



Blood Donation Changes

Yvonne Bower



DID you know that one in three Australians will need blood or blood products during their lifetime (33%), yet only 3% of Australians donate? New donors are always needed so please consider donating. There have been recent changes to blood donation eligibility rules.

On 20th April 2026 Australian Red Cross Lifeblood announced that gay and bisexual men and transgender people in long-term monogamous relationships will now be eligible to donate blood and platelets. All donors will be asked the same sexual activity questions in the pre-donation questionnaire, regardless of gender.

This follows changes introduced in July 2025 allowing gay and bisexual men and anyone taking PrEP to be eligible to donate plasma. From July 2024 people living in the United Kingdom during the mad cow disease outbreak became eligible to donate.

These changes reflect Lifeblood's ongoing work to make donation more inclusive while maintaining the safety of donated blood.

If you wish to donate but are uncertain if you are eligible, please call Lifeblood on 13 14 95. If you are unable to donate, why not become an ally and spread the message to your family and friends.

As a Lifeblood Champion I lead a small team, the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Blood Donors. We are unique in that we have never met in person as I promote the team solely through a local Facebook group. Our small team of 21 members has saved 96 lives to date in 2026. Well done team! You are most welcome to join, just mention the team name at your next donation.

Sourced from the Lifeblood website (lifeblood.com.au)

Electoral Reforms Ahead

Zaki Feyzullayev

SIGNIFICANT changes to the legislative framework governing elections in the state of Victoria have come into effect after the passage of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 by Parliament on March 31, 2026. These reforms will significantly alter key timelines and procedures related to the upcoming state election scheduled for 2026.

One of the main changes is the shift in timelines for political party registration. Political parties will now be required to register 60 days earlier than previously. The deadline for submitting applications to register or change the name or logo of a political party will now close 180 days before the election date. For the 2026 state election, this deadline will fall on June 1, 2026.

Continued on page 3





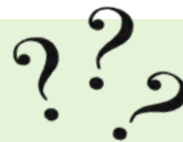
CONTENTS

(Click on article to navigate to it)

Blood Donation Changes	1	Building Confidence	20
Electoral Reforms Ahead	1	Hearing and Vision Testing	21
Quizling Questions	2	Suicide prevention in Eastern Melbourne	22
News and Topical issues	3	Mental Health at Upton House	23
Community Consultation	3	Mitcham Nunawading Probus Club	23
Excavation of a Time Capsule	4	Meet the locals	24
Handmade, Heartfelt and Thriving	5	Tom Thorpe OAM JP	24
Navigating Change	6	Brickwalls and family history	25
Letters to the Editor	7	Pets	26
Threat to green suburbs	7	Ask a Vet with Dr Suze	26
We need the right information	8	Local stories	27
Environment, climate and sustainability	8	Box Hill Community Gardens	27
Where Does All Our Green Waste Go?	8	Woodsy	27
The 10 cent Classroom	10	Growing up in Surrey Hills: Wattle Park	28
Pastimes, activities, interest groups	11	St. Andrews Gardiner Uniting Church	29
Full steam ahead for Express	11	Creative writing, poetry	30
Volunteering at Bungalook	12	Ode to an Oak	30
For the Love of the Sport	14	The Bands of ANZAC	31
Garden of 'Hope' - Autumn	15	Community Notices	32
Walking through history	16	Events	36
Hawthorn Station	17		
Local organisations	18		
Community through dance	18		



Quizling Questions



Answers on page 39

1. A famous English actor. Turn the last letter of his first name into a Roman numeral, and you spell a type of pain that bad puns can produce. Now turn the first letter of his surname into another Roman numeral, and you get a word for glee. Who is our man?
2. CUT hides in the alternate letters of COURT (or ACQUIT), depending on whether you opt for odd or even letters. Now cutting to objects that cut, can you find two words (including a remarkably appropriate word) that alternately hide the words FOIL and SABRE?

Thank you, David Astle for allowing us to use your intriguing, teasing, and frustrating quizlings that can drive a person to distraction. These come from his book, Puzzled.

To read more of his work, go to davidastle.com

Acknowledgement of country

Independent Community News Group Incorporated acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters of the Eastsider News focus area, and pays respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

To learn more about the rich culture and traditions of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, explore their website at www.wurundjeri.com.au



Electoral Reforms Ahead

Continued from page 1

Another significant change is the alignment of the electoral roll closure with the date a writ is issued. This update underscores the importance for voters to ensure their registration details are up to date. Now, Victorian residents must make sure their information is current before the electoral roll is closed.

New additional requirements have been introduced for the registration of political parties. There will now be stricter scrutiny to ensure that party names and logos do not mislead voters. These measures are designed to prevent the registration of parties with confusing or similar names that could deceive the electorate.

Another key change is the increased flexibility for the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to appoint alternative voting centres during emergencies. In the event of unforeseen circumstances, the VEC will have more options for quickly adjusting voting locations to ensure smooth election proceedings.

Victorian Electoral Commissioner Sven Bluemmel commented that, with the legislation now passed, the VEC will focus on implementing the reforms effectively to ensure participation, transparency, and trust in the electoral system. "Now that the legislation is passed, our focus is on delivering the reforms in a way that supports active participation in the democratic process," he emphasized.

At the same time, another important aspect cannot be overlooked. A major ruling by the High Court of Australia has overturned Victoria's political donation system, removing caps, bans on foreign donors and disclosure requirements.



The decision found the laws placed an unjustified burden on political communication, effectively wiping out the entire framework rather than fixing specific issues.

Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan warned the ruling could allow money to flow through politics without limits or transparency, raising concerns about 'dark money' and public trust. The state government is now under pressure to introduce quickly new laws that balance fairness, transparency and constitutional constraints.

Community Consultation

Members of SHMAPA

IN June 2025 the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association (SHMAPA) lodged a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Community Consultation Practices.

The Committee overseeing this Inquiry received 133 submissions leading to three days of public hearings and two online roundtable discussions with members of the public. The Committee's report was tabled in Parliament on 3 March, 2026. The report came up with 63 findings and 28 recommendations.

The Committee strongly endorsed the need for all government departments, agencies and their consultants to follow a consistent framework and approach to consultation with the public.

The Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association welcomes the Committee's findings, including those that respond directly to the Association's experiences during the 2022-2024 level crossing removal project. Examples include the blocking of access to plans, technical reports and other relevant information. Community liaison groups and drop-in sessions were so heavily controlled that it became extremely difficult to get genuine concerns heard and considered.

Continued on page 4

[Return to Contents](#)

Community Consultation

Continued from page 3

The Government has six months to respond in writing to any recommendations made by the Committee's report. In its response, the Government must indicate whether it supports the Committee's recommendations. It can also outline actions it may take.

Why this matters? Genuine consultation is needed to engender public trust. We believe the public has the right to receive accurate information in a timely manner and to provide input into projects that will directly impact them, in many cases permanently.

More information can be found at <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-community-consultation-practices/reports>

The SHMAPA submission can be found at <https://www.shmapa.org.au>

Media coverage can be found at

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/ndas-tied-to-infrastructure-projects-slammed-as-entirely-antithetical-20260316-p5oawj.html>

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/call-for-young-victorians-to-be-paid-for-their-two-cents-on-the-state-s-future-20250828-p5mqjg.html>



(ABOVE): MP Paul Hamer and group at the Time Capsule excavation. Photo courtesy Anne Payne

ON March 17 this year, an almost forgotten time capsule was excavated from its site next the rotunda in South Parade, Blackburn. It was buried on March 17, 2001 as part of a Federation Grant project, a year after the rotunda was opened.

Documents indicate that to celebrate Federation in the year 2000 the Blackburn Chamber of Commerce, local community groups, service clubs, schools, residents, Councillors and MP's, formed the Blackburn Federation Picnic Day, 19th March 2000 committee. It was chaired by local identity, Bob Hoskins OAM.

They decided on two separate dates for activities- in 2000 and a year later in 2001. For the actual Federation Day many activities were planned. The idea of burying a Time Capsule a year later was proposed by Keith Rooney and accepted.

The committee applied for and received a grant from the Commonwealth Government to carry out activities and build the Rotunda as a lasting monument. Its opening on March 19 2000 was a happy time for the community. Activities were held all day from South Parade to Blackburn Lake Sanctuary.

These included bands playing, people dressed in period costume, steam train rides, an old-fashioned school

sports day in the grounds of the Adult Deaf Society, a picnic, walks, history displays and a concert at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary (BLS) in the evening.

Historic vehicles, including an old Ventura bus and John Allison / Monkhouse horse drawn hearse, other horse and buggies, provided rides for the public from South Parade to BLS.

The Committee continued and on the first anniversary of the rotunda opening organised the 'burial' of a Time Capsule and associated celebratory activities, not quite as extensive as in 2000. Kathryn, a Federation project youth representative, was present. A number of local identities were chosen to help shovel dirt onto the capsule. An Irish band played in the rotunda and a sausage sizzle was held.

The site of the capsule was marked with a small plaque near the Rotunda with instructions that the capsule be opened on the March 17, 2026 and reburied to be opened again on March 17, 2051.

The capsule was filled with contributions from local residents, school children and businesses in Blackburn. Historic documents, photographs, information

Continued on page 5

[Return to Contents](#)

Excavation of a Time Capsule

Continued from page 4

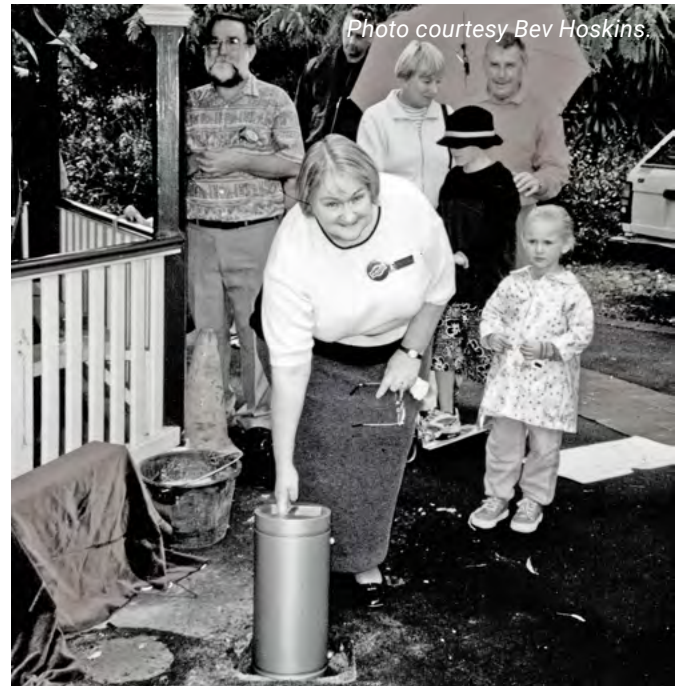
pertaining to the Federation year celebrations, art work and forgotten technology such as VHS and tapes were included.

It was fortunate that Kathryn, the young woman who helped bury the capsule 25 years ago realised it was that time to excavate the capsule, and contacted both Whitehorse Council and Box Hill MP Paul Hamer.

The capsule was identified as being on Metro Trains land and after some quick organising the excavation took place with a small group of locals, joined by MPs Paul Hamer and Gabriel Ng, Whitehorse Council and Metro Train staff.

The contents of the capsule will be documented by the Whitehorse Historic Society volunteers, and it is planned to rebury the capsule in the later part of this year.

At this stage plans for this occasion have not been announced.



(ABOVE): Mayor Jessie McCallum lowering the Capsule in 2001.

Handmade, Heartfelt and Thriving

Zaki Feyzullayev

IN an age of one-click shopping and global supply chains, something refreshingly human unfolded in Melbourne over the weekend.

The Makers and Shakers Market returned on 18–19 April, transforming the grand Royal Exhibition Building into a bustling hub of creativity, where every product told a story and every purchase supported a real person behind it.

Founded by Sarah Thornton and Georgina Austin, the Makers and Shakers Market was born out of frustration with mass-produced goods dominating retail shelves. Their answer was a curated marketplace that championed Australian craftsmanship, ethical production, and small-scale creativity.

Over time, the event grew into one of the country's most respected handmade markets, drawing thousands of visitors each season and this April was no exception.

More than 180 independent makers showcased everything from slow fashion and ceramics to small-batch skincare and gourmet treats. Shoppers met designers face-to-face, heard the stories behind their work, and in some cases watched parts of the creative process unfold.

It was retail with a human connection, something increasingly rare.

While the stalls were the main attraction, the atmosphere kept people lingering. Live DJs set the tone, workshops invited hands-on participation, and a dedicated kids' area ensured it was a family-friendly outing.

It became less about ticking items off a shopping list and more about spending a day immersed in Melbourne's creative culture.

At a time when retail spaces are increasingly digitised and impersonal, the Makers and Shakers Market offered a compelling alternative. It reminded visitors that behind every product was a maker, a process, and a story worth sharing.

And for one weekend in April, Melbourne celebrated all of it under one historic roof.



[Return to Contents](#)

Navigating Change

A Bright Future for the Eastern Suburbs

Zaki Feyzullayev

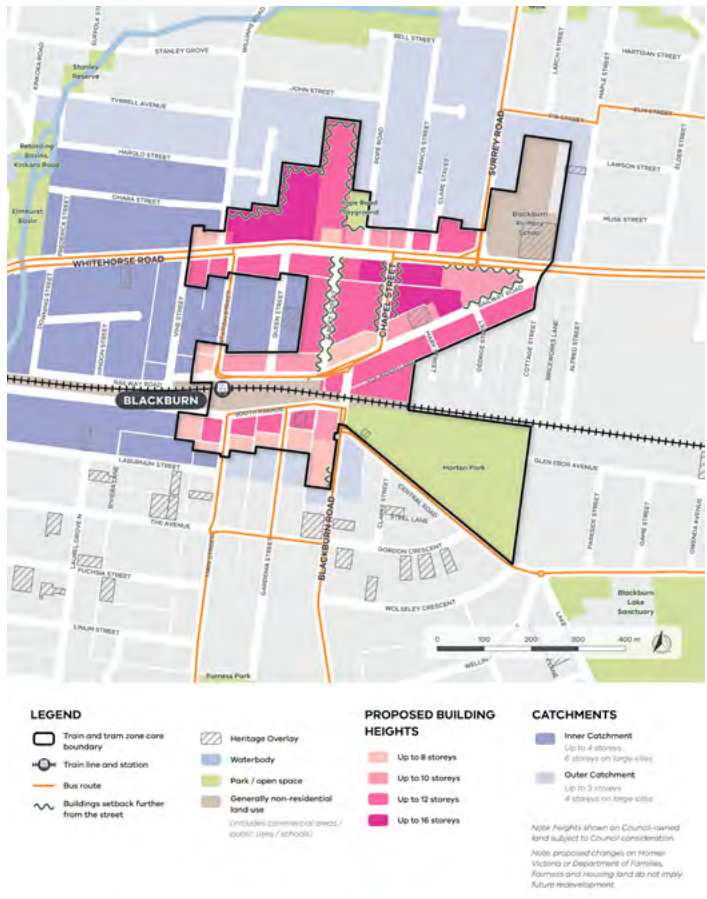
APRIL has brought a wave of exciting developments across Melbourne’s eastern suburbs, as the City of Whitehorse and City of Boroondara embrace opportunities for growth, enhanced infrastructure, and vibrant community engagement. There’s a shared optimism that these changes will ultimately create a better, more connected future for all residents.

In Whitehorse, the conversation has been buzzing around the future of the Blackburn activity centre, a pivotal area poised for growth. City Council has been actively working on various initiatives to address community needs and improve services. They have prepared an Annual Action Plan that outlines key projects and actions to support the community's evolving needs, including collaborations with local universities and community engagement efforts. Council has made strides in improving services and infrastructure.

Across the border in Boroondara, infrastructure developments are also making waves. The ongoing North East Link Project, which has involved necessary closures on the Eastern Freeway, has caused some temporary disruptions for commuters. However, residents and local businesses are looking ahead with hope, knowing these short-term inconveniences will ultimately lead to reduced congestion and smoother travel in the long run.

While the project’s construction may be causing some headaches today, the future vision is one of a more

ABOVE: Map showing the proposed building heights in the ‘core’ of the Blackburn train and tram zone activity centre.



efficient, well-connected Melbourne where commuting is quicker, and the city operates more smoothly for everyone.

As we look to the future, one thing is clear: Melbourne’s eastern suburbs are more than ready to rise to the occasion, embracing challenges as opportunities for improvement and transformation.

Paul Hamer MP

STATE MEMBER FOR BOX HILL

Here to help.

paulhamermp
Authorised by P Hamer, 24 Rutland Road, Box Hill VIC 3128

24 Rutland Road, Box Hill 3128

✉ paul.hamer@parliament.vic.gov.au

☎ 9898 6606

[Return to Contents](#)



Letters to the Editor

The Editors of Eastsider News welcome letters from our readers and supporters. We want to provide you with a platform where you can express your concerns and share your insights on the things that matter in our communities. All we ask is that you keep them polite, well written, short at no more than 250 words and factually based.

Please note, while we welcome a spread of topics, views and opinions, the specific responses expressed by individual writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors, Independent Community News Group Incorporated, or any other organisation.

Threat to green suburbs

The Editor

Eastsider News

MELBOURNE'S "leafy green" eastern suburbs are under severe threat from the Victorian government's housing intensification policies to allow for increased high-density development, and overall expansion. Past articles in Eastsider News have addressed this issue in the loss of tree canopy exacerbating the urban heat island effect, the consuming of valuable "green wedge" land, the strains on infrastructure, the effects of climate change etc. Many of these issues are compounded by increasing housing density.

Simultaneously, one of the biggest issues confronting Australians today is the housing crisis, with younger generations feeling locked out of homeownership, essential workers struggling with rents, and concerns growing about wealth inequality driven by property assets and tax concessions. While there are mounting calls for more public housing and planning, the Victorian Government's short-term approach in fast-tracking high-rise apartments lacks vision and in the long run it compromises neighbourhood amenity, building quality, infrastructure, health and the environment, a regrettable legacy for future generations. In the long term it will create places in which our children will choose not to live.

Opinions diverge on solutions to these conflicting problems, but disappointingly the only viable long-term solution, decentralisation, is not mentioned. Australia is one of the most urbanised nations in the world, with 85% of the population living within 50km of the coast. While many western nations are implementing decentralisation to preserve residential amenity, increase local efficiency and provide services more effectively, the UN notes that *no large country concentrates such a high share of its population in so few major cities as Australia*.

Melbourne, once the world's most liveable city, no longer holds that crown, with cosmopolitan Melbournians living near transport and cultural facilities, and the less well-off struggling with the stress, congestion and disadvantages of outer suburban living. Access to good quality, affordable housing is fundamental to society, but the short-term political solutions of the Victorian government only compromise our long-term future. The Whitlam government began a program of decentralisation, developing cities like Albury-Wodonga. If these policies had not been abandoned by the Fraser government Melbourne would be a vastly better city today. With Melbourne's population set to grow to almost eight million by 2051, the priority should be to secure quality of life, and safeguard the environment, jobs and prosperity for future generations.

Relocating some public sector and job opportunities to regional cities using incentives like housing, payroll tax, financial incentives etc would need to be implemented over decades, but countries like Sweden, Finland and Indonesia, are decentralising and creating more liveable cities.

While the electoral cycle and current lack of bipartisanship in Victoria would seem to mitigate against long term planning, the government has stared down opposition in implementing suburban rail electrification, the desalination plant and level crossing removals. Let's remember that despite vehement opposition at the time, our capital city Canberra is a great example of successful decentralisation.

Decentralisation is undoubtedly complex, long term, expensive and difficult to implement, but the prospects of infinite growth are simply unsustainable and show little regard for future generations.

*Bryan Long
Balwyn 3103*

[Return to Contents](#)

We need the right information

The Editor

Eastsider News

AUSTRALIA'S democracy is widely respected, underpinned by compulsory and preferential voting. However, we must remain vigilant as misinformation and disinformation—now increasingly amplified by AI bots on social media—pose growing risks.

The recent Senate Select Committee report, *The Integrity Gap: Restoring Trust in the Climate and Energy Debate*, found that rising mis- and disinformation, accelerated by the speed and reach of digital platforms, can erode trust between citizens and governments. Concern about misinformation in Australia is high, at 74 per cent, the highest globally.

The report made 21 recommendations, but Senator David Pocock argued it fell short without truth in political advertising laws and an overhaul of the federal lobbying regime.

With a Victorian election looming in November, these issues are especially relevant given the rise of key climate misinformation proponent, One Nation. Opposition Leader and Member for Kew Jess Wilson has not ruled out preferencing One Nation and has yet to commit to strong emissions reduction or climate action.

The Victorian Liberal Party has also criticised the end of native forest logging and is yet to show any interest in closing remaining loopholes. Victoria is the most cleared state, and continuing to support an industry that loses tens of millions of dollars annually—despite substantial public subsidies—makes no economic sense.

If Jess Wilson and her colleagues hope to regain government, they must take a more proactive stance on climate policy and forest protection. The environmental legacy of the former premier and Member for Kew, Sir Rupert Hamer, provides a clear and credible model.

*Ray Peck,
Hawthorn*



Where Does All Our Green Waste Go?

Sal Dugan



WELL, it's enlightening, a trip down to Dandenong South's Bio Gro, the home of the City of Whitehorse's Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) processing plant. Sixteen interested and curious Whitehorse residents took up a Council initiated, free tour of the plant that annually saves 250,000 plus tons of green and food waste from landfill.

After a brief induction, we donned our high viz, helmets, gloves and masks to help preserve our physical beings and olfactory senses, and off we traipsed, upstairs, downstairs along, elevated walkways and back down to on-ground paths. Along the way we passed massive crates full of plastics, nappies, bottles, syringes and other horrors we don't like to contemplate. These crates, the result of stringent sorting processes, are filled every two hours and unfortunately end up in landfill. Odd, given we're talking about green waste here.

Continued on page 9

[Return to Contents](#)

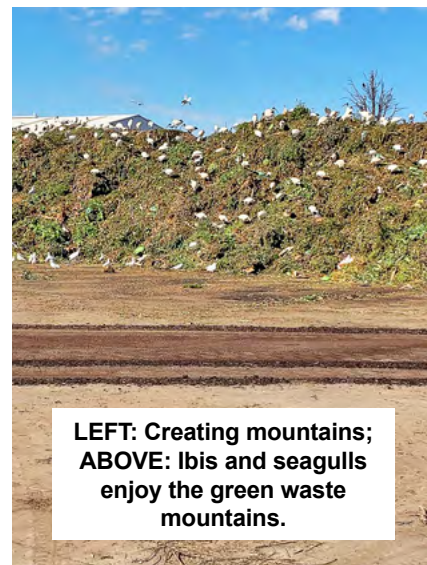
Where Does All Our Green Waste Go?

(Continued from page 8)



The sifting process goes through several phases, sorting the large alien matter from the greenery, then the smaller stuff, followed by the really small stuff, which is plucked out by hand, before a final processing that eliminates the minuscule, invisible to the eye, unwanted material. This sifting process takes time, purpose-built machinery, human labour (Bio Gro employs 45 people) and comes at a high price. What a shame members of our community treat their green bins as general waste opportunities.

In brief, once the contaminants are removed, the filtered green waste is shredded to help expedite



LEFT: Creating mountains; ABOVE: Ibis and seagulls enjoy the green waste mountains.

the decomposition process. Small mountains of the resultant material are piled onto concrete floors to allow microorganisms do their stuff to accelerate the process further, with the heat generated working to destroy pathogens and weed seeds. Ultimately, and following quality control testing for purity, nutrients and further removal of contaminants, the piles are transformed into mountainous heaps of fabulous compost that are subsequently purchased by commercial nurseries and viticulturalists, horticulturalists, landscape suppliers and farmers throughout Australia. Some is also bagged and can be bought from hardware outlets.

Many thanks to Jess and Simone of the City of Whitehorse's Waste Management team and to Trish and Gee at Bio Gro for guiding us through the processes. A fabulous opportunity not to be missed. Check with Council's Waste Reduction and Recycling Team, who will be running further tours later in the year. A tour such as this would be a novel experience for you, your kids and/or grandkids!

Visit <https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/sustainable-whitehorse> or email sasteteam@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

[Return to Contents](#)

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY IN MENZIES



Gabriel Ng MP
Federal Member for Menzies

Authorised by Gabriel Ng MP, 651 Doncaster Rd, Doncaster 3108

Get in contact:

7066 6590

Gabriel.Ng.MP@aph.gov.au



The 10 cent Classroom

How a Box Hill dad turns recycling into lessons in financial literacy

SINCE Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic) launched in November 2023, Box Hill's David Xu and son Jason have become familiar faces at the local over-the-counter refund point at J&J Grocery World. For the father-son duo, returning their empty drink containers together has become a weekly ritual that teaches them about environmental care and essential budgeting skills.

Over the past 18 months, their commitment has added up both environmentally and financially, with the pair collecting roughly \$400 in refunds through CDS Vic. David sees the scheme as a tangible teaching tool, helping his son learn about budgeting and the value of money. "There's a saying in China that teaching is learning," David says. "When my son wants to buy an item that's expensive, we use bottles and cans to help him calculate how much something is worth and whether

he can afford to buy it or needs to save the refunds for a particular treat or hobby."

David initially intended for all their refunds to go to Jason as pocket money, but the young recycler soon had other ideas.

"He started to pick up the habit of sharing and would ask me to keep half," David recalls. "The whole process has helped him become a more generous person. He really enjoys using the money he earns to give back to me or his mum."

When last Christmas came around, David received a heartfelt card from his son, thanking him for the time spent bonding on their shared trips. It was then he realised these outings weren't just about passing down positive financial habits, they were also about spending time together.

The positive impact has extended beyond their immediate family. Neighbours and colleagues, inspired by David's dedication to teaching Jason, now set aside their own eligible containers to give to the family.

As Victoria enters its third year of the recycling scheme, the Xu family is an example of the program's broader positive impact, demonstrating the real value that can be found in connections forged and lessons passed on to the coming generation

[Return to Contents](#)

To find your nearest refund point and start your own collection, visit cdsvic.org.au

Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic) is a recycling initiative offering a 10-cent refund for each eligible drink container. It's easy to participate, with hundreds of refund points across Victoria. Funded by contributions from the beverage industry, the scheme diverts valuable materials from landfill and turns them back into new products.

VICReturn

For further information please contact:

Mel Buttigieg, VicReturn Senior Media and Communications Lead

Mb: 0412 567 707 Email: media@vicreturn.com.au

Royal wag!

RICHARD Griffin was Queen Elizabeth II's personal police officer for fourteen years. Accompanying her on a picnic in the hills near Balmoral Castle one day, they met two American hikers. "Have you ever met the Queen?" they asked, not recognising the monarch in plain dress. "I haven't," the Queen quipped, "but Richard here meets her regularly!" Thrilled to meet someone close to royalty, the hikers then handed the Queen their camera, posed with Richard, and asked her to take a photo!





Pastimes, sports, activities, interest groups

Full steam ahead for Express

Adam Miller



PAST success brings high hopes for 2026, as the Boorondara Express aim to exceed expectations in the Victorian Netball League.

Founded in 2009, the six-time VNL premiers can boast current Super Netball League talent including Melbourne Vixens players Hannah Mundy, Kate Eddy, Rudi Ellis, Jo Weston, and Zali Anderson; Casey Adamson with the GWS Giants; Lara Dunkley with the Queensland Firebirds; and Matilda Garrett with the Adelaide Thunderbirds as former players.

The season has got off to a solid start, with two wins from their opening four games, putting them 6th out of 12 in the table.

President of the Boroondara Express and Director of the Boroondara Netball Association, Sue Reddish said that along with a premiership, the main goals for 2026 were "To deliver an elite Daily Training Environment to work together according to our club culture for the betterment of the club and to participate in community engagement

activities where players are seen as role models by junior participants.

"These goals are absolutely within our reach, thanks to our outstanding coaching and sports science teams delivering a vibrant Daily Training Environment, our comprehensive and holistic Player Welfare Program (PIMP), our long-term, loyal sponsors, and our robust financial base" Mrs Reddish says enthusiastically.

Netball fans across Melbourne's east won't want to miss the Express in action at the State Netball Centre. "Come and experience the thrill of a truly elite, competitive team, the unmatched intensity of high-level netball, and the inspiring respect shared between players, coaches and umpires," Mrs Reddish adds.

The new VNL website has signalled the start of a new era for the state league competition, where fans and clubs can access free match live streams, replays, highlights, news, statistics, ladders and fixtures.

More details on the VNL can be found on their website.

[Return to Contents](#)

TIM RANDALL FOR ASHWOOD

THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW

- greens.org.au/vic/StateAshwood
- tim.randall@vic.greens.org.au
- @timrandallgreens
- facebook.com/timrandallgreens

Authorised by M. Sireto, Victorian Greens, 11/01/2024, Melbourne VIC, 2024

Volunteering at Bungalook

Glenys Grant

WHEN mobility issues increase, community volunteers have been known to give up because they feel they are perhaps no longer of use.

Not so Margaret, Vic, Marion and many others who work in whatever ways they can to help in our bushland parks and other volunteering areas such as Bungalook indigenous plant nursery.

Margaret Witherspoon, who has volunteered at Bungalook for 38 years as an administrator and co-ordinator is also a specialised licenced plant collector and propagator. She said “last financial year we sold almost 30,000 plants and gave nearly 700 volunteers hours. Our vision has expanded from a small enterprise to growing plants for the local council, schools, community groups, Government authorities, landscape gardeners and home gardeners, as well as providing education.”

Bungalook is entirely staffed by dedicated volunteers - more than 50, with at least 20 working per session. They range from tertiary students to those in their 90s. All enthusiastically help produce the plants. Good examples of the calibre of volunteers are Margaret, Marion Siseman and Vic McNamara, the latter two having volunteered for more than 25 years each.

The nursery began in 1987 after dozens of local residents participated in a huge working bee in Blackburn Creeklands. They decided a community nursery to supply plants was needed, and with the support of the local Council and a bi-centenary grant, the Nunawading Indigenous Plant Project (NIPP) was born.

Sponsored by the Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Advisory Committee, the first committee meeting of NIPP was held in 1992. Enthusiastic volunteers from the newly formed bushland parks advisory committees joined in.

The nursery propagated hundreds of local indigenous plants. A two-way cooperation developed, building up the nursery and at the same time supporting the groups as they in turn were tackling the task of protecting, enhancing, and enlarging the bushland parks.

In 1999 the nursery was incorporated and renamed the Whitehorse Community Indigenous Plant Project Inc. (WCIPP). With generous funding assistance WCIPP moved to its current site and acquired the name ‘Bungalook’ - Wurundjeri for Stringybark.

Today WCIPP/Bungalook is a very viable plant producer and an asset to the community. Volunteers are provided with educational workshops and excursions and in turn, help educate children and the public in what and where to plant, and how to care for the native bushland.

The nursery continues to receive support from Whitehorse Council and is run by a committee of volunteer members.

Visitors are welcome and are often surprised, as I was, at the magnitude of the operation and how professionally the volunteers, often retired, run it.

As Margaret says “Retirement is just a word – and not in my vocabulary”

Bungalook Nursery

107 Fulton Road, Blackburn South, Vic, 3130.

Mob: 0473-122-534

*Opening hours: 9:00 am – 1:00pm Wednesday & Friday
10:00am - 12:30pm on the last Saturday of each month
(except December).*

BELOW: Marion, Margaret and Vic - a total of more than 100 years of volunteering.

[Return to Contents](#)





Boroondara
Cemetery

Celebrating Life

Firefly Winter Solstice Festival

SATURDAY 20 JUNE 2026 * 6-10PM
Boroondara Cemetery * 430 High Street, Kew

Featuring:

- * Fireworks
- * Light shows
- * Food trucks
- * Entertainment
- * Guided tours
- * Live music and more!

This is an outdoor event, be sure to rug up!



*Join the fun and
bring a lantern!*

\$10 ENTRY OR \$20 FAMILY PASS

AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM MAY 1 ON EVENTBRITE



[Return to Contents](#)

For the Love of the Sport

Adam Miller

A club in Melbourne's outer east is making waves as it pushes to bring Water Polo to areas where it previously had little to no presence.

Founded in 1960 as Nunawading Water Polo Club, the now-named Nunawading Yarra Plenty Water Polo Club is based out of Aqualink in Nunawading, 20 km east of central Melbourne.

Throughout its history, the club has provided playing opportunities for both experienced and inexperienced players based outside the sport's inner eastern and southern heartlands.

Water Polo has been played in Victoria since 1879 and has long been linked with Melbourne's elite grammar schools, especially those in the APS (Associated Private Schools) and AGSV (Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria) organisations.

The schools, the majority of which are based within the City of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington, or Boroondara council areas, tend to have access to private pools, which allow them to train and host competitions without needing to reach out to public facilities for pool space.

The club competition is concentrated in the inner city, as is the school competition.

Of the 17 Water Polo Victoria registered metropolitan clubs, only five (NYP, DVE, Monash, La Trobe and Ringwood) are located 15 km or more from Melbourne's CBD, meaning there are as many teams in the rural Albury/Wodonga competition as there are in outer suburban Melbourne.

Of these five teams, only NYP, DVE, and Monash currently have junior programs.

NYP Secretary William Collum says the club wants to reach out consistently to this forgotten population and invite them to be involved with the club, which plays a sport best described as a mix of rugby, wrestling, swimming, and handball.

"As a club, we are always welcoming to new members, regardless of their experience level or ability. If you are keen to try out water polo and want to have some fun playing, there will always be a spot for you with us," Mr Collum said.

Mr Collum, who serves as NYP's B side captain as well as secretary on the club's committee, believes the organisation represents what a community sporting club should be. "The club feels like one big community."

"Ever since I started, I have always felt welcome and included, and all the club members are friendly," he said.

He and the rest of the committee plan big things for the Dragons, both short and long term.

Eastsider News May 2026

Picture: Adam Miller



"Short term, I would like to see the number of junior players at the club increase, long term, I would like to build towards having competitive U16 and U18 teams, as well as getting a proper training session going for older kids", Mr Collum said.

With the clubs having secured more pool space this time at Aquanation in Ringwood, and the junior program heading down to Rosebud on Saturday, March 21, for a training camp with the newly founded Mornington Mist, the committee's dedication is already paying dividends.

The Rosebud camp followed a successful January camp, held in conjunction with Monash at the Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre, which attracted over 60 children.

Anyone interested in getting involved with the Dragons can email them at nypdragons@hotmail.com or contact President John Malvestuto on 0417 347 289.

For those interested in attending a training session, the club's squads train at Aqualink on Sunday evening, with the junior and women's squads in the pool from 4:30-6pm, and the men's squads from 6-7:45pm.

Parents with young children are encouraged to sign up their children for the club's Flippa Ball program, water polo equivalent of Auskick.

[Return to Contents](#)

Garden of 'Hope' - Autumn

Leah d'Cruz

GARDEN of 'Hope' with Open Gardens Victoria was back for its annual autumn showcase, opening its doors to the public on 19 April. The one-day showcase had a strong focus on an array of seasonal horticulture specially curated by garden designer Dr Jacquie Chirgwin and her husband Dr Paul Kertes.

Garden of 'Hope' featured a landscape spanning from Chinese elms to lilacs and elderberries with the aim to radiate vibrant expressions of resilience, creativity and the joy of new beginnings, all arranged in the comfort of Dr Jacquie's Templestowe home.

It first opened its doors to the public in 2002, after she had received a note in her letter box asking if she would be interested for her garden to be considered in Australia's Open Garden Scheme.

"I was chuffed that my garden had caught somebody's eye, although at that time I really hadn't been a prolific gardener. This suggestion, of course, set me off on a wonderful path that has had a profound influence on the course of my subsequent life," she said.

The Templestowe garden showcases a two-part series in summer and in autumn, allowing people to see that journey, the increasing succession of flowers into early summer with the textures that carry straight into autumn.

Garden of 'Hope' dates back to Dr Jacquie's previous garden when she lived in Park Orchards more than 20 years ago. The Templestowe garden continues the story, transforming a once-neglected block with poor soil into a layered and glowing space of flora and fauna.

"It's the same garden, but an entirely different experience," Dr Jacquie said.

Building on that idea, Open Gardens Victoria volunteer Frauke Koch recognised the difference between Dr Jacquie's showcase and other public garden events.

"Dr Jacquie has also come up with an amazing line-up of thoughtful extras like morning and afternoon teas, a plant sale and a beautiful photo exhibition of landscape photography, elevating the experience for visitors".

This enhanced experience is something that visitors themselves have noticed. Two-time attendee Violeta Zalacor recalls her time at the summer showcase. "You could just smell the flowers. I really enjoyed my time there and was thrilled to bring four of my friends along to this autumn showcase. I am a horticulturist and have 300 plants at home, so I was thinking, why wouldn't you want to share this with everybody?" she said.

Beyond the garden and its atmosphere, the event also carries a deeper purpose. A portion of gate proceeds is donated to Breast Cancer Trials, reflecting on Dr Jacquie's former profession as an oncologist.



[Return to Contents](#)

Walking through history

Penny Underwood

HOW many of us have a familiar walk we take either to work, or the well-worn path to the local grocery or café, or to walk the dog? Many of us tread the same routes day in, day out, often oblivious to the rich histories imprinted on the streets. With closer inspection, traces of the past spill out like treasure from a chest long buried: the plaques of homes, the interpretation signs along pathways, the pepper trees and the bluestone paving stones.

During the year, Hawthorn Historical Society volunteers lead heritage walks in different parts of the suburb. They take walkers across streets, past historic buildings offering insights about architectural influences, tales of the founding families, intriguing detail about dissenters, rogues and rose farmers... all to keep the history of Hawthorn alive.

Many participants know only snippets about Hawthorn's history. As Liz Yewers, the Society's historian, says: "Every city and neighbourhood have stories to tell, and it is not just the people and the history. The architecture, design and materials that went into making a building also add to the rich historical tapestry of the town."

She says history walks offer the best of many worlds. Participants learn about Hawthorn while getting their steps in. Additionally, they serve as social affairs, providing opportunities to meet and make like-minded friends.

Penny Underwood, the Society's President, adds: "Whenever I do a history walk, it is like being a tourist in my own hood, helping me to look at familiar places with fresh eyes – and often upwards".

One of the objectives of our heritage walks is to educate people about what life used to be like and how the area has developed over the years. The walks are literally a step through Hawthorn's political, economic and social history.

A stroll down Glenferrie Road is a lesson in how life has changed. In 1902 Glenferrie Road still had paddocks and houses. Its commercial expansion into the shopping street today began in the Edwardian period of architecture from 1901 to 1918.

The familiar sight of the Church of Immaculate Conception on the corner of Burwood and Glenferrie Roads comes alive on the stroll: the first stone of Immaculate Conception was laid in 1867; later changes introduced elements of Edwardian architecture to the building. Its spire completed after 1919 at a cost of £16,000 by the architects, Reed, Smart and Tappin, the same group responsible for Bendigo's Sacred Heart Cathedral.

On the walk, I learn that shopping in 1902 focused on personal service, with shops offering delivery of wood, meat and fish. The shopkeepers then often lived above the shop. The shops at 752-754 Glenferrie Road were grocery and greengrocery shops owned and operated by Bennett & Woolcock, Moran & Cato and Frank Crotty. Moran & Cato was established in 1881 by Frederick Cato and Thomas Moran. Nine years later, when Moran died, there were 35 stores. In 1909 the firm expanded to New South Wales and Tasmania and at the height of their expansion, the company had about 160 stores.

Further along is the Hawthorn Motor Garage, now a wine bar. From the 1920s the garage was run by Albert James Kane and family who had it for several decades. They introduced the first electric petrol pump in Hawthorn. The building is now classified by the National Trust of Australia and is on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Every history tour offered by the Society is carefully curated. A new walk, Church Hill, which ran on Saturday 2 May, has taken hours of detailed research by Liz Yewers who will lead the walk through parts of the Urquhart Estate, past private dwellings and several churches. Walks cost \$10 for Society members and \$25 for non-members. Bookings are essential: <https://www.trybooking.com/DKEBY>

Other walks in 2026 include the Morang Road heritage precinct (August) and Glenferrie Road (October). Details are on the website: hawthornhistoricalsociety.com.au

[Return to Contents](#)

Hawthorn Station

165 years and still going strong

Priya Mohandoss

HAWTHORN Railway Station, completed on 13 April, 1861 and was the eastern terminus of the Richmond branch line, catering to those travelling to and from Melbourne and the suburban system. Formerly, there was only a solitary serviced platform that was similar to today's Platform One.

At this stage the Hawthorn station belonged to a private firm, the Melbourne and Suburban Railway Company. However, in 1878 it became publicly funded after the Victorian Government took over control, with VicTrack being its present owners.

Along with the Hawthorn station was the Hawthorn Railway Bridge. Due to the engineering feats of Francis Bell, this viaduct with its girders (large iron compound structures and iron web) spanned the Yarra River and still stands today as the oldest such structure in existence.

While the bridge was being constructed, trains halted at a siding near the river bank that was called Pic-Nic. The Pic-Nic line was on the Richmond side of the Yarra, in an area called Survey Park. In those early days many people were able to observe the development of the bridge. However, after it was constructed, the Pic-Nic line was mainly used for day trips and in 1898, eventually closed.

Hawthorn station ran steam trains from its initial opening in 1861 before modifying to electrification in 1922. It served as a central passenger line into Melbourne, going from a single platform to an active station through the 1880s.

In 1882, after the rail line from Hawthorn was extended to Camberwell, another platform had to be built to provide for the duplicated track. This track was part of a larger, fast expansion stretching to Lilydale. The addition of this platform greatly benefited passengers as it enabled trains to travel in two directions, which eased delays and led to increases in service frequency.

However, in late 1882, just after the extended line had been made, tragedy struck between Hawthorn and Burnley with the Hawthorn train colliding head-on into a train travelling from Pic-Nic. The Coroner later confirmed the underlying causes were due to this part of the line still functioning only as a single track that was yet to be duplicated, as well as a fault with the train schedule.

In 1887, the Kew line opened, consisting of a two-station track branch line that went from Hawthorn northwards to Kew. Additionally, during 1890, an island platform was also built for this line on Platforms 2 and 3 that is still in use today. In 1901, this platform also incorporated a huge canopy that was initially part of Flinders Street station. At that time, it was disassembled from its Port Melbourne platform and then remodeled

as a permanent fixture, being used as a shelter for passengers waiting for their train to arrive.

However, in 1957, the Kew line was closed due to a reduction in suburban rail travel, and the need for more funding to provide this line's infrastructure. As a result, in 1963, Platform 3 became another line for trains passing between Melbourne and Camberwell.

In 1972, there was another upgrade with a third line being constructed between Hawthorn and Burnley, enabling trains to move in both directions while allowing for the access of express trains to pass through at times of peak activity. Furthermore, there was now a three-track system that went through to Box Hill.

At the onset of the mid-1980s, Hawthorn station was in a rundown state and needed much renovation. As a consequence, the State government worked in partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Authority to provide funding to repaint it, repanel the waiting area, repair the platform roofs and canopies, and finish the landscaping. In May 1986, the renovations were completed and Hawthorn station was reopened once more to the public.

(Continued on page 18)

Ross-Hunt
real estate

**Ming Chen returns
as our Sales Director**

With over 25 years of experience, Ming brings proven results, insight, and leadership to our team.

**Thank you to our clients for your
trust in Ming and our team.**



Sales



Rentals



Owners Corporation



Est. 1973

99 - 105 Union Rd, Surrey Hills | 9830 4044 | rosshunt.com.au

[Return to Contents](#)

Hawthorn Station

(Continued from page 17)

Riversdale Ward Councillor Rob Baillieu said: “Hawthorn Station is one of Melbourne’s older railway stations and a well-used and much-loved place for many residents”.

Hawthorn Railway Station is a renowned structure of the Victorian era, gaining its heritage status in 1982. Through its 165 years, while many changes have been made, its infrastructure from the late 1890s has remained intact. Its timber station buildings, a model that characterises early railway construction, are a distinct feature of its design in contrast to nearby Camberwell, Glenferrie and Auburn stations that are predominantly have brick.

Penny Underwood, president, Hawthorn Historical Society said, “Hawthorn Station has transformed the area from a distant suburb into a functional commuter city. It is unique because of its age, heritage and history. There is no other like it.”



Penny will be conducting two walks in August that will leave from Hawthorn Station. The area focuses on the historically significant Hawthorn Station, developed and in continuous use since 1861.

Morning: Morang Road heritage precinct walk

Sunday 9 August, 11am

Meet at Hawthorn Station.

If wet, we will postpone.

Price: \$10 for members; \$25 for non-members

<https://www.trybooking.com/DLFNR>

Twilight: Morang Road heritage precinct walk

Tuesday 18 August 4pm-6pm including drinks at Gibsons afterwards.

Meet at Hawthorn Station.

If wet, we will postpone.

Price: \$10 for members; \$25 for non-members

<https://www.trybooking.com/DLFNW>



Community through dance

Fatemeh Mirjalili

WHEN Paris Wages moved to Australia, she thought her lifelong career as a professional dancer was behind her. However, she discovered a new way to share her love and passion for dance, one that would bring together creativity, health and community in unexpected ways.

Wages became a professional dancer when she was just 16-years-old. Originally trained in classical ballet, she performed with a regional company in Rhode Island, studying dance at university and completing a Master’s degree in fine art and dance. Over time, she

expanded her career from classical ballet to modern and contemporary dance, even dabbling in musical theatre.

She had already retired from being a professional dancer when she moved to Australia over two decades later. It was here, unexpectedly, that a friend introduced her to the Dance for Parkinson’s program, developed in Brooklyn, New York.

“Strangely enough, it took me coming to Australia to find out more and get trained in an American program.”

(Continued on page 19)

[Return to Contents](#)

Community through dance

(Continued from page 18)

[Dance for Parkinson's](#) is a specialised, research-backed movement program using dance, music, and social connection to help manage Parkinson's symptoms. Led by trained artists, it adapts techniques from various dance styles, often starting seated, to improve balance, flexibility, gait, and coordination in a creative, enjoyable, non-patient environment for participants and carers.

When Wages first learned about the program, she was at a crossroads in her career. She was considering transitioning into teaching while juggling the responsibilities of raising her family, and decided to get trained in the program in 2014. Wages took her first class at the Camberwell Uniting Church, and was also teaching at an adult ballet school, when she began taking the first dance for Parkinson's ongoing weekly class in Melbourne.

Today, Wages runs bi-weekly classes at the Hawthorn Aquatic Centre for adults living with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions. The classes are structured and often seated, but they are also creative, expressive, and social.

“What's super exciting about this program and makes it a bit more than just a community dance class for people living with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions is that we get to have these extra little events and projects, too.”

Wages' team has previously completed programs with the Australian Ballet in 2023, and is beginning a permanent association with them this year. This means participants can attend classes at the Australian Ballet Centre in Southbank, accompanied by a company pianist. The classes integrate artistic themes from the company's repertoire, previously allowing participants to explore choreography from the Ballet's production of *Swan Lake*. Wages has once again partnered up with her colleague Katrina Rank (who teaches Dance for PD classes in North Melbourne) for a similar program set to be held this year.

“We bring the elements of that repertoire, that choreography, that music, together, and we present it in a Dance for PD class, and also work with the resident choreographer.”

Wages and the team also organise local events; one of their previous events was held at the Hawthorn Town Hall Art Gallery, where the class immersed participants in still life art.

“We took the elements of still life, painting, and sculpture and incorporated them into our class. So it's very creative.”

While the classes offer therapeutic benefits, Wages emphasises that they are artistic experiences grounded in joy and connection. A class



takes place in a large studio set up with chairs arranged in a circle to represent a strong sense of community.

It begins with 30 minutes of seated movements to warm up the body gently, focusing on coordination and different muscle groups. Participants then stand behind their chairs for light, ballet-inspired exercises to support balance, before moving across the floor and finishing up with simple choreography drawn from a variety of styles, such as tango, jazz, musical theatre, and others.

“I have a pretty broad repertoire myself, so we just think diversity is the best thing. Variety is the spice of life.”

The session ends back in the circle with a cool-down followed by an optional social catch-up at a café.

Wages says the classes are inclusive and accessible to people of different mobility levels, and there are always two teachers or a volunteer to help support participants and make them comfortable. While it isn't mandatory, caregivers are encouraged to attend classes and are invited to be integrated into the sessions.

She credits the YMCA, the Boroondara Council and Rotary clubs for their support through community grants, which have given them an opportunity to conduct several free classes over the last eight years. “I'm really grateful that they give us that support.”

Paris Wages conducts Dance for Neurobalance classes on Wednesdays and Fridays at the Hawthorn Aquatic Centre between 12 and 1 pm. The classes are \$6 per participant, and caregivers attend for free.

[Return to Contents](#)



Building Confidence

Diane Falzon

ALTHOUGH International Women’s Day has long passed, the Balwyn Evergreen Centre continues to use it to challenge a quiet but persistent assumption, that confidence fades as women grow older.

At the Evergreen Centre, the reality looks very different.

Through dedicated women’s programs such as The Senior Divas and two new Women’s Cross Training classes, alongside much-loved activities such as Exercise to Music and Line Dancing, older women are showing that later life can be a time of movement, visibility, friendship and renewed self-belief.

According to Tina Hogarth-Clarke, CEO, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, the centre sees older women proving every day that confidence after 70 is alive and well.

“There can be a lingering idea that women become less confident as they age, less likely to try something new, less likely to take up space and less likely to put themselves first. That is not what we see here,” Tina said.

“We see women walking through the door and backing themselves. We see them joining classes, forming friendships, laughing, learning and becoming more confident in who they are.”

“Older women are far too often left out of conversations about confidence, health and community participation, yet they have so much to contribute and every right to feel strong, seen and supported,” Tina said.

“At Balwyn Evergreen Centre, we are proud to create spaces where women can keep growing, keep moving and keep showing up for themselves and each other.”

Among them is Theresa Webster, a long-time community-minded local. Theresa keeps busy with a range of activities at Balwyn Evergreen including Strength Exercise, Yoga and Meditation, Seated Tai Chi, bus outings and The Senior Divas.

Theresa said being part of the centre had reinforced something important, that confidence does not belong to one stage of life. “You do not stop wanting friendship, purpose and enjoyment just because you get older,” she said. “What I love about Evergreen Centre is that it gives women the opportunity to stay engaged, keep active and be part of something warm and welcoming. That does wonders for your confidence”.

Theresa went on to say that the Senior Divas in particular had become a valued part of her routine. “It is a wonderful group of women and there is a lovely energy in the room. You feel encouraged, included and uplifted. “The exercise classes also make a real difference. You leave feeling stronger in yourself, physically and mentally, and that carries into the rest of your week”.

“Confidence does not always arrive in a big moment. Sometimes it is built quietly, by walking into a class, joining a conversation, sharing a laugh or realising you are still capable of more than you thought,” Tina said. “That is why these programs matter. They help older women feel connected, capable and confident in a way that is real and lasting”.

Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Victoria

PATIENCE

Alexander Theatre, Clayton
Friday July 10 7.30pm
Saturday July 11 2pm & 7:30pm
Sunday July 12 2pm

Sullivan's most beautiful music and Gilbert's brilliant satire on the Victorian obsession with poets: Patience is adored by two rival poets. Neither of them is who he pretends to be! Mirth ensues as the love triangle unravels.

Details + Tickets:

Season 2026 **gsov.org.au** 0490 465 009



Hearing and Vision Testing

Glenys Grant

and supervisors then spent time with each family to explain results and suggest referrals where necessary. The students worked in teams of two and tested 23 children aged from four to six. Results showed 11 youngsters required referral to a vision specialist and five needed referring to a hearing specialist. Two further children had possible hearing loss and needed retesting. It was detected that one child's ear grommets had fallen out. Feedback from the grateful parent who took the child for further testing was that the test on the day was sufficient and no further testing was required. The grommets had indeed fallen out, and were replaced.

That parent, and others, were all delighted with the care and attention they received. Those with children who needed to be referred for further testing were so thankful the issues with their children's sight and hearing had been discovered.

These results have shown how important this program is, and how worthwhile the efforts of everyone involved.

Given the results proved to be so beneficial it has been decided to run the event annually in future and to expand the number of children being tested.

HOW do good ideas get actioned? The success of the Rotary Club of Nunawading's inaugural free hearing and vision community testing on Saturday March 28 proves it can happen, with excellent results.

The decision to trial this idea came about after discussion with the community, which showed there was definitely a need for such a service.

The club contacted the University of Melbourne Schools of Audiology and Optometry and both agreed to be involved. They advised that four to six-year-old children be tested because it is an age where, if sight or hearing loss is missed, vulnerable children can be set back years in their learning process.

A venue was needed and Mitcham Community House kindly offered their premises and facilities – two very large rooms, two smaller rooms, a reception and waiting area with a kitchenette and gathering area for the workers.

Jobs were allocated. A team of Rotarians organised setting up, lunch for all, reception and paperwork. They divided the two large rooms with screens, meaning six testing areas were available. The University team set up these six areas and provided the testing equipment.

Since this was a trial to see if it was of benefit only four schools and one preschool were approached. A booking form was set up, and very speedily spots were filled. Each child was allowed 15 minutes for vision testing and 15 minutes for the hearing test.

Testing the children were 12 University of Melbourne Audiology and Optometry post graduate students, six from each speciality. Two supervisors checked results and gave feedback to the students. Both testers



[Return to Contents](#)

It takes a community

suicide prevention takes root in Eastern Melbourne

Agustina Mariani

AN approach to suicide prevention in Melbourne's East is demonstrating a powerful shift, recognising that supporting people in distress is not the responsibility of services alone, the support required takes an entire community.

Led by *Roses in the Ocean*, the *It Takes a Community* initiative was designed specifically for the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network region, bringing together people with lived experience of suicide, community organisations and service providers. It has been underway for six months, embedding lived experience at every level of suicide prevention across communities, services and systems to better support people before, during and after crises.

At its core, the program is built on a simple but powerful idea: suicide affects entire communities, and preventing it requires more than clinical intervention. I spoke with Michelle Dickson, Head of Project and Workshop Support at *Roses in the Ocean*, to better understand how the program works, what drives it, and why approaches that extend beyond clinical settings are so essential.

The scale of the issue: Breaking the silence around suicide

According to Michelle Dickson, the latest data from the Coroners Court of Victoria (updated to late 2024/early 2025) shows that suicide deaths have remained relatively steady, despite some fluctuations. Mid-life (35–54) continues to be a high-risk period, accounting for a significant proportion of total suicides in the state.

While the figures remain within the expected range, the state has not seen a sustained reduction in lives lost. Metropolitan Melbourne accounts for around 66 per cent of these deaths, and rates remain notably higher among First Nations communities. Nationally, more than 150 people attempt to take their own lives every day.

“Many people who experience suicidal distress are not engaged with formal services, which highlights the importance of prevention approaches that extend beyond clinical settings,” Dickson said. “This reinforces the need for community-based and lived-experience-informed responses that strengthen connection, understanding and shared responsibility.”

Despite growing awareness, stigma remains one of the biggest barriers to suicide prevention. Participants in the program identified a “fear of the word ‘suicide’” and a lack of understanding about available support as key challenges within their communities.

By creating open and inclusive spaces for conversation – through workshops, learning circles and training,

the initiative is helping to address these barriers and encourage more open dialogue. Participants reported that, after completing the training, they felt more confident to “hold space for people and encourage more conversations around suicide,” “be an advocate in the spaces I’m privileged to be a part of,” and “destigmatise talk of suicide”.

A community stepping in before crisis

Rather than waiting until someone reaches breaking point, *It Takes a Community* is shifting the focus to earlier, more compassionate intervention by equipping individuals and organisations with the skills to recognise distress and respond safely. By strengthening connections across community networks, workplaces and services, the initiative is helping ensure that support is not only available, but accessible sooner.

“While there is growing recognition of the importance of lived experience in suicide prevention in Australia, meaningful integration still varies. *It Takes a Community* helps bridge that gap by showing how lived experience can be embedded in practical, community-led ways. Sustained investment, organisational commitment and genuine partnerships are key to strengthening suicide prevention over the long term,” said Michelle Dickson.

As the initiative continues across Eastern Melbourne, its focus remains on building lasting change — strengthening community capacity, fostering collaboration and ensuring lived experience voices are not only heard, but valued. For Dickson, witnessing that shift has been one of the most powerful aspects of the program.

“Seeing people with lived experience being recognised, supported and valued for the knowledge they bring is incredibly powerful,” she said.

Participants say the impact is already being felt, describing “a genuine feeling of support within the workshop” and calling it “the best workshop I’ve ever been to”. As one participant put it: “If you think you’re too small to make a difference, you haven’t met a mosquito.”

For more information or to get involved, visit *Roses in the Ocean*: <https://rosesintheocean.com.au/it-takes-a-community/>

If this story raises concerns for you or someone you know, support is available. In Australia, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or visit lifeline.org.au

Supporting Mental Health at Upton House

Katrina Flinn

UPTON House is the adult psychiatric inpatient ward at Box Hill Hospital. Patients are often admitted during some of the most challenging periods of their lives, and access to meaningful activities, practical skills, and everyday comforts can play an important role in supporting recovery. Rotary Hawthorn as part of a collaboration of Rotary Clubs has been supporting Upton House and other local public hospital wards with provision of care bags and clothing since 2020.

Following further consultation with hospital staff, including the Head Nurse and Mental Health Physiotherapist, a project was developed to enhance patient wellbeing during hospital stays and assist with self-care skills following discharge. Staff emphasised that additional activities help lift mood, encourage movement and support both physical and mental health.

The project supports staff-led programs such as moving to music, supervised sports games, and gentle physical activities designed to improve strength, coordination, balance, and confidence and to 'spark joy'. Equipment provided includes fit balls, hand grips, small hand weights, sports balls, and a speaker for music-based activities. Basic ingredients are supplied to support popular cooking classes that teach basic skills and foster social connection in a relaxed setting.



Rotary Hawthorn's Katrina Flinn and Upton House Mental Health Physiotherapist, Emily (in the colourful scrubs).

The initiative also addresses dignity and basic needs with supply of sanitary items. Small personal care items, coffee pods and snacks help support patients' mutual self-help sessions and provide moments of comfort and calm.

Delivered with the support of a Rotary Foundation District Grant, our members work closely with hospital staff to source and deliver items monthly. The project was expanded at Christmas with donated snack packs (thanks to It's the Little Things Community) and gift packs from items donated by CWA Boroondara and also sourced from local residents via the Boroondara Hard Rubbish Rehome network.

Hospital staff report this sustained community input contributes positively to patient wellbeing and recovery and reduces the chance of readmittance, demonstrating just how well working together can make a meaningful difference.

Mitcham Nunawading Probus Club



OUR Club has started the year with a very promising outlook for 2026. Several new members have been inducted and more have indicated they will join the group.

Activities to date have included a fascinating guided walk through Box

Hill Cemetery. We were surprised to learn that so many famous people are buried there, including Sydney Myer, poet C J Dennis (1876-1938) who penned The Songs

of a Sentimental Bloke; Maurice and Doris Blackburn (1889-1970), both politicians who fought for civil rights; Edouard and Xenia Borovansky, who moved from Czechoslovakia to Australia and founded the Borovansky Ballet Company among many others.

Planned outings include ten-pin bowling, shows at The Round, a visit to the Museum of Chinese-Australian History, Christmas in July and December and, of course, our monthly Sunday lunches. We will also tour Government House and LaTrobe Cottage and continue with our Monday morning coffee in Laburnum.

[Return to Contents](#)



Meet the locals – local heroes and achievements



Tom Thorpe OAM JP
100 years of giving

Tom's club 100-year celebration group

Glenys Grant

FEW 100-year-olds are still actively engaged in supporting the community. Tom Thorpe is the exception. One hundred years is an extraordinary achievement in itself, but Tom's life is even more remarkable because of the legacy of service, leadership, and community spirit he has built.

At a surprise birthday celebration organised by the Rotary Club of Box Hill Burwood at Box Hill RSL club Tom and his wife Dorothy were the honored guests.

Whitehorse Mayor Kirsten Langford spoke of Tom as a distinguished community leader, of his almost 20 years as a councillor and three-time Mayor of the former City of Box Hill and how he has contributed significantly to local government, community development, and social enterprise.

She explained how his career has spanned leadership roles in manufacturing, training, and disability employment organisations.

Recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1998 and in 2014 as Whitehorse Citizen of the year, Tom has been a steadfast advocate for community wellbeing, ethical leadership, and opportunities for all.

Cr Langford concluded "On behalf of Whitehorse City Council and the many people whose lives you have touched, thank you for your extraordinary service."

Peter Behm, Rotary 9815 District Governor then summed up Tom's contribution to Rotary. "Tom joined in 1993. Since then, he has been a dedicated and inspiring Rotarian, serving the community through an extraordinary variety of programs and initiatives. His main passion has been vocational service, particularly supporting apprentices and young people as they launch their careers.

"He has been a key figure at the club's Opportunity Shop and at the annual Box Hill Art show, helping to raise thousands of dollars for local and international causes. He has ensured that support continued for relief organizations and schools, as well as projects benefiting local youth and vulnerable members of our community."

Tom's leadership extended to serving as President of Box Hill Burwood Rotary Club twice and overseeing the chartering of the Rotaract Club of Whitehorse. His outstanding commitment and dedication to the ideals of service and community have been formally recognised by Rotary.

DG Peter continued

"But beyond the awards and titles, what truly sets Tom apart is his consistency, humility, and dedication. Whether through mentoring, volunteering, leading, or quietly supporting projects behind the scenes, Tom has been an inspiration to generations, and a role model for community service in every sense of the word.

"Tom, tonight we celebrate your 100 years of life, and a century of making the world a better place — through Rotary, through community service, and through the countless lives you have touched with your leadership, wisdom, and generosity".

President of Box Hill Burwood Rotary Club Sue Thwaites wrapped up the evening with an award to Tom and warm congratulations on his many achievements.

Tom's many years of service are not over. He and his wife Dorothy continue to volunteer. Until very recently they worked with Whitehorse Meals on Wheels.

(Continued on page 25)

[Return to Contents](#)

Tom Thorpe OAM JP

Continued from page 24

They help man the desk every year at the Rotary Art show at Box Hill Town Hall. Tom hopes to continue to organise and present the Rotary Club of Box-Hill Burwood award recognising excellence among first and second-year apprentices at the Box Hill institute as well as the Shine On Awards, ensuring deserving young people receive recognition for their achievements.

And he has just been involved with the Wattle Park Heritage ANZAC Day service held before Anzac Day each year which typically commemorates the area's historical connection to the 24th Battalion and features local community tributes.

Tom – Happy Birthday and thank you.



Pic supplied by Robyn Floyd.

RESearching family history can be both rewarding and challenging. Documents may be missing, surnames misspelt and often the trail of records ends. Yes, you've hit a brickwall. However, the brickwalls I discovered in my family research were exactly that – brick walls: hand-made, kiln fired, American bond or elegant polychromatic patterns.

I knew that my great, great grandfather, Frederick Spear, a farm labourer had emigrated from Somerset to seek a better life in the colony of Victoria. As I delved

Brickwalls and family history

Robyn Floyd

more deeply into documents and archived newspapers I learned that on arrival in Melbourne he'd decided, with little prior experience, that brickmaking was his pathway to wealth. After all, the colony needed houses and even if a house was made of timber it would need a chimney!

Selling his husbandry tools and his feather bed he arrived with his small family in Victoria in 1853. A man with a sense of his own worth, shipping records indicate he was thrown out of the Arrival Depot where families stayed until they found employment, for 'refusing £60 per year'. He had come for a better life! Within four years his business in Victoria Road, Camberwell was employing two men and making 8,000 to 10,000 bricks a day. With the support of his sons the business grew, expanding to Malvern, Hawthorn and eventually Templestowe.

While delving into the lives of the Spear family, I have been unexpectedly drawn into the world of brickmaking; the kilns, the processes, the challenges. Now whenever I walk past a hand-made brick wall in Hawthorn I stop to ponder whether those bricks are part of my history.

[Return to Contents](#)



Ask A Vet with Dr Suze

Dr Susanna Gamage

As a vet, one of the things that has constantly struck me is how surprised people are when a pet is diagnosed with a “human” condition. So, I thought it would be worth listing a few common diseases that afflict both humans and our furry friends alike!

Obesity is a shared condition driven by lifestyle. Overfeeding and reduced physical activity can lead to weight gain in both pets and their owners, increasing the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and joint issues.

Diabetes is a condition affecting blood sugar regulation. Symptoms include increased thirst, frequent urination, and fatigue. Type 1 diabetes or problems with primary insulin production are seen more in dogs. Type 2 diabetes is more commonly associated with cats and is potentially reversible, especially if obesity is a predisposing factor. Certain feline breeds such as Burmese are also over-represented. In both cases proper diet and medical care are essential for management.

Arthritis results in joint inflammation, stiffness, and pain. There are many causes of joint inflammation but in our pets these symptoms become more noticeable with age.

Allergies triggered by environmental allergens such as pollen, dust, and mould can affect both pets and humans. While humans may experience sneezing and itchy eyes, pets often show signs of scratching, excessive licking, skin irritation or recurring ear infections. As with humans, some allergies in pets can be triggered by certain proteins in the food and result in either skin or gastrointestinal signs.

Anxiety and stress. It is well documented that pets have positive effects on human mood, the irony being that more and more pets are being diagnosed with stress related behavioural issues such as separation anxiety, excessive barking, or increase reactivity. Activities such

as regular exercise, consistent routines, and quality bonding time help reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing for both pet and human. Failing that, don't be too surprised if your pet is prescribed the same anti-depressants as someone you know!

Hyperthyroidism (too much thyroid hormone) is a common condition typically seen in older cats and a super rare condition in dogs. Hypothyroidism (too little thyroid hormone) is seen in middle aged dogs and very rarely occurs in cats. Both of these conditions affect humans.

The list goes on... As mammals we have more in common with our furry friends than we think. I guess we're all just animals after all!

Some of the most common dog anxiety symptoms include:



Dr. Susanna Gamage BVSc MRCVS has over a decade of international veterinary experience and is the founding director of Dr. Suze – My Visiting Vet, a mobile veterinary business in the Eastern Suburbs providing caring, personalised and professional veterinary care in the comfort of your own home, keeping things convenient for you and comfortable for your pet. If you have a general pet question you would like answered by Dr. Suze to be featured in Eastsider News or to find out more about our services, please contact us via the website: www.dr.suzemyvisitingvet.com.au Please note the information in this article is of a general nature and is not intended to be a substitute for professional healthcare advice. If you have specific concerns about your pet, you should always seek advice directly from your veterinary healthcare practitioner.

[Return to Contents](#)



Box Hill Community Gardens

*Dennis Fitzgerald
Secretary, Box Hill Community Gardens Inc.*



Photo: Sophie Wang.



Photo: Sophie Wang.

A dull grey shed in the midst of a beautiful garden: something needed to be done.

The Box Hill Community Gardens are located in Combarton Street, next to the Box Hill Community Art Centre, so an artistic collaboration was the answer.

A team up with a children's holiday program, 'Sofia Art for Kids' (sofiaartforkids.com.au) led to the development of a plan for



Photo: Leanne Lampard

the children painting the shed with garden images.

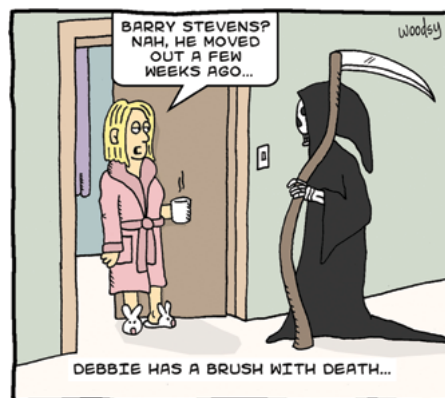
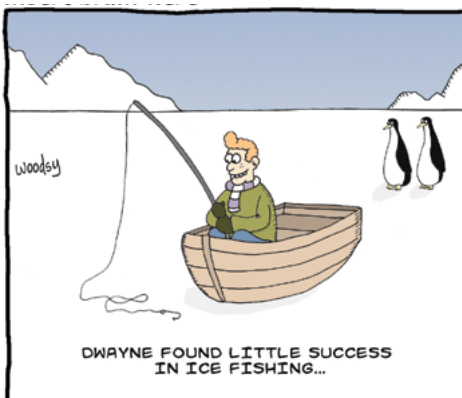
Once the images to be used were selected, the shed was cleaned and a white undercoat was applied by a plot holder, Greg Smyth, and the young artists took over, supervised by Sofia Wang and Will for the week.

With a week's hard work, the shed was transformed into a colourful set of images. Well done children!

PICTURES: (top left) Ethan working on the front door; (top right) Claire in red with the red paint; (centre) Finished: A kangaroo disappears into the grass.

woodsy

insert brain here



[Return to Contents](#)

Growing up in Surrey Hills

Wattle Park

Gill Bell

As a child I lived in Sherwood Rd Surrey Hills in the house where my father Hec had grown up, within sight and sound of Wattle Park.

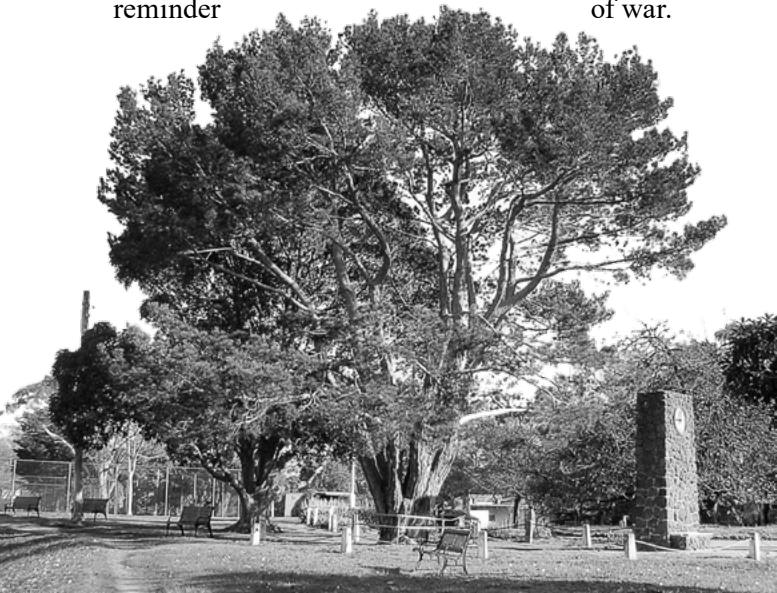
I imagine little Hec running down Elwood St and pausing in the rubbish tip at the foot of the hill. Here many treasures could be found: glass bottles, china fragments and other discarded household items. Wattle Park opposite, ringed by 12,000 wattle trees, had been opened during the First World War, four years before my father was born. It was a semi-wild paradise for Hec and his four siblings. There were even areas of the original indigenous shrub.

Wattle Park was a major feature of our childhood as well, and its playground was the best one we knew. We would run from one attraction to the next. The swings were very high, and it was the aim of each generation of children to loop the loop – fly right over the top bar and back down to earth. Luckily none of us managed to perform this feat!

There were very high metal slides, which on hot days seared the tender bare skin of our legs. One day our father encouraged us go down the slide head-first. This had a predictable result: mouthfuls of tanbark, and tears.

There was a spinning horizontal wheel to which we clung to avoid being thrown off. Then there were the jangle bars, attached to a maypole-like structure. We children hung on to the rings attached to metal chains, and swung out over the gently sloping hill. The maypole made a satisfying jangling sound which cut clearly across the valley to our home a kilometre away.

At the heart of the park stood the Lone Pine, planted in 1933. It had grown from a seed brought back from Gallipoli. Over the decades it has stood as a silent reminder of war.



Not far away was the tranquil pond with its frogs and waterlilies. There were stone benches to contemplate the scene. To me the pond seemed to have an air of sadness. In fact, despite the playground and the band concerts, the park always gave me a slight sense of melancholy.

In springtime the wattle trees burst into golden bloom. Melbourne Metropolitan Tramways Board would begin its summer concert season. On Sunday afternoons we would hear waves of wistful brass band music drifting across the valley to our house.



Spring was also time for the famous Orana fete. This was held at the Orana Children's Home, not actually in the park but on its south-eastern edge. Orana Fete day seemed always very hot. As we got out of the car on the sun-baked slope we were greeted by the scent of freshly cut grass. We could hear the sound of music piped over loudspeakers, punctuated by amplified announcements. We followed the stalls which stretched all the way up the hillside, offering bric-a-brac, toys and shiny red toffee apples. We stopped at the fairy-floss stall. The man on duty was shrouded in a sticky pink mist. We exchanged our pocket money for sticks of fairy floss, which magically vanished as we chewed on it.

Towards the top of the hill was a cool hall where jams and cakes were displayed. It seemed dark after the blazing sunlight outside.

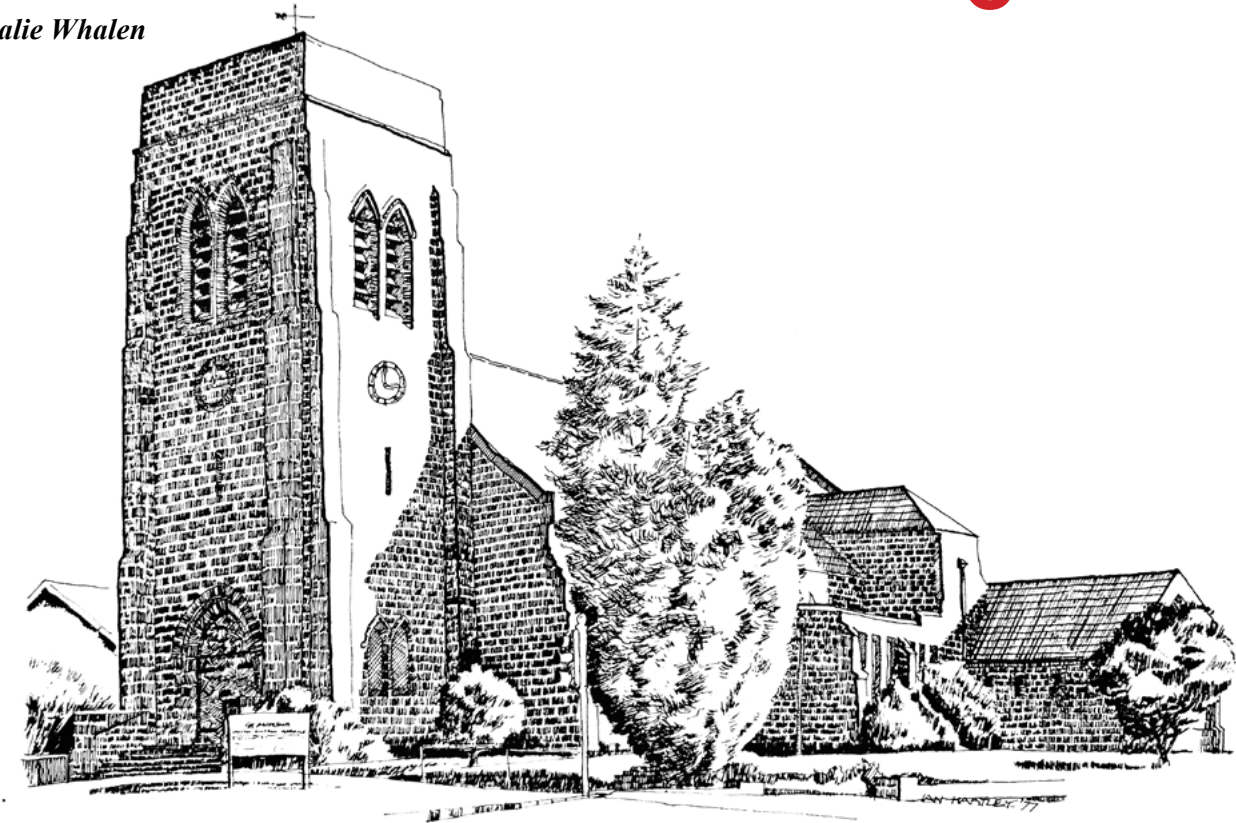
The fete was always a cheerful bustling occasion. I didn't realise until many years later that this children's home also probably housed many members of the stolen generation.

Light and shade; golden wattle and dark history; cheerful music and sombre reminders, are all woven into my memories of Wattle Park.

[Return to Contents](#)

St. Andrews Gardiner Uniting Church

Rosalie Whalen



St ANDREWS Church sits on the southwest site corner of Burke and Malvern Roads where the tram does a ninety-degree turn and Boroondara meets Stonnington, just up the hill from Gardiner Station. It is an imposing bluestone building with an interesting history.

A Presbyterian congregation had been worshipping in this area from 1911. In 1913, they had a wooden church on this site with the later addition of tennis courts right on the corner for the use of the burgeoning young parishioners.

By 1938 it had become evident that a larger church was needed to accommodate the congregation and solutions were sought.

There was a bluestone church in Carlton, which had been built in 1851 for a Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian congregation. It seated 1200 people and was called St. Andrews. It had a bell tower with a clock made in Scotland in 1855. This clock was originally intended for the Melbourne Town Hall; however, it only had three dials instead of four, so it was duly installed in this Gaelic Church.

It is assumed that by 1938 a large church for a Gaelic-speaking congregation was no longer needed in Carlton and the decision was made for it to be demolished and moved stone-by-stone to its current location in Gardiner.

Every stone was numbered to aid in its re-erection; however, a smaller church was actually built, seating

300, and the extra stones were used for the surrounding fence structure.

The clock was relocated in the new bell tower and all was complete for the opening service in 1940. Ever since, this clock has been relied upon by the passing traffic in the knowledge that the time would be accurate. We have the Birch family to thank for that. Originally, William Birch kept it running. Then in 1975, his son Paul took over the duty of climbing the bell tower ladder every week to wind it manually, and grease the mechanism.

That has amounted to 51 years of dedicated service and on the Australia Day Awards this year Paul was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

In 1977 it became a Uniting Church when most Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists banded together in the area and adopted St. Andrews as their place of worship.

Over the years the congregation dwindled and the buildings needed to be better used. There was an Indonesian congregation in Mulgrave desperately needing more space, so the decision was made for them to re-locate to Gardiner and their first Service took place there on 15 May 2016. Most services are in Indonesian but a translated service in English is available by using the head phones provided. All of the adjoining facilities are now in constant use and the buildings and garden are well maintained by the parishioners.

[Return to Contents](#)



ODE TO AN OAK

For a century or more you held your ground
a great, generous oak
broad armed and steady
lifting life into your canopy.
Plants gathered at your feet
birds chirped and squawked between
your leaves
possums made quiet highways of your
branches.
Tawny frogmouths, lorikeets and
wattlebirds,
you were their address, their inheritance.
You sustained so much life,
and we owed you more than we ever said.

With your vast, sweeping limbs
and deep green foliage
you cast shade freely.
Beauty offered, rent-free,
to all who wandered our old street.
You were giving long before I arrived,
and long before I learned to notice.

I've heard that the tests have found what
your body already knew:
herbicide, not hemlock,
a quieter cruelty.
Poisoned by the hand of someone you
had no choice but to trust
I did not see you suffering
until your last weeks of life.
Stoic to the end,
your distress escaped the limits of my
hearing.
How long you endured before the
damage showed
only the murderer knows.
For this blindness, I am sorry.

Across the road, a woman told me
how much she loves trees.
Now she cannot look at you without weeping.
We fear for the others too,
the small, breathing world that depended on
your life.
"This is not the suburb I once knew," she said.
"I don't recognise it anymore."
She speaks now of leaving.

So much for our 'leafy' suburb.

Today you stand as a vertical corpse.
A monument to your own defiance.
Your leaves, once lush,
now greyed and shrivelled,
clinging like a thousand withered fingers
on a desiccated cadaver.

I'm told the council will prosecute,
but what is a fine against a life?

When they poisoned your heart
they poisoned mine as well
just like they've poisoned my pen.

— Anon





THE BANDS OF ANZAC

We hear the bands on Anzac Day,
their beat is strong and clear –
just like the beat in young men's hearts
that overcame their fear.

We see the bands on Anzac Day,
they march with style and flair,
just like those young men setting off
to war, without a care.

We dream the past on Anzac Day –
we try to understand
how each man faced his fear of death
in tune to his own band.

We dream ahead on Anzac Day –
we see our children grown,
all marching on behind the bands,
to claim what is their own.

We join the bands on Anzac Day
as we are free to do –
a gift of grace from those who heard
the message ringing true.

We need the bands on Anzac Day
through all our hopeful years,
the beat of history in our hearts,
the future in our cheers.

© Jean Cornell



[Return to Contents](#)



Community Notices

From the March issue of Eastsider News, we have introduced a new section: **Community Listings**. This is a free listing for local clubs and organisations to advertise their programs and meeting times. Because of space limitations in the PDF, we will provide up to six lines, plus a small logo, with a link to a longer description/article on our website, if required.



Love Our Street (Beach Patrol) is a volunteer organisation and we aim to bring people together as a community to look after our environment, to keep our streets beautifully clean and stop litter reaching Gardiners Creek and yOUR oceans. We host monthly clean-ups at litter hotspots across various postcodes.

Contact Moira Tobin at email: 3147@loveourstreet.co.au

ACF Community Eastern Rosellas

Independently organised ACF group

We are a group of passionate people, living in Eastern Melbourne in and around the electorates of Chisholm and Menzies, who are standing up for action on climate and nature. Our group is part of the Australian Conservation Foundation Community Group Network. Email acf.eastern.rosellas@gmail.com



Ashgrove Calisthenics Club is a community club offering classes from Tinies (3 years) to Masters. Calisthenics is a uniquely Australian sport blending dance, ballet and gymnastics. We welcome all abilities, building confidence, teamwork and strong technique – backed by over 60 years of history. Ashburton Uniting Church, 3 Ashburn Grove, & Glen Iris Community Centre, 200 Glen Iris Road.

Email ashgrovecalisthenics@gmail.com Web: <https://www.ashgrovecc.org.au/>



KOoyongkoot Alliance

Back2Nettleton Friends Group Be part of a friendly group of volunteers that work to improve the native habitat and biodiversity of Nettleton Park with the help of council. We are a member of the KooyongKoot Alliance (KKA). Join us every Thursday and the 2nd Sunday of the month from 9 to 10.30am. Email back2nettletonfriends@gmail.com



Balwyn Rotary has since 1972 brought people together to create positive change. Known for the Camberwell Sunday Market, Boroondara Council Community Strengthening Grants and Biodiverse Nature Strip transformations, the club supports community projects locally, nationally and internationally with energy and heart.

Email info@balwynrotary.org.au



Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society (BDTPS), first formed in 1959, continues to encourage the preservation of the local natural environment, protect areas of remnant bush, and stop the loss of the decreasing tree canopy within the City of Whitehorse. Meets bimonthly on the 4th Wednesday of the month at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Visitor Centre, Central Rd Blackburn. Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct 3rd AGM (see website). Web: <https://bdtps.wordpress.com> or contact the secretary at bdtps@gmail.com

[Return to Contents](#)



Blackburn South Probus If you'd like to enjoy retirement with friendly people, good conversation, plenty of laughs, and a wide choice of activities, our Club could be just what you are looking for. The club meets at 10.00 am on the first Wednesday of each month from February to November at the City of Whitehorse Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill. Web: probusblackburnsouth.org.au or call 0408 801 624.



Boroondara Hard Rubbish Rehome

Grassroots Action, Sustainable Solutions, Community Connections.

BHRR helps keep pre-loved items in use and out of landfill while building meaningful, local community connections. Find us on Facebook or email boroondarahardrubbishrehome@gmail.com



Box Hill Ballet Association Inc. is a Not-for profit organisation established in 1951. We offer Classical ballet (Cecchetti), Jazz, Tap, Folk, Wu Tao. Students 3yo–adult. Adult beginners. Grow Confidence. Build Friendships. Feel the Joy of Movement. w. <https://www.boxhillballet.com.au/>



Box Hill Community Gardens is allotment-based. The gardens were established around 30 years ago on council land. There are 34 plots, three of which are standing plots. Most people grow vegetables for their own use. As at January 2026, there was a waiting list of 1-2 years. To discuss any aspect of the garden, contact Dennis Fitzgerald by email boxhillcg@gmail.com or phone 0438 527017.



Box Hill Historical Society was formed in 1963. We hold mainly paper-based records such as photographs, manuscripts, books, ephemera and loose newspaper cuttings, with some small artefacts. We focus on the suburbs of Box Hill, Box Hill Nth & Sth, Mont Albert, Mont Albert Nth, Burwood and part of Surrey Hills. We meet 2pm on the 3rd Sunday in the month, in the Bert Lewis Meeting Room of Box Hill Library, 1040 Whitehorse Rd. Ph. 0480 651 323. e: boxhillhistory@gmail.com



Box Hill Scottish celebrates its 70th Anniversary in 2026. We meet Tuesday evenings in Surrey, Hills lead by teacher Matthew and we love to welcome new dancers. All you need is soft shoes and a reasonable level of fitness. No partner required, we dance in sets. Scottish Country Dance is for normal people, not athletes! Please call Secretary Susie on 0425 883 218 or boxhillscottish@gmail.com Website boxhillscottish.com



Bungalook Nursery has an abundance of indigenous plants thanks to our volunteers who have been busily propagating trees, shrubs and ground covers, and a range of wetland plants. We are open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 9am until 1pm and on the last Saturday of every month (except December) from 10am until 12.30pm. For more details email: wcipp@yahoo.com.au web: <https://www.wcipp.org.au> or phone 0473 122 534.

[Return to Contents](#)



Friends of Blackburn Lake Sanctuary. We hold regular working bees, the Visitor Centre is open Sundays 2-4pm. Melb. Water Watch monitoring, guided walks – wildflowers, night walks & bird walks, assist with Whitehorse Environmental Education program. Visit our analemmatic sundial, yarning circle, playground; wander through bushland spotting birds & wildflowers in season. Volunteers always welcome. Contact blackylakesanctuary@gmail.com for more details or see the website for the latest activities <https://blackburnlakesanctuary.org>



Friends of Belmont Park meet on the 2nd & 4th Saturday of the month at 11am to protect and restore this unique park of pre-settlement trees – right in the heart of suburban Balwyn! The group focuses on increasing mid-storey planting, which

- Boosts biodiversity
- Provides habitat for birds and small wildlife
- Strengthens the natural ecosystem
- Supports long-term resilience of the park.

Email friendsofbelmontparkvictoria@gmail.com



Friends of Markham Forest Be part of a friendly group of volunteers that work to improve the native habitat and bio diversity of Markham Reserve with the help of council. A member of the KooyongKoot Alliance (KKA). Join us every 1st Sunday of the month from 9.30 to 11.30am. For updates join WhatsApp 'Friends of Markham Forest'. Email fomf3147@gmail.com



Nestled along Back Creek, South Surrey Park is a cherished green corridor between Riversdale and Union Roads. The **Friends of South Surrey Park** volunteer their time to plant indigenous species, remove weeds, and keep the area clean – creating a flourishing bushland haven for both people and wildlife. Join us in caring for this special place at one of our regular working bees on a Tuesday or the last Sunday of the month 10 am to 12 noon. Email southsurreypark@gmail.com



The **Kew Philharmonic Chamber Choir** is an early music community (auditioned) choir which rehearses at 7.45 pm on Monday nights at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church Kew under the direction of Stephen Kerr. We present our concerts both at HTK and at the Hawthorn Arts Centre. New singers welcome. <https://kewphilharmonicchoir.weebly.com/>



Menzies for Climate is committed to working for a safer future. We care about our community, and one of our goals is to bring people together to work towards positive action on climate, renewable energy and our natural environment. Activities include Community Cafe events, speaker nights, market stalls, visits to Local, State, Federal politicians, and support for other local groups' work.

Email menziesforclimate@gmail.com



Mont Albert North Probus Club Inc. Fun and Friendship in Retirement. 'Enriching our Lives' is our focus. We meet at 10am, on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Regular group activities include walking, book clubs, coffee club, Sunday breakfast, arts and crafts. Highlights in our calendar are social occasions, outings to fascinating places and our annual three-day Getaway. If you're interested to find out more go to <https://manprobus.org.au/> or email montalbertnorthprobus@gmail.com

[Return to Contents](#)



Murnong First Peoples' Gathering Place invite you to care for country in our Wominjeka Garden. First Saturday of the month – 7 March 9–11am; 4 April 9–11am; 2 May 9–11am; 6 June 9–11am. We welcome new and regular volunteers to care for our Wominjeka Garden followed by a cuppa and a yarn. We recommend you wear comfortable work shoes, protective clothing, sun hat and apply sunscreen. Gardening tools provided. Location: 100 High Street, Glen Iris.



Probus Club of Donvale Hill. Friendship and fun for retirees who enjoy dining, chatting over coffee, walking, going on day trips and excursions, live theatre, etc. Phone Rob: 0417 453 761 or email: thomprwt@bigpond.com

The
Rotary
Club



The Rotary Club of Nunawading. Want to make your community a better place; want to make new friends, networks and learn new skills. Varied opportunities for you to volunteer. Contact rotarynunawading@gmail.com

Rotary
Box Hill Burwood



Rotary Box Hill Burwood is a welcoming local club of volunteers bringing people together to create positive change locally and globally. We support youth programs, mental health initiatives, cultural connections, and service projects that strengthen our neighbourhood. New members and visitors always welcome. Meet at the Box Hill RSL, 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 6:30pm. Email Secretary@boxhillburwoodrotary.org.au

Rotary
Hawthorn



The Rotary Club of Hawthorn meets at Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club from 12.30–2pm on Tuesdays (except second Tuesday of the month). We have a variety of guest speakers and guests are very welcome. Please contact clubservice@hawthornrotary.org.au for more details.

U3A
HAWTHORN

U3A Hawthorn provides opportunities for seniors to learn, teach, share and to give mutual support to each other in a friendly and warm environment. Our courses cover a wide range of interest areas, from academic to physical and artistic activities. U3A Hawthorn is open to anyone over 55 who is retired or no longer working full time. Courses are listed at u3ahawthorn.org.au/
w: u3ahawthorn.org.au e: mail@u3ahawthorn.org.au/courses-activities



Probus Club of Mitcham Nunawading is a small, friendly Probus group meeting 2nd Tuesday each month at 10am in the Willis Room, Whitehorse Council. Meetings are short, terrific speakers and include morning tea. w: <https://microsites.probusouthpacific.org/microsites/mitchamnunawading/Welcome>

[Return to Contents](#)



Surrey Hills & Mont Albert Progress Association is a voluntary group made up of residents concerned about the future amenity and liveability of our local area (defined by the suburbs of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert falling within postcode 3127). We advocate to governments and other decision makers for the proper consideration of the impacts of their policy and project initiatives in our area of interest.
Email shmapa3127@gmail.com



Vermont Garden Club was established c1930 by Vermont Scouts to grow vegetables during the great depression. In 95 years we've gained substantial gardening knowledge & experience & love sharing it! We meet monthly (except Jan) on the 2nd Thurs at the City of Whitehorse Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill. Annual memb.: \$25 single, \$35 family. All members receive monthly newsletter. Further info: Ph. Louise on 0401 431 239 or email vermontgardenclub@gmail.com



Box Hill/Mitcham VIEW Club One of our undertakings is to support the Smith Family's "Learning for Life" program. We regularly hear from one of "our" 9 students and share in their successes and plans. We meet on the 4th Sunday of the month at Poppies, in Canterbury Rd, Blackburn; also Morning Coffee at Forest Hill Shopping Centre, on the 2nd Monday; or Happy Hour from 5-6pm at The Platform Pantry, Railway Road, Blackburn, on the 3rd Friday. Email at maxval60@gmail.com



Sunday, 10 May 2.30 pm

Special Youth Concert

Camberwell Uniting Church, 314 Camberwell Road

Charlie Wu, at 13 years old, is one of Australia's finest young piano talents. He has performed concertos with professional orchestras in Moscow and Geneva. In 2025, he won 1st prize in the Concours International Genève Musicale in Switzerland. Camberwell Music Society proudly presents Charlie Wu in concert Tickets \$15 adults, \$5 students and children. Book through trybooking.com/DGQWK or pay at the door.

Saturday, 16 May 10am

Church Hill walk

Meet at the corner of St Columbs Street and Burwood Road, Hawthorn

Join this walk to explore the history of this area which encompasses some important nineteenth century private dwellings as well as parts of the Urquhart Estate. The walking tour is approximately 2km and takes up to 2 hours. It is leisurely paced. This tour has been researched by Hawthorn Historical Society and is delivered historian Liz Yewers. \$10 for members; \$25 for non-members. Bookings <https://www.trybooking.com/DKEBY>

Saturday, 16 May 2.30 pm

The Kew Philharmonic Chamber Choir

Holy Trinity Church, Kew, corner High and Pakington Streets

Directed by Stephen Kerr and supported by the Boroondara Council, the choir will present a programme of festive choral works from the Renaissance period, both religious and secular, expressing delight, exaltation, and love. Composers include Palestrina, Monteverdi, Gibbons, Byrd, Hassler and Victoria.

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/DKMAE>

Sunday, 17 May 2pm

Box Hill Historical Society speaker

Box Hill Library, 1st Floor, 1040 Whitehorse Road

Chris Baker will tell us about the history of the Box Hill Golf Club.

[Return to Contents](#)

GENOCIDE in the Wildflower State

Murnong First Peoples Gathering Place (MFPGP) are pleased to announce the following events:

Sunday 24 May 5 to 7pm

Boroondara Sorry Day Event screening “Genocide in the Wildflower State”

The city of Boroondara is collaborating with Murnong First Peoples Gathering Place to host a special film screening event for National Sorry Day.

This free event will be held at Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris
Please register your attendance here: [National Sorry Day film screening | City of Boroondara](#)

Saturday 30 May 3pm

Launch of Russell Shiells’ Exhibition “Truth ‘N’ Treaty – All in for Reconciliation”

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds church

Sunday 31 May 11am

20th Anniversary of the Victorian Aboriginal Remembrance Service

Shrine of Remembrance

Saturday 6 June 9am to 11am

Caring for Country Wominjeka Garden

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds church

Saturday 13th June

Trivia Night at Murnong

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds

Saturday 4 July 9 to 11am

Caring for Country Wominjeka Garden

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds church

Friday 31 July to Saturday 1 August

“Keep the Fires Burning”. Wominjeka Garden

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds

Saturday 1 August 9 to 11am

Caring for Country Wominjeka Garden

Murnong First Peoples’ Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris adjacent to St Oswalds

Thursday 21 May, Arrive 7 for 7.30

‘7 Seasons’ documentary on First Nations plus Welcome to Country & Yidaki (didgeridoo) performance

Box Hill Community Arts Centre, 470 Station Street

The director, Clancy Lester, will talk about his connections with First Nations people and the land after the performance, and another First Nations film will complete the evening.

Cost: \$15, \$10 Concession. Tickets: <https://events.humanitix.com/7-seasons-documentary>

[Return to Contents](#)

Thursday 21 May 10.30pm-12pm

History lovers' coffee

Saint Helens, 173 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East

There's always something new to learn about Hawthorn's history and what better way than to meet new and old friends over coffee and cake to chat about heritage and history? We welcome members and non-members. Free event. Bookings <https://www.trybooking.com/DKECJ>

Saturday, 30 May to Friday, 31 July 11am to 3pm Tuesday, Wednesday & Saturday

'Truth N' Treaty' Exhibition

Mumong First Peoples' Gathering Place 100 High Street, Glen Iris

Paintings by contemporary narrative artist, RUSSELL SHIELLS. Russell was an art teacher at Kew and Glen Waverley High Schools, and a graphic designer in Ashburton, where he has lived and worked for over 40 years. His recent paintings can also be viewed at www.russellshiells.com Free but register via: <https://events.humanitix.com/all-in-for-reconciliation-exhibition-launch> Contact Susan Vincent 0432 367 307 or mfpग्ग्gi@gmail.com

Sunday, 31 May 2 to 4pm

Celebrate 40 years of Neighbourhood Watch in Whitehorse

Box Hill Town Hall

Celebrate 40 years of Neighbourhood Watch in Whitehorse and the incredible contribution of volunteers – past and present. Reflections and stories from the past 40 years. A look at how community safety has evolved with opportunities to get involved in your local area. Light refreshments and networking and meet your neighbours! Free, but booking is essential. RSVP: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1572207>

Monday 1 June 7.30pm

Save our Waterways

Persian Flavours, 338 Springvale Road, Forest Hill

Come and hear Juliet Le Feuvre talk about efforts to save our waterways. Juliet is on the Board of Environmental Justice Australia. She was head of the Healthy Rivers Campaigns with Environment Victoria with a focus on the Murray-Darling Basin which has now been declared as critically endangered. If wishing to join us, dinner or snack is from 6pm and the speakers commence at 7.30pm. RSVP: menziesforclimate@gmail.com or call Sally on 0400 371 635

Saturday 6 to Monday 8 June from 10am each day

Waverley Model Railway Club 2026 Model Railway Exhibition

Brandon Park Community Centre, 649 Ferntree Gully Road Glen Waverley

The exhibition will have on display working model railways, including live steam. The club will present their latest model railway layout "Rossiter" depicting rural Australia. Several vendors of speciality model railway products will also be present to supply the latest releases of rollingstock or to provide that hard-to-find item. We have a canteen for drinks and snacks, a U-Drive layout for children and a bargain stall of members' pre-loved models for sale. For more information, check out our website www.waverleymrc.org.au or follow us on Facebook.

Sunday 14 June 2pm

Box Hill Ballet Association celebrates 75 years

Box Hill Community Arts Centre

To mark the 75th Anniversary of the Box Hill Ballet Association, students will perform, showcasing their classwork and specially choreographed items in classical, jazz and tap dance styles, all culminating in a folk dance for everyone to join in to learn and dance together. Afternoon tea, including an anniversary cake, will complete the celebrations. Tickets: Adults \$10 Children (under 16 years) Free. Bookings open 1 May 2026. See our website www.boxhillballet.com.au or email info@boxhillballet.com.au

Sunday, 21 June 2pm

Box Hill Historical Society speaker

Box Hill Library, 1st Floor, 1040 Whitehorse Road

Mary & Neil Blundy will tell us about the history of the Box Hill Wildernes Wilderness Shop.

Sunday, 19 July 2pm

Box Hill Historical Society speaker

Box Hill Library, 1st Floor, 1040 Whitehorse Road

Catriona Tweedie will tell us about the rich connections of the Box Hill Tweedie Family.

[Return to Contents](#)



The next edition

The next edition of *Eastsider News* will appear in July 2026. The deadline for contributions will be 20 June, 2026.

But don't wait till then. We love hearing from you at all times and we will continue post your articles, newsworthy material, stories and other content on our website. Whenever you are inspired, please send us your contributions, written and visual to eastsidernews1@gmail.com

We encourage you to send us photographs and images that relate to your contribution. Send them as a separate jpg/jpeg file and to get adequate resolution, please try to make them at least 250dpi and preferably larger at 300dpi or more.

Your opportunity to get published

We encourage our readers to also become writers for Eastsider News. Guidelines are available on our website at <https://www.eastsidernews.org.au/guidelines/> When writing your article, please consider our editorial values at www.eastsidernews.org.au/editorial-values/

If you have any queries, email us at eastsidernews1@gmail.com

If you value Eastsider News, please consider volunteering with us

The Eastsider News team is facing the distinct possibility that this is the last edition of our beloved newspaper unless we can attract more members to our team. We desperately need your help and hope you will put up your hand to become involved in the production of *Eastsider News*.

We need volunteers to contribute in many ways. This includes administrative tasks such content receipt and management; editorial duties; advertising manager, website management and maintenance; local news reporting; and people with new ideas on and experience in digital publishing.

We are sad that we have reached this stage. Please respond to our plea for help. All positions are voluntary and unpaid. Get in touch so we can chat about making best use of your skills and time at eastsidernews1@gmail.com

Guidelines for writing articles

Guidelines for writing for Eastsider News are on our website at www.eastsidernews.org.au/ All contributions should be emailed to eastsidernews1@gmail.com We will always acknowledge receipt.

In summary, we prefer articles of no more than 600 words or 250 words for letters to the editor. Submit your article as a word document and images as a jpg. Editors will usually accept material as written, but may make changes to improve clarity, readability, or focus. Please be respectful, non-defamatory and factual in your writing and choice of topic. As a community newspaper, we seek material of local interest or with a broader context if relevant.

Disclaimers

Eastsider News is a means by which people in Whitehorse, Boroondara and adjacent areas including Manningham and Monash can share information, opinions and experiences. A spread of interests and views that reflects the diversity of people in the area is encouraged, but views expressed in *Eastsider News* by individual writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors, Independent Community News Group Incorporated, or any other organisation.

Copyright © 2026. Copyright rests equally with the named authors and Independent Community News Group Incorporated. All rights are reserved but, consistent with the community spirit of the venture, a Commons approach to reproducing material is taken on the understanding that it is accompanied by an attribution which refers to both *Eastsider News* and the author, and a copy of the reproduction is sent to eastsidernews1@gmail.com

Responsibility for material related to elections is taken by named authors and Independent Community News Group Incorporated. We accept advertising in good faith, but readers need to apply *caveat emptor*.



Quizling Answers

1. Colin Firth
2. Floridly and scabbarded

Contact Eastsider News

Eastsider News is the business name for Independent Community News Group Incorporated. The primary contact point for ICNG and Eastsider News is eastsidernews1@gmail.com or PO Box 392, Mont Albert Vic 3127.