael Gadsden and Cee Cee In America in the pacing cup for Joe Thompson.

Birchip “Mallee Bull” Cups, Sunday, March 9.



• Driver James “Herby” Herbertson with Jacinta Allan-Gange and Terry Gange after the win of Mister Jimangle.



• The winning style of a very good trotter, Settle The Bill, driven by Damian Wilson, defeats Jessica's Story, driven by Liam Older.



• Driver Damian Wilson with prominent owner/breeder Len Parker after the win of Ideal Moth. This completed a training/driving double for Damian.



• Driver Alex Ashwood driving Likeable Rogue to victory. He defeated Major Drama (inside) driven by David Murphy and Major Manbar driven by James “Herby” Herbertson.

# Raising Pension Age Lowers the Australian Birth Rate

(From e61 Institute)

Raising the pension age for women has reduced Australia’s birth rate by delaying grandmothers’ retirement and limiting their availability for childcare, new research by the e61 Institute has found.

Using data gathered from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey from 2001 to 2022, the study found that women whose mothers were not yet old enough for the pension were less likely to have children, with the likelihood decreasing from 73.5% to 69%.

## Fewer Children

Those women also had fewer children on average at 1.47 compared to 1.56 for women whose mothers had qualified for the pension.

Between 1995 and 2023, the pension age for women gradually increased from 60 to 67, delaying grandmothers’ retirement. The employment

rate among grandmothers eligible for the pension is 25% compared to 36% for those who are not, and eligible grandmothers work 3.9 fewer hours per week, the research found.

## In Workforce Longer

“Raising the pension age has kept women contributing in the workforce for longer,

but the trade-off looks like a reduction in their daughters’ fertility rates,” said e61 Research Manager Pelin Akyol.

“This may be because women are more likely to have children when their mothers are available to help them with childcare.

“We find that grandmothers’ pension eligibility has a large impact on fertility, similar to the impact of the introduction of paid parental leave, which increased the average number of births by five per cent.

“The effects were even greater among women with lower wealth and education levels, suggesting they rely more on grandparental childcare.

## Impacts on Fertility

“With Australia’s fertility rate at a historic low of 1.5 births per woman, policymakers should carefully consider impacts on fertility when designing policies that encourage labour force participation among the older population.”

The study isolated the im-

pact of pension eligibility on fertility by comparing similar women whose mothers just qualified for the pension based on their age, to those whose mothers had to keep working due to the gradual pension age increase.

The study controlled for observed and unobserved time-invariant factors, such as cohort-specific differences and year-fixed effects, as well as potentially time-varying characteristics such as education, health and region.



# Hayden Has a Harness History

Life member of the Birchip Harness Racing Club, Hayden Hogan, will present the trophy to the winner of the Mallee Bull Cup at the annual harness racing meeting next Sunday, March 9.

In the mid-1960s local café owner, Joe Hogan, bought Vickie Marie. Ownership subsequently passed to Hayden Hogan and Eddie Lee. Trained and driven by Jack Caldwell from Ouyen, Vickie Marie won over twenty races including three at the Melbourne Showgrounds.

This was the catalyst for growth of interest in harness racing in the Birchip district.

Hayden and Eddie both ventured into the breeding side of the industry, with Hayden standing Pacific Hanover which had early winners. Rocket Lady, his first, won at Stawell in 1974 and Bay Roan and Villa Marie ran first and second at the Hopetoun Show in 1976.

Hayden was presented with a hickory shafted sulky. However, for safety reasons this type of shaft has been discontinued.

## The Track

Hayden and other prime movers including Frank Tuck,

Ken Goodwin and Pat Connelly hatched an idea to build a track at Birchip. With a major contribution from A.D. Hillgrove, work commenced on the project in 1979. A.D. had promised the track would be as good as the Moonee Valley track, but sadly A.D. passed away before it was finished.

Hayden built his stables called "Tarleton Lodge" to the East of the track in 1980. Many winners came from these stables, and many had Tarleton as the prefix to their name.

## First Meetings

The first meeting at the Birchip track took place in 1982 and the inaugural Mallee Bull Cup was held in 1987, sponsored by M.J. and M.F. Foott Butchers. It was won by Clontarf Lass, owned and trained by John and Mick Connelly and driven by Robbin Connelly.

Some other winner's were Jock Schofield's Winfield

Adios, P & J O'Connor's Truant Rajah and Hayden and G Russell's Bando Lady. Ian McCallum drove three of the six winners.

Hayden owned, bred and trained harness horses for nearly 60 years. He has also made a major contribution to the establishment and ongoing success of the club.

On Sunday, March 9, at the Mallee Bull Cup the club will acknowledge Hayden's contribution and those of his counterparts. Come along, pay tribute to Hayden, make a donation to Women Can - Team Teal (raising funds for gynaecological cancers) and enjoy a magnificent day out.

Many trainers acknowledge that Birchip's meeting is the most enjoyable race meeting they attend all year, with activities for all age groups catered for at family friendly venue that the committee manure for the big day out.



• Life Members photo taken in 1987: Hayden Hogan, Ken Goodwin and Pat Connelly (absent Frank Tuck).

# "Burtons" Claim Twilight Title

The combination of Robert and Debbie Burton and Shane O'Shea has taken out the Donald Golf Bowls Club's annual Twilight Mini-Pennant, sponsored by the Community Bank Donald and District.

Over the four-night series, the "Burtons" accumulated a total of +61, to take out the title from another long-term "Barflies" combination of Peter Hibberd, Belinda Murray and Sian Robertson +54, with the "Corack" team of Corazon, Tony and Connor in third place with +42.

Making the presentations to the winners and runners-up on Tuesday evening, chief organiser Peter Raynes thanked the many club members who had assisted over the series, cooking a barbecue tea, manning the bar, selling raffle tickets, making sandwiches and helping to set up the

green for play, as well as fellow event organisers, Brian Bayles and Robert Adams, for their assistance in the office.

He also thanked the major sponsors, Community Bank Donald and District, and Donald's Family Butcher, which provided meat trays each evening for the raffle.

Peter described the current series as one of the most successful, with up to sixteen teams of three competing on some nights, and 42 bowlers across 7 rinks taking part on the final evening, including a number of participants who travelled long distances to

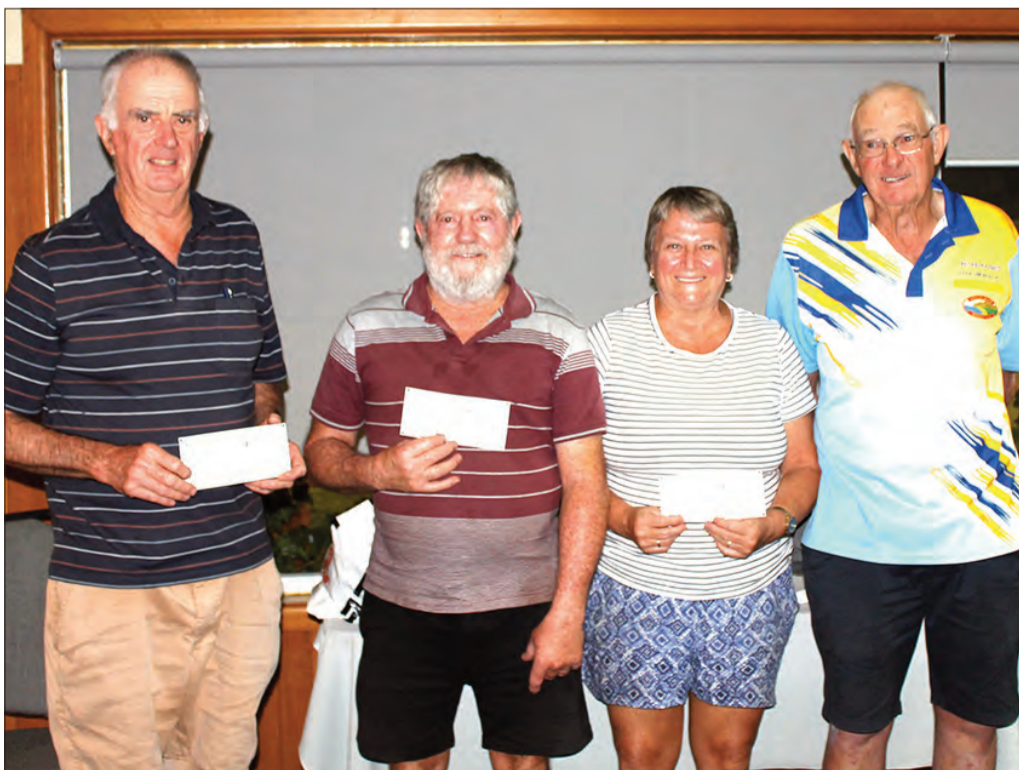
play, making special mention of the Humphrey family from Wedderburn, and Neil from Horsham.

Presenting awards to the winners of week four, Peter presented club pens to the "Burtons", who achieved three wins on Tuesday, with a score of +20, with the runners-up, the team of Connor, Montana and Luke.

A special award, donated by Brian Bayles, of a Bowls Crying Cloth, to go to the unfortunate skipper who had the dubious honour of achieving the least number of wins, was won by the donor himself.



• Hayden Hogan with the 2025 Mallee Bull Cup and the sulky with the hickory shaft, recreated by Kevin Sharp.



• "Burtons" team members: Shane O'Shea, Robert Burton and Debbie Burton, with event organiser, Peter Raynes.

## North-Central Pennant Bowls

This Week's Selected Club Teams



**DIVISION ONE**  
Grand Final, Saturday, March 1,  
at Wycheproof

**Donald Golf v. St Arnaud**  
DONALD GOLF

W. Livingston, A. Humphrey, R. Reseigh, D. Pettifer (s)  
G. Stopps, B. Murray, S. Hollis, P. Hibberd (s)  
M. Frank, G. Geddes, R. Adams, G. Rigby (s)  
Cars: Hibberd, Humphreys, Geddes. Leave 12.10 p.m.

**ST. ARNAUD**

T. Amos, G. McNally, G. Hancock, S. Zsigmond (s)  
D. Shepherd, C. Marchment, P. McRae, A. Dyke (s)  
T. Marland, M. Wood, A. Welsh, T. McSwain (s)

**DIVISION TWO**  
Grand Final, Saturday, March 1,  
at Wycheproof

**Wycheproof v. Wedderburn**  
WYCHEPROOF

D. Nicholls, S. Barratt, Jeannie Grylls, P. Connolly (s)  
P. Bagley, J. McLean, G. Coatsworth, M. Nicholls (s)  
S. Wellington, V. Grant, D. Denney, R. Grylls (s)

**WEDDERBURN**

S. Lear, N. White, A. Noordennen, I. Hall (s)  
R. Ashley, R. Hall, C. Mills, J. Grant (s)  
R. Tonkin, T. Benaim, L. Holt, L. Standfield (s)



# Donald Golf Wins a Thriller

• Continued from page 16.

After 60 ends, Golf led by 4 shots, a margin it proceeded to extend until disaster struck the O'Shea rink, which conceded 5 shots to Matt Nicholls's crew on the 22nd end and trailed by 4 shots.

Fortunately, the quartet was able to pull together, wipe out the deficit over the next three ends, and finish 2 shots in front after 25 ends, 22-20.

Peter Hibberd was cruising along to a comfortable victory until Dale Groves moved the Jack, picking up 5 shots on the final end, Golf having to settle for a 1-shot win.

Those results combined to create a fitting climax to the season decider: Donald Golf three shots up and one hand on the premiership shield, but Wyche, holding 2 shots in the final head, with several other bowlers in the near vicinity, with two bowls to be delivered. Tuesday's grand final could not have reached a more appropriate finish between the two teams which finished the home-and-away season in the top two positions on the midweek pennant ladder.

• North Central Playing Area officials Gillian Tweddle and Sandra Steel, who had umpiring duties on the day.

Despite the Rigby rink having to settle for a 2-shot loss to its opposition, 24-22, fortune favoured Donald Golf on the day, albeit by the narrowest of margins.

Details:  
Donald Golf 71 d. Wycheproof 70.

Marilyn Frank, Beris Jones, Joyce Hollis, Geoff Rigby (s) 22 lost to Carol Jones, Vince Grant, Jeannie Grylls, Jono Grylls (s) 24.

Corozon Stopps, Shirley Evans, Robert Reseigh, Shane O'Shea (s) 22 d. Andrea Coatsworth, Shirley McKenna, Des Nicholls, Matt Nicholls (s) 20.

Bill Livingston, Sue Donnellon, Brenda Dixon, Peter Hibberd (s) 27 d. Cheryl Rayes, Lynette Nicholls, Alan Jones, Dale Groves (s) 26.



• Donald Golf Bowls Club's 2024-'25 North Central Playing Area Midweek Pennant premiership team: Back row, left to right, Bill Livingston, Shane O'Shea (skipper), Geoff Rigby (skipper), Robert Reseigh, Beris Jones. Front: Sue Donnellon, Brenda Dixon, Peter Hibberd (skipper), Shirley Evans, Joyce Hollis and Corazon Stopps.



• Donald Golf bowler Sue Donnellon delivers her bowl. Watching on are Alan Jones (seated), Lynette Nicholls and Bill Livingston.



• Donald Golf skipper, Peter Hibberd, accepts the Midweek Pennant Shield from North Central Playing Area officials, Lance Standfield (left) and Sandra Steel.



• Winners of the Willie Mok triples event: Margaret Quick, Lindy Morgan, John Howley, and Beryl Milne.

## Willie Mok Triples Winners

Willie and Agnes Mok were dentists in Donald in the early 'eighties. Willie became a member of the Donald Park Bowls Club and under the excellent tuition of the late Alan McClelland and Norm Hollis, became an excellent and skilled bowler.

Willie Mok was considered at one stage to represent his native country Malaysia at the Commonwealth Games.

Willie and Agnes had two children, with Nicholas and Cassandra being born in Donald. Willie was a strong member of Donald Apex, notorious for driving straight into Lake Buloke and being bogged for a day.

Willie and Agnes now live on Sydney's North Shore and have fond memories of their stay in Donald where they have supported Donald Park bowls. The Willie Mok Triples have been held for over 40 years.

Donald Bowls Club continued its Club event with

the Willie Mok sponsored event on Saturday.

Bowlers started early at 9 a.m. to get it over by the predicted temperature peak and saw the team of Beryl Milne, John Howley, Lindy Morgan and Marg Quick victorious – just by one point but got the chocolates.

"Tiger in the Ditch"

## Church Notices

**UNITING CHURCH (North Central Living Waters Cluster)**  
Donald, 10 a.m., Harvest Festival with Rev. Peter Welsh  
Wycheproof, 10 a.m.  
Birchip, 10 a.m.  
Contact Number: 5497 1033

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# Birchip Grey Goes Bang, Bang!

**For the fourth successive year Birchip teams have won Division 1 and Division 2 grand finals in the Tyrrell Bowling Association.**

The early start due to the heat rule did not halt the charge of Birchip Grey players as they came out triumphant in both divisions of the Tyrrell Bowling Association's grand final held at Woomelang on Saturday.

After the welcoming ceremonies and national anthem, play got under way and it was obvious right from the get go that this was going to be a tight game against the Sea Lake teams in both divisions one and two.

### Division Two

Skipper Moya Connelly, Rob Ince, Pauline Bragg and Leslie Whiting got away to a slow start for the first two ends, but in the next six ends they added 16 shots to take the lead and control the game, coming out very good winners 33/15.

Things weren't as rosy for Skipper Peg Hogan, Geoff Smith Stan Fraser and Les Blair. After getting away to a good start the Sea Lake boys and girls worked hard to overcome their tardy start and come out winners 30/21.

The great thing about bowls is that it is an overall result game and the collective score of both teams determines the winner, meaning Grey secured a 9-point grand final victory in Division 2.

### Division One

A giant battle ensued in Division One, and it wasn't until the last couple of ends that Birchip took the upper hand to run out premiers. Mark "Frogga" Bowen was on fire from the start and with the able assistance of Mick Spicer, Carolyn Reid and Grant Cartwright, they had a resounding victory over Adam Louttit and his rink 28/13.

Des Ryan's rink of Liam Scott, Nick "Bobby" Noonan and Owen Reid, was up against Noel Watson's rink, and they worked tirelessly all day to help achieve victory overall. After a slow start in the first 11 ends, the Greys bounced back and at one stage they led 17/16 only to go down by 6 shots 25/19. Des Ryan's leadership was telling with his ability to keep his rink in a positive frame of mind throughout the whole game.

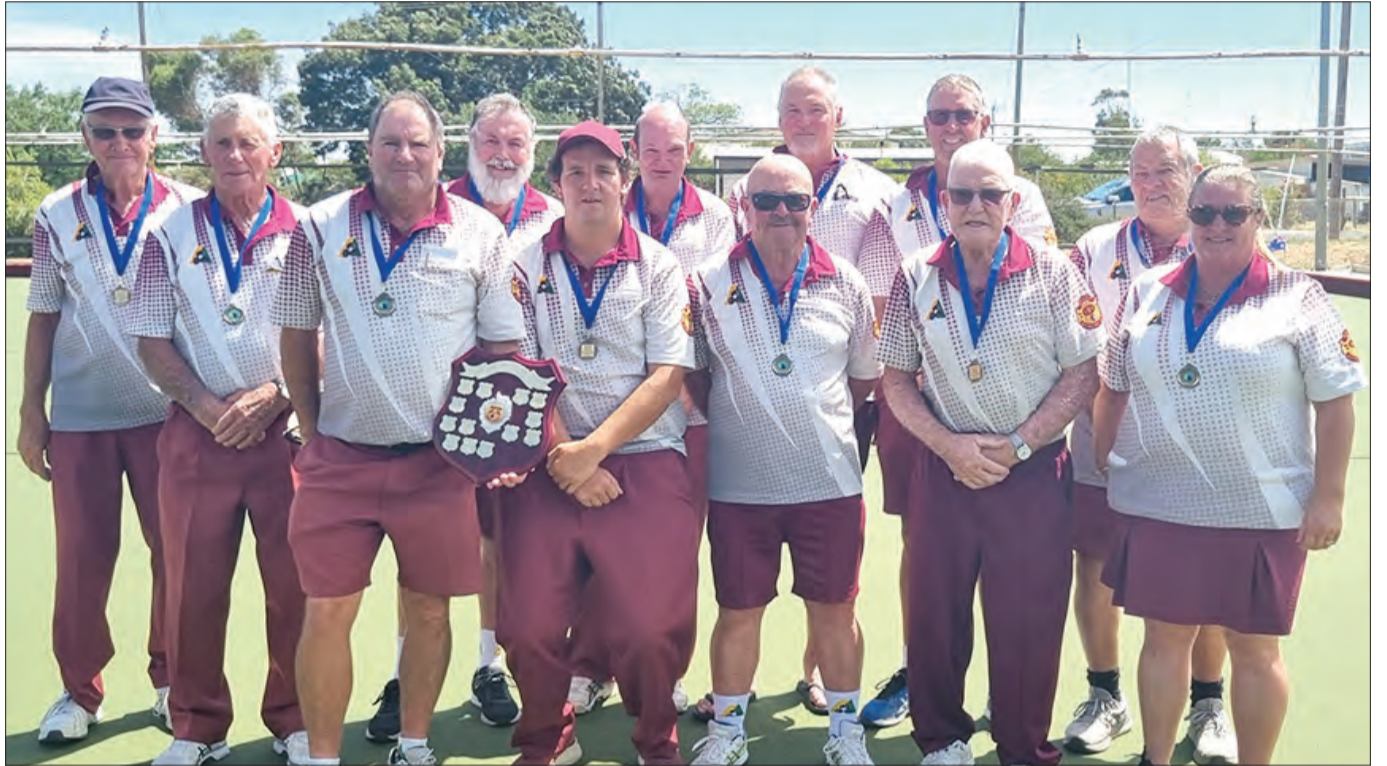
Richard Haddrick, Roger Bragg, Bryan Hogan and the legendary Alf Donnellan, likewise, had a gigantic battle against Ric Stacey and his boys and fought back towards the end to go down by one shot overall 17/16.

Again, as was the case with Des Ryan's leadership, Richard showed great composure to keep his rink in a positive mindset, to stay in the game till the very end, contributing shots to the overall scores, that saw Birchip Grey win the 2024/25 Tyrrell Bowls Division 1 premiership by 8 shots.

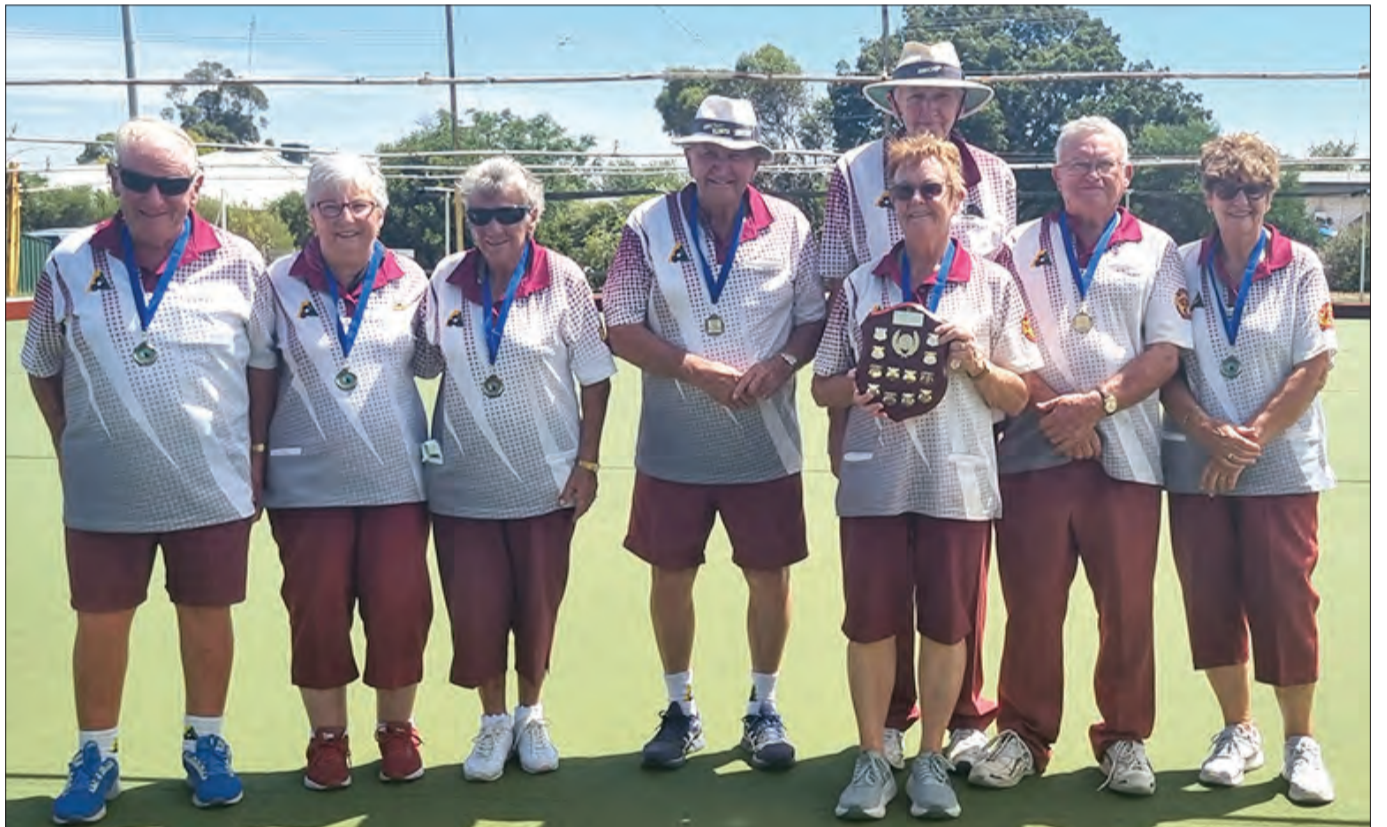
Congratulations to all who competed, including the two Sea Lake teams and to the Tyrrell Bowling Association for its administration over the 24/25 season.

It was another successful year for the Birchip Bowling Club and now the club looks forward to the future, whatever that may look like for Birchip and Tyrrell.

Thank-you and again congratulations to every member of the Birchip Bowling Club for all of your efforts, either on the green or in the kitchen and around the greens. All of your hard work makes the Birchip Bowling Club the successful club that it is.



• Division 1. Back row: Richard Haddrick, Bryan Hogan, Roger Bragg, Nick Noonan, Des Ryan, Owen Reid, Grant Cartwright. Front row: Mark Bowen, Liam Scott, Mick Spicer, Kevin Donnellon, Carolyn Reid.



• Division 2: Rob Ince, Pauline Bragg, Lesley Whiting, Stan Fraser, Les Blair, Geoff Smith, Peg Hogan, Moya Connelly (in front with shield).

# Donald Golf Wins a Thriller

**Donald Golf is North Central Playing Area's midweek pennant champion after scoring a thrilling one-shot victory over Wycheproof in Tuesday's grand final, played at Bort.**

Scores were close throughout the evenly contested and very entertaining season decider, with the end result in the balance until the last bowl.

As has been the case in recent finals, Wycheproof's Jono Grylls was in a position to influence the outcome, both on his rink and overall, with his final bowl, this time against Golf opponent, Geoff Rigby.

Golf held a slender three-shot lead overall, with two rinks having completed their 25 ends.

Holding 2 shots in the head but needing at least three to force a draw, Jono was unable to improve Wycheproof's position and Golf survived,

with Rigby not being required to deliver his final bowl.

From start to finish, very little separated the two grand finalists, each enjoying a positive start on at least one rink.

For Donald Golf, it was the Rigby combination of Marilyn Frank (lead), Beris Jones and Joyce Hollis which scored freely on the first two ends, picking up 7 shots against Grylls, his leader Carol Jones, Vince Grant and Jeannie Grylls.

By the completion of 13 ends, when a lunch break was taken, the Grylls combination had settled and then scored frequently, overtaking the Rigby rink to lead by 5 shots, 16 to 11.

Peter Hibberd for Donald Golf, with Bill Livingston (l), Sue Donnellon and Brenda Dixon, was able to counter that lead, holding a five-shot advantage, leading 15-10 over Dale Groves, with Cheryl Rayes (s), Lynette Nicholls and Alan Jones.

Matt Nicholls's Wycheproof rink of Andrea Coatsworth (l), Shirley McKenna and Des Nicholls, ensured Wyche. led at the break, 39 ends having been completed, holding a 6-shot advantage over Shane O'Shea, with Corozon Stopps (l), Shirley Evans and Robert Reseigh, 13 to 7, the bowling of the trio armed with bowling arms, Andrea, Shirley and

Des, causing all sorts of grief for their opponents.

Lunch has a peculiar way of changing the course of a bowls game, and so it proved against in the grand final.

Golf was able to pick up shots on all three rinks in the early stages after the resumption, edging its way to within a shot of Wycheproof after 48 ends had been completed, and hit the front, 51 to 47, after 54 ends.

The Rigby versus Grylls rink remained tight, Hibberd's advantage had been whittled back to 3 shots, while 2 shots separated O'Shea and Nicholls, in Wyche's favour.

• Continued on page 15.



• The final score of an epic game of bowls showing Donald Golf claiming a one-shot victory over Wycheproof.