

Cockatoo

Gembrook

HillsNews

February 2026 Issue: 65

Read online at Hillsnews.net



Story of the Icy Pole Run, Page 3.

Image: Cockatoo Rural fire Brigade CFA Facebook page.



Scan here to
learn more



Daniela De Martino

STATE LABOR MP FOR MONBULK

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The Icy Pole Run

The annual Cockatoo Rural Fire Brigade icy pole run kicked off on Christmas Eve (Wednesday) at 2.30PM.

Do you know the history behind the icy pole run and why our Brigade doesn't do a Santa run like many other Brigade?

Well...

In 1983, Cockatoo was significantly impacted by the Ash Wednesday bushfires, which resulted in the loss of six lives, 307 houses and other buildings, and a total area burnt of 1,800 hectares.

This disaster was etched in the memory of young and old and remains with some of our current residents today.

Before the days of understanding the now-diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or "shell shock" as it was referred to when troops from World War 1 returned home, an association of fire trucks and bad outcomes was formed.

To regain the positive association with the Brigade and the big red trucks (BRTs), the icy pole run was developed later that same year so that children could have some joy and on the flip-side Brigade members could too.

This tradition lives on strong in our community as we remember the tragedy of Ash Wednesday in



Read online at Hillsnews.net



Australia Day in Cockatoo



An opportunity to recognise and celebrate some of our very special volunteers.



At this morning's **Cockatoo Australia Day Community Morning Tea and Awards** we proudly recognised:

Community Group of the Year: **The Lyrebirds Community Choir**

Community event of the Year: **Sing for Unity**

Young Citizen of the Year: **Eliza Owen**

Senior Citizen of the Year: **Ted Godwin**

Citizen of the Year: **Coral Belrost**

We also acknowledge the contributions of Keilah Dewar as a nominee in the Young Citizen category.



Our community is enriched by your care for others, the knowledge and skills you share, and your leadership and resilience

Our gratitude also goes to **Cockatoo Rural Fire Brigade(CFA) SES Emerald Unit** and **1st Cockatoo Scouts** for their ongoing support of our events and our community.

thank you **Rosalyn Oxtoby** for sharing your musical talents with us

We enjoyed great coffee from **Barista on the Move** and delicious lamingtons from Cockatoo Bakery and our award recipients received beautiful leadlight cockatoos handcrafted by **Lorens Leadlighting** to commemorate their achievements.

Thank you to Cardinia Shire Mayor **Councillor Brett Owen - Beacon Hills Ward, Cardinia Shire** and **David Nickell - Ranges Ward Councillor - Cardinia Shire Council** for presenting our awards

Our thanks to **Aus Day National Australia Day Council** for funding our event.

Cardinia Shire

Australia Day

Awards 2026

Cardinia Shire Council is excited to announce
the nominees for the Cardinia Shire
Australia Day Awards 2026!

Citizen of the Year

Brijal Parikh
Caroline Roff
Coral Belrost
Kim Thomsen
Lisa Ann Hicks
Moira Eveleens
Queyea Tuazama
Renuka Vijayakumaran
Robb Evans
Stephen Paul Hicks
Sonya Boloski
Vanessa Kewish

Senior Citizen of the Year

Maureen Timms
Merle Mathisen
Ted Godwin

Young Citizen of the Year

Eliza Owen
Keilah Joy Dewar
Priyansh Parikh

Event of the Year

Emerald Arts Society Annual Art Exhibition
Officer Community ANZAC Day Dawn Service
Sing for Unity

Celebrating our 2026 Cardinia Shire Australia Day

Award Winners!

Cardinia Shire Council was proud to announce and celebrate the nominees and winners of the 2026 Cardinia Shire Australia Day Awards at a special ceremony on Thursday 22 January.

This year's Cardinia Shire Australia Day Award winners are:

- 2026 Citizen of the Year: Robb Evans
- 2026 Senior Citizen of the Year: Maureen Timms
- 2026 Young Citizen of the Year: Eliza Owen
- 2026 Event of the Year: Emerald Arts Society Annual Art Exhibition

The awards ceremony at the Cardinia Cultural Centre celebrated the outstanding contributions of volunteers whose dedication and passion make a positive difference to the local community.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Councillor Brett Owen congratulated the 2026 winners and nominees and thanked them for their valuable contribution.

“Our Australia Day Awards showcase the strength, spirit and generosity that define our community, allowing us to come together to celebrate the selfless contributions of people who've dedicated their time and energy to making Cardinia Shire a better place,” Mayor Owen said.

“These community members continue to be the heart of Cardinia Shire — quietly giving their time, energy and passion to help others and strengthen our community. Their dedication is nothing short of inspiring.

“On behalf of Cardinia Shire Council and our entire community, I warmly congratulate the 2026 Australia Day Award winners and nominees. Your contributions help make our shire an inclusive, vibrant and welcoming place for all.”

Mayor Owen congratulated 2026 Citizen of the Year, Robb Evans, on his deserving win. “Robb's unwavering commitment and efforts are nothing short of extraordinary,” Mayor Owen said.

“Robb founded *Liv's Legacy* to honour his daughter, Olivia, whose life was sadly cut short at just 15 due to anorexia nervosa. In the face of unimaginable loss, Robb chose not only to honour her memory, but to create lasting change for countless families across Australia.

“His work has made a huge difference to families navigating the impacts of eating disorders, and his courage, conviction, and unwavering commitment have created real and lasting change.”

Mayor Owen said the 2026 Senior Citizen of the Year, Maureen Timms, had been an outstanding volunteer with Palliative Care South East since 2012, contributing more than 150 hours through the companionship program.

“Maureen consistently goes above and beyond, taking on extra clients and offering exceptional care and support,” Mayor Owen said.

“Maureen continues to inspire through her generosity and positive example. Her compassion and selflessness make her a true role model and a deserving recipient of the Senior Citizen of the Year Award.”





Mayor Owen said Young Citizen of the Year, Eliza Owen, had displayed exceptional dedication to her community as a volunteer with the Emerald SES and CFA.

“From a young age, Eliza supported logistics and welfare during major storms, even when her own home was destroyed. Officially joining the SES at 15, she quickly became a trusted team member, assisting with storm response, flood recovery, landslides, and community engagement.

“Eliza has earned her CFA five-year service award and is recognised as a youth leader in Emerald and Cockatoo. Eliza’s strength, positivity, and commitment make her an inspiring role model for young people.”

Mayor Owen said the 2026 event of the Year – the Emerald Arts Society Annual Art Exhibition – had been a highlight of the local calendar for 55 years.

“This much-loved and long-standing annual event celebrates creativity and strengthens community connections through art,” Mayor Owen said.

“The event attracts entries from across Victoria and interstate, featuring more than 200 exhibits and drawing more than 400 visitors across four days.”

Mayor Owen thanked all Australia Day award winners and nominees for their valuable contributions and positive impact on the community.

“Our deserving winners and nominees embody the community spirit that makes Cardinia Shire such a special place.

“As Mayor of Cardinia Shire, I’m proud to be part of a community with so many dedicated, passionate and truly outstanding people. Your contributions uplift and inspire us all, and we sincerely appreciate all that you do.”

The annual Australia Day Awards celebrate and recognise the outstanding contributions made by individuals and community groups to the Cardinia Shire community. Councillors and former winners were invited to vote on the nominations received for each category. A unique link was provided to each person voting which only registered one vote and could only be used by the person voting. Prior to voting, each participant was required to complete a Conflict of Interest and confidentiality declaration.

To find out more about the 2026 Cardinia Shire Australia Day Awards nominees and winners, please visit www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/AustraliaDayAwards





**COCKATOO
JITTERBUGS**
PLAYGROUP



**GEMBROOK
JITTERBUGS**
PLAYGROUP



*A Playgroup for
children & their
parents/carers from
birth to pre-school*

FREE PLAYGROUP

Each week of school term
from Feb to Nov.

TUESDAYS & WEDNESDAYS:

9.30 - 11am @
St. Luke's Anglican Church
1 McBride St Cockatoo

THURSDAYS:

9.30 - 11am @
Gembrook Community Centre
4 Gembrook Rd Gembrook



Details



JITTERBUGS runs for 1.5 hours and includes; outdoor activities, imaginative play, crafts, songs, storytime and snack time (provided by parent/carer)



Tea and coffee is available to parents/carers throughout the session. JITTERBUGS aims to strengthen the relationship between parents and children through relaxed, interactive activities.



JITTERBUGS is free to attend. We just ask that you please bring a small fruit snack and water for your child/ren for morning tea



Please note that parents/carers are to remain with their child/ren at all times. Children and parents/carers with contagious illnesses must not attend.

Term1

3rd, 4th & 5th Feb
- 31st Mar 1st, 2nd April

Term2

21st, 22nd & 23rd April
23rd, 24th & 25th June

JITTERBUGS will not run on days of **EXTREME** or **CATASTROPHIC** fire danger and/or days **predicted 38 degrees** or hotter at **8am** that morning; regardless of what the temperature gets to

Hills Community Strengthening Initiative

1-3 McBride St, Cockatoo

Ph: 5968 8459 Mon - Thur

Cockatoo email: Naomi.dewar@echo.org.au

Gembrook email: gembrookjitterbugs@echo.org.au



Cr David Nickell - January 24 2026

IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR HILLS FOLK...

Many of you will be strongly aware of (and many of us are in the middle of) the changing nature of farming and land use in the Hills. Most recently this includes the significant decline in broadacre potato cropping and irrigation around Gembrook and Cockatoo. Before that it was the berries and nurseries around Emerald.



New land uses are being tried here and there, but there's no doubt our District is in transition to a different future, as landowners adapt and consider taking-on new risks. Or not. This change - the need to do it well and with care for our people, landscape and hopefully ongoing food producing potential, was one of the reasons I stood for Council.

Well - the Cardinia Agribusiness Audit which will kick-off a new strategic plan and vision for Cardinia's farming potential (including the Hills' part in it) has been released for comment.

*** Please take some time to read the Audit, reflect on your experiences and thoughts about the future - and respond. There is also several drop-ins planned over the next couple of months.***

This affects 'townies', in the Hills too. The farms in the landscape surrounding you create the backdrop we all love, but it's the landowners who are also the land managers of that landscape. Weeds, pests, slashing, irrigating, even planting trees all need to be paid for. We've all got to be able to make a living, somehow. If family farming as we know (knew?) it changes, what will that mean for the farmland around us?

As part of the process, Council is also seeking expressions of interest from citizens who would like to be involved in a new advisory committee.

*** If you are involved in or have a background in food and/or agribusiness, please consider getting involved and sending in your expression of interest.***

Farming in the Hills has many similarities, but also lots of differences to farming on the flats... it is critical that the Hills experience is represented on the Committee by a couple of locals at least.

Please share or talk to people who you know are interested in this topic and who might want to have a say.

[SEE PAGE 31-](#) I'm proud that Cardinia is now making concrete efforts to build a vision for an ongoing future in farming for our communities...Cr David Nickell.



Cr David Nickell | Ranges Ward | Cardinia Shire

Council

Phone: 0428 630 155 | Web: cardinia.vic.gov.au



Volunteer Training Workshops

Council offers a range of free training workshops for volunteers to support our community organisations such as community asset committees, neighbourhood houses, sporting clubs, men's sheds, township committees and many more.

January- April 2026

Grant Writing

Wednesday 18th February, 6:30- 8:30pm

Join us for a FREE grant writing workshop for local organisations and community groups whose work directly benefits those in Cardinia Shire. This workshop will provide the tools, strategies and confidence necessary for writing successful grant applications. The workshop will also provide an opportunity to connect with other grant writers to discuss common challenges and share helpful strategies for success.

Governance Training for Community Groups

Wednesday 25th March, 6.30- 9.00pm

Good governance is the foundation of a strong not-for-profit organisation, providing the checks and balances needed to guide leadership and support long-term sustainability. For community groups run by volunteers, understanding this can be challenging within a complex legal and regulatory environment.

Recruitment and Management of Volunteers

Wednesday 15th April, 6.30-9pm

Volunteers are often the heart of a community group, but keeping them motivated, supported, and aligned with the organisation's purpose takes thoughtful planning and good communication. This session gives participants the tools to manage volunteers effectively and build a strong, engaged team.

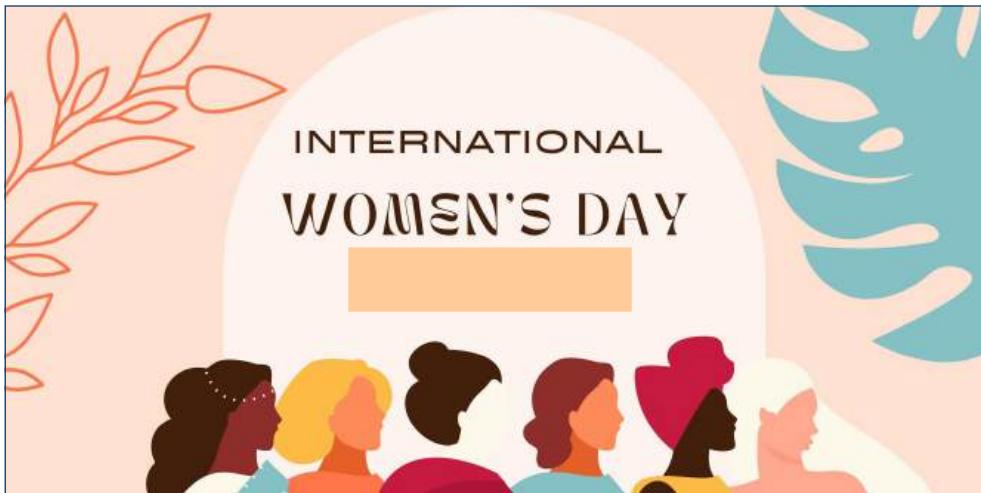


For further information and to register, visit:

cardinia.vic.gov.au/volunteering

or email: connectedcommunities@cardinia.vic.gov.au

Share her story: recognising the women who inspire our community



Published: 21 January 2026

Do you know an inspiring woman who is making a difference in the local community? If the answer is yes, we want to hear her story!

This International Women's Day, Cardinia Shire Council is honouring the extraordinary women who help shape and uplift our community – whether they lead, support, create, advocate, or make a difference behind the scenes.

Please tell us what makes her special in 500 words or less, or by submitting a short three-minute video.

Everyone who submits a story, along with the women featured in their stories, will be invited to join our 2026 International Women's Day celebration on Thursday 5 March at the Cardinia Cultural Centre. The event will celebrate the remarkable contributions of women across our shire.

During the event, five stories will be highlighted from each of the following categories:

- Leading the way
- Making a difference
- Using creativity
- Celebrating culture and generations

Quiet achiever

Submissions are now invited for women who have a strong connection to Cardinia Shire either as a resident or through their meaningful contributions to the local community. Entries may be submitted as a written story, poem or video and will close on Sunday 8 February.

For more information, or to make a submissions, please visit [International Women's Day 2026: Balancing the Scales Through Her Story submissions – Cardinia Cultural Centre](#)



The Cockatoo Community Bus Is Back on the Road!

Great news for our local groups, clubs, and community organisations—the **Cockatoo Community Bus is officially back in service!** After a prolonged pause, the bus has returned to provide safe, reliable, and affordable transport for the Cockatoo community.

The Cockatoo Community Bus has long played an important role in helping residents stay connected. Whether it's getting seniors to social programs, supporting youth activities, helping sporting clubs travel to events, or assisting local groups with excursions, the bus offers a convenient way for everyone to get where they need to go.

This much loved service is **owned and maintained entirely by volunteers**, made possible through the generosity of community contributions and support from local sponsors. Every booking helps keep the bus on the road and available for everyone—so when you choose the Cockatoo Community Bus, you're also supporting the continued strength and independence of our town.

Booking & Rates

The bus is now open for bookings, and community groups are encouraged to plan ahead for upcoming events, outings, or regular activities.

For the most up to date rates, please refer to our Square or Facebook pages, where the current pricing schedule is listed alternatively call 0493 646 318.

A Community Effort

The return of the bus is a testament to what our community can achieve together. A heartfelt thank you goes out to the volunteers who dedicate their time to maintaining the vehicle, coordinating bookings, and ensuring the service remains available for all. Their commitment helps strengthen the connections that make Cockatoo such a special place to live. If your group is looking for a reliable way to get around—or you simply want to support a local asset that benefits everyone—consider using the Cockatoo Community Bus for your next outing.

Next meeting Friday Feb 6th at the Alan Bailey building on the Alma Treloar reserve 7.30
Thanks to Cockatoo scouts for the use of the building.



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Gembrook

Empowering women of the
Hills through self care
Laser Hair Removal
Laser Facials
Ombré Brow Tattoo
Skin Needling
Chemical Peels
Lash Lift
Brow Lamination
Brow Shaping



Victoria's transition to contactless payment on public transport a tap in the right direction

RMIT University



The Victorian Government is in its final testing phase for the long-awaited transition to a tap-and-go system, where passengers can use bank cards or smartphones to pay for public transport. An RMIT expert explains what the shift means for passengers and if it will ease pressure on the state's growing transport system.

Andrew Butt, Professor in Sustainability and Urban Planning

"Many people will be familiar with tap-and-go system in cities such as Sydney and London, and while the technology is not new, it has apparently taken some time, and some new technology, to get it working on the Myki system.

"The advantages of this are clear for users, especially visitors and occasional users, with opportunities to reduce another barrier to using public transport.

"Shifting transport modes, from driving to public transport, offers advantages to ease congestion, manage major events, and meet the needs of tourists and visitors.

"Coupled with the new free under-18s fares, free weekend fares for seniors, and the opening of the Metro Tunnel, it provides a step change in public transport choice and access, at least for those with reliable options nearby.

"However, with increased usage, issues will still remain in a system where capacity on major routes, especially in Melbourne's rapidly growing outer suburbs, requires big investments, and where increased users at peak times and at major events demands more services."

Andrew Butt is a Professor in Sustainability and Urban Planning in the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies and the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University. Andrew is a

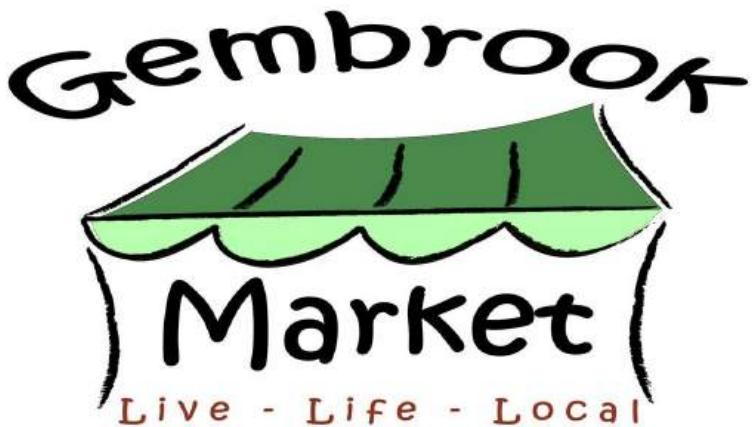
Supported by



Cardinia

Cardinia Shire Council

9am to 2pm 4th Sunday of the Month



Save them to your calendar now

Cockatoo RSL presents

BINGO!



Mondays



at Gembrook RSL

49 Main St Gembrook.



Doors open 6.45 pm , \$3 per book (15 games per session, 2 Sessions). Raffles \$2 per ticket (all prizes donated). 7.30pm Eyes down First session (15 games) 8.30pm First session ends. 8.40pm short break and raffle draw. 8.45pm Eyes down Second session (15 games). 9.30pm Second session ends. Bar open.



COCKATOOS SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS

Presented by:

JOSE & FRIENDS & COCKATOOS RSL

COCKATOOS RSL
SUB BRANCH



Some of the recent performers at Sunday Music Sessions.

2pm-5pm every Sunday. Kitchen open. Best coffee in town.



Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for WorkSafe and TAC



ONE MILLION YOUNG VICTORIANS NOW TRAVELLING FOR FREE

Thursday, 1 January 2026



The Allan Labor Government is making public transport free for every child, every day, everywhere – putting money back in the pockets of parents right across Victoria.

Acting Premier Ben Carroll and Minister for Public and Active Transport Gabrielle Williams today announced that all passengers under 18 are now able to catch a train, tram or bus for free with their Youth myki card anywhere in the state.

This will help to ease the cost of living for Victorian families – making getting to school and seeing family and friends cheaper and easier.

A yearly student pass in 2025 cost \$755. A family with three children using yearly student passes spent \$2,265 a year. A student without a yearly pass – who buys a daily fare four times a week – spent \$1,144 a year.

Across Victoria there are more than one million young Victorians who are eligible for the new Youth myki card, unlocking more opportunities to get young people where they need to go.

Passengers aged 5 to 17 must carry their Youth myki as proof of their free travel entitlement and should continue to tap on and off to ensure a smooth entry and exit when travelling across the network.

Youth myki cards are available to purchase for \$5, both online on the Transport Victoria website or in person at staffed stations.

It's just one of the ways the Labor Government is making travel across Victoria cheaper.

The Labor Government's regional fare cap has already saved Victorians more than \$174 million and travel is free for everyone, everywhere, every weekend across the public transport network until Sunday, 1 February to celebrate the opening of the Metro Tunnel.

For more information on the Youth myki and free travel across the network visit transport.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier Ben Carroll

"Free public transport for every child, every day, everywhere – from today."

"This will put money back in the pockets of parents right across Victoria and make life just that little bit easier."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Public and Active Transport Gabrielle Williams

"This is real, practical, cost of living relief for Victorian families. Whether it's travelling to the city, to regional Victoria or just around the corner – it's now free for every child."

"We're adding more services across our public transport network, to provide Victorians with more options to get to appointments, work and social activities."

Media contact Jen Aitken 0467 745 963 | jennifer.aitken@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Cockatoo Over 50's day trip

Cockatoo Over 50's had a day trip to 'Bruno's in Marysville on 19th January 2026. Our first trip of the New Year for the Cockatoo over 50's group. What a fabulous day it has been, Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, it was both informative and enjoyable. The Art Work was incredible, to think that one man (apart from some that his father also had produced) has produced over 160 of his own sculptures in his garden. it was mind blowing experience . To have the ability to create not only paintings but sculptures to the quality that he has is totally amazing. I will include here just a tiny sample of his amazing work. For those of you who were unable to come, well, you missed an incredible treat. A great day out, mark it on your calendar and go see for yourselves.



COCKATOO Over 50's Podiatry.

We have Adam from "walk on podiatry" attending the Cockatoo over 50's. If you are over 50 and interested you can book an appointment by ringing 03 5941 6147

The dates for 2026 are

- February 25 th
- April 29 th
- June 24 th
- August 19 th
- October 14 th
- December 9 th

Time 10.00 - 1 pm



COCKATOO OVER 50'S

at the Cockatoo Over 50's Centre
Alma Treloar Reserve, Pakenham Rd,
Cockatoo

February 2026

2nd | Lunch \$10—Chicken and Salad Sandwiches, fruit

9th | Craft – Zentangle coaster with Marg | *BYO lunch*

16th | Guest Speaker: Martine will be talking about assistance dogs

23rd | Outing to Arthurs Seat Dromana. *Bus \$8 plus costs for activities chosen*



Mondays 10:30am –2:30pm

\$2 a session and an Annual Full Membership of \$12. Toasted sandwiches available for purchase for \$6 unless otherwise specified.

Other Activities...

Meditation with Danny & Chris | 0412 468 867

Will not be commencing in February at this stage

Beginners Line Dancing with Kathy Smith

Thursday 10am—11:30am

\$6 a session and an Annual Associate Membership of \$6



Chair Pilates with Jeanette

Fridays 10am—10:45am

\$7 a session and an Annual Associate Membership of \$6



Feel free to walk in and join us for any of the above sessions

Please contact Dot on 0400 070 197 for further information

Podiatrist Appointments

Please phone Dot 0400 070 197

Next appointment at Over 50's Centre is on **February 25**



Free green waste drop-off events

Dispose of garden prunings, weeds and
small tree branches at our free drop-off events.



Free green waste drop-off in Pakenham!

Published: 23 January 2026

To help residents clear out their gardens and tidy up their properties this summer, Cardinia Shire Council is holding free green waste drop off days this February.

From **7–14 February 2026**, residents can drop off their green waste at the Future Recycling Transfer Station in Pakenham.

This free service gives residents a convenient and environmentally friendly way to dispose of green waste, in addition to the optional food and garden waste bin.

Residential green waste can be dropped off, including:

- garden clippings, tree branches and trunks (up to 30 centimetres wide and 1 metre long), weeds, grass clippings, leaves, flowers

Drop-off dates and location

Future Recycling Transfer Station, 30–32 Exchange Drive, Pakenham **Operating times:**

- Saturday 7 February: 8am – 2pm, Sunday 8 February: Closed, Monday 9 – Friday 13 February: 7:30am – 3:30pm, Saturday 14 February: 8am – 2pm

This drop-off service is only open to Cardinia Shire residents, so please present photo ID as proof of residence when you arrive. Residential green waste is only accepted via cars, utes and trailers; commercial vehicles or business operators cannot access this service to dispose of green waste.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Councillor Brett Owen is encouraging the community to use this opportunity to dispose of excess garden waste responsibly.

“You can help keep our shire tidy and safe. These drop-off days are a simple, practical way for residents to clean up their properties and help reduce fire risks, especially during summer.”

Council runs a range of free waste drop-off events throughout the year to help residents manage their waste safely, responsibly, and sustainably.

“We’re proud to offer these free events and additional waste services, and I would encourage residents to use these services.” Mayor Owen said.

To find out more information on all upcoming waste events, visit www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/dropoff

2XL *Mentoring program*

WE ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER MENTORS!

If you want to make a drastic difference in a child's life then we'd love to invite you to our information night to find out what 2XL is and what it means to be a mentor!

2XL is for children grade 2-6 aiming to enhance developmental abilities, social skills, self-confidence, resilience, and ultimately to help kids excel in life!

MENTOR INFORMATION NIGHT

7PM, Thursday 5th February, 2026

St Luke's Cockatoo, 1-3 McBride Street

Light supper provided

For more information contact Naomi at:

0418 382 857

naomi.dewar@echo.org.au



In partnership with:



LINE DANCING WITH KATHY

FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS OF ALL AGES

\$10 per class

Our 2026 beginners line dance group will start at Cockatoo Over 50's Community Hall
on Thursday 5th February, 10 - 11.30 a.m.

Learn to line dance - everyone is welcome!

You will enjoy fun and laughter, music, and exercise, of course!



**NEW OFFICE LOCATION
345 Belgrave-Gembrook Road, Emerald 3782**

- Small Business Accounting and Tax support
- Tailored solutions
- Monthly Financial Reporting
- New Business Advice and Set Up
- GST & BAS
- Individual Tax Returns

By Appointment Only. Visit our website for available times.



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Conscious Breathwork



Have you tried Conscious Breathwork yet?

There are so many different techniques to evoke varied states of awareness and being. Brooke uniquely combines the intentional breath with energetic healing, using rhythmic breathing to go deep within the body and open up space to heal and repair stagnant energy and emotional blocks. Private 1:1 sessions available online, and local group Breath Journey's are running this term in Emerald and Cockatoo. Visit <https://www.breathbodyritual.com/> for all details and information, or Contact Brooke on 0434 926 554. Just for women at this stage.



2026 Jobs and Skills Showcase

Explore, Experience & Empower Your Future

Step into a world of opportunity at this exciting event hosted by Cardinia Shire Council, where inspiration meets information to help you take the next step in your career journey.

Location: Cardinia Cultural Centre

Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2026

Time: 9:15am – 12:00pm

Tickets: <https://www.trybooking.com/DHVXN>



Jobseeker Information Session: Unlock Your Career

Presented by Workforce Australia - Local Jobs South Eastern Melbourne and Peninsula this pre-showcase information session will provide you with practical tools and tips to navigate the job market, discover in-demand industries, explore training pathways, and learn how to stand out with your resume and interview skills. Connect with local support services and get ready to take control of your career!

Explore the opportunities at Showcase

- Meet local employers, training providers, trade professionals, and support agencies—all under one roof! Whether you're passionate about traditional trades, curious about emerging industries, seeking volunteer opportunities, or still discovering your path, this is your chance to connect, learn, and be inspired.



HillsNews. Online HillsNews.net

Contributions for consideration for publication are welcome and must be submitted by the 20th of the month for the next issue, Emailed to 3781News@gmail.com or posted to 3781News, PO Box 3, Cockatoo, VIC 3781. Editor Brett Barker 2/5 McBride St, Cockatoo. 0421 219 899. HillsNews is Auspiced by Cockatoo RSL sub branch inc. Read online and see back issues at HillsNews.net or send an email to subscribe and help save a tree.



COCKATOO SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS
Presented by:
JOSE & FRIENDS & COCKATOO RSL

COCKATOO RSL
SUB BRANCH



1st February 2026



Paul Klat



Peter



Edward Nass

15th February 2026



Mark Turner

Mark Gardner L'N'L (Liz & Laurie)

Carol McCoy & Friends

22nd February 2026



Mark S & friends **Dave Cox**

John Hunter **Pete Be**

Grant opportunities that are currently open for applications (listed in order of closing date)



Tiny Towns Fund (Victorian Government) closes 4 February 2026

This funding opportunity supports local communities in Cardinia Shire in targeted locations with a population of up to 5,000 people. The Fund responds to the needs of local people and aims to increase liveability, opportunity and prosperity in small towns in Victoria. Both community capacity building and infrastructure projects can be applied for.

Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program - Community Grants (Australian Government) closes 5 February 2026

This small grant from the Department of Veteran's Affairs is for projects that are community based and commemorate the service and roles of those who have served, and to preserve and provide access to information about Australia's wartime heritage.

2026 Community Bank University and TAFE Scholarship program (Bendigo Bank) closes 6 February 2026

Local Community/Bendigo Banks are offering this program which aims to assist academically motivated students from the local area and surrounding districts who have been offered a place at an Australian university or TAFE to study 2026 and are experiencing challenging circumstances. The scholarship program supports the following study related expenses – accommodation costs, course costs, study-related materials/equipment, textbooks, tutoring and /or education related travel (within Australia). Community Banks in Cardinia offering this program are Lang Lang, Koo Wee Rup and Bunyip.

2026 Community Bank New Beginnings Mature Aged Scholarship (Bendigo Bank) closes 6 February 2026

Local Community/Bendigo Banks are offering this program which aims to assist academically motivated matured aged students residing in the City of Casey or Shire of Cardinia who have been offered a place at an Australian university or TAFE to study in 2026 and are experiencing challenging circumstances. The scholarship program supports the following study related expenses – accommodation costs, course costs, study-related materials/equipment, textbooks, tutoring and /or education related travel (within Australia). Community Banks in Cardinia offering this program are Lang Lang, Koo Wee Rup and Bunyip.

African Australian Creative Media Grant (Ubuntu Project) closes 12 February 2026

This grant funds organisations that operate in screen media, visual arts, podcasting, radio and written media to amplify the stories of African Australia creatives.

Grant opportunities that are currently open for applications (listed in order of closing date)

Community Sponsorship Program (WorkSafe Victoria) *closes 13 February 2026*

NFPs and unincorporated groups can seek sponsorship for community events or activities that complement WorkSafe's strategic objectives and campaigns relating to reducing workplace harm and improving outcomes for injured workers.

Multicultural Capacity Building Grants (Victorian Government) *closes 19 February 2026*

This Department of Premier and Cabinet grant aims to help NFPs to build skills, systems, leadership and strategies to improve long-term effectiveness and support more collaboration.

National Shed Development Programme (Australian Men's Shed Association) *closes 20 February 2026*

This grant supports Men's Sheds to deliver mental health and wellbeing programs and events, shed improvements and to purchase new tools and equipment.

Funding for healthcare education initiatives (AbbVie) *closes 27 February 2026*

This grant supports community organisations with healthcare education initiatives, disease awareness activities, the creation of educational materials and digital content, and related fundraising efforts.

Content, Operations & Programming Grants (Community Broadcasting Foundation) *closes 3 March 2026*

These grants support small and grassroots community media organisations (radio & TV) to build business capacity and skills.

Community Project Funding (Women's Mental Health Australia) *closes 5 March 2026*

Funds local organisations to build programs and support services that increase positive mental health outcomes for women.

National Shed Development Programme - Defibrillators Category (Australian Men's Shed Association) *closes 6 March 2026*

This grant supports Men's Sheds to purchase an Automated External Defibrillator or to replace batteries and pads.

Small Environmental Grants (Wettenhall Trust) *EOI opens 9 March 2026*

Through this grant, the Trust supports practical, community-linked biodiversity conservation and education projects.



The FoodStore is OPEN!!

The Food Store is open on Mondays to welcome those in need. We open between 10am-1pm for you to come and collect some food. You will receive a friendly welcome and a warm smile, as well as access to the wide range of food available. There are no requirements other than being in need to access our services.



St Lukes Church Cockatoo

All are Welcome to our

SUNDAY NIGHT *Service*

EVERY SUNDAY

6pm-7pm

**7pm-7.30pm . Cuppa, cake, bikkies
and chat with locals.**



With Youth Pastor Luke Hatchkin van Neuren

**1 McBride St Cockatoo. Driveway beside
the creek opposite the Bowls club.**

UPCOMING MARKETS

Saturday 7th February
8:30am - 1:30pm

Saturday 7th March
11th Birthday Celebration
Twilight Market 3pm - 8pm



13
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- arthritis
- nurse consults
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- new puppy and kitten checks
- lump checks

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and grooming and surgery bookings.

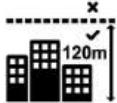
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You must not fly your drone higher than 120 m above ground level.



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You must only fly one drone at a time.



Only fly during daylight hours.



You must not fly in a populous area. This includes beaches, parks, events, or sport ovals during games.



You must not fly your drone in a way that creates a hazard to another aircraft, person or property. Respect others' privacy.



Keep your drone within visual line-of-sight. This means you must always be able to see it with your own eyes (not through a device, screen or goggles). Don't fly through cloud, fog or smoke.



You must not fly your drone over or near areas affecting public safety or where emergency operations are underway. This includes ambulance, police, search and rescue, or firefighting efforts.



If your drone weighs more than 250 g, you must not fly within 5.5 km of a controlled airport (airports with control towers). If it's 250 g or less, you can fly up to 45 m high within 5.5 km but stay out of the airport boundary and don't create hazards for other aircraft. Regardless of weight, stay clear of the runway approach and departure paths.



Near smaller airports without control towers, you can fly your drone within 5.5 km. If you become aware of crewed aircraft nearby, move away and land your drone quickly and safely.



If you're within 1.4 km of a helicopter landing site and become aware of a helicopter nearby, taking off or landing, you must move your drone away and land it safely.



If you fly your drone for work (commercially), extra rules apply. You must register your drone and get a licence or accreditation. If you only fly for fun, no registration or accreditation is needed.



25045164

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Help shape the future of food and agribusiness in Cardinia Shire

Cardinia Shire Council is strengthening the shire's food and agribusiness sector and is calling on the community to get involved.

The Draft Agribusiness Audit Report has been completed following a number of research and engagement activities during 2024–25. More than 330 rural landowners, farmers, food businesses, industry representatives and community leaders informed the audit.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Cr Brett Owen said the report provided an overview of the current state of the food and agriculture sector in the shire, as well as challenges and opportunities for the future.

A key opportunity identified through the audit is the establishment of a Food and Agribusiness Advisory Committee. Council is now inviting expressions of interest from community members interested in joining the committee to help shape policies, strategies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the shire's food and agribusiness sector.

Mayor Owen said Council was seeking up to 10 community representatives to join the committee, which would also include two Councillors and Council staff.

"The advisory committee will play an integral role in supporting Council's vision for food and agribusiness across the shire," he said.

"We're inviting Cardinia Shire residents from diverse backgrounds, such as farming, food production and manufacturing, science, technology and industry organisations, to express interest in joining the committee and share their knowledge and insights.

"The committee will provide advice on strategies, identify emerging trends and challenges, advocate for industry needs and help to strengthen connections between Council and key stakeholders in the sector."

Expressions of interest for the Food and Agribusiness Advisory Committee are open until 22 February. The Draft Agribusiness Audit Report is available for the community to view and provide feedback until 15 March.

Opportunities identified through the audit, together with the Food and Agribusiness Advisory Committee, will help to inform the development of Cardinia Shire Council's new Food and Agribusiness Strategy, which is a key initiative of the new Council Plan 2025–29.

To help inform the strategy, a number of community pop-up sessions will be held:

- Monday 9 February, 6–7:30pm, Koo Wee Rup Community Centre, 255 Rossiter Road, Koo Wee Rup.
- Thursday 19 February, 6–7:30pm, Gembrook Community centre, 4 Gembrook Road., Gembrook.
- Monday 2 March, 6–7:30pm, Cardinia Cultural Centre, Lakeside Boulevard, Pakenham.

Saturday 14 March, 10 am–2pm, Pakenham Agricultural Show, PB Ronald Reserve, John Street, Pakenham.

To view and provide feedback on the Draft Agribusiness Audit Report, express your interest in joining the Food and Agribusiness Advisory Committee, or for more information, please visit <https://creating.cardinia.vic.gov.au/agriculture-audit>

LIMITED TIME
OFFER



NEW PATIENT WELCOME OFFER



COCKATOO
DENTAL



What are the benefits of having your own live chickens?

Having your own live chickens can give you fresher eggs, better garden fertility and pest control, reduced food waste, and surprisingly engaging, low-cost pets. Many people also value the environmental and educational benefits of a small backyard flock.



Food and nutrition

Regular supply of very fresh eggs, often daily from good layers. Backyard eggs are often higher in some nutrients like vitamin D and certain vitamins compared with typical supermarket eggs, especially when hens are well-fed and allowed to range. You know exactly how the birds are treated and what they are fed, which can matter if you care about humane and low-chemical production.^{[4][7][3]}

Garden and waste benefits

Chickens provide high-nutrient manure that becomes excellent compost and fertiliser once aged, improving soil structure, moisture retention, and plant health. They help with pest control by eating insects, slugs, larvae, and some weeds, reducing the need for chemical pesticides in vegetable beds and orchards. A flock can significantly cut kitchen scraps and garden waste going to landfill, because many leftovers can be safely fed to hens.^{[1][3][4]}

Cost and sustainability

After setup, chickens are relatively low-cost pets; feed and bedding are the main ongoing

**CHICKENS
FOR SALE**

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Vale Arthur Wintle



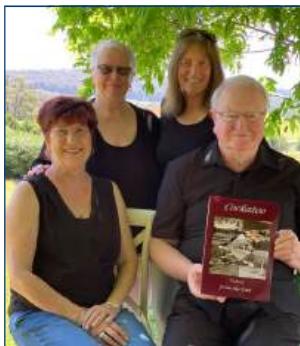
It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of our dear friend and Vice President Arthur Wintle. He was a valued and important member and will be sadly missed by us all.

Arthur was a passionate contributor to The Cockatoo History Group always eager to share his knowledge and passion for our local history as well as his interest in family history. His dedication helped preserve the spirit of Cockatoo for generations to come. He was instrumental in the writing and publication of our book Cockatoo, Voices from the Past and was interested in assisting with our new book.

We will deeply miss his warmth, humour, and the generous way he brought our local history to life.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Sarah, Cameron, James and family, and all who had the privilege of knowing him. RIP Arthur.

Jan, Dot and Ruth (Cockatoo History and Heritage Group)



OPEN STAGE



Gemco Players Community Theatre

Welcome one and all to Gemco's ongoing Open Stage Night. Hosted by Carol, our popular open stage has been running for many decades. Held in the cosy hall, you are welcome to perform anything you like or just come for the lovely entertainment.

Enjoy music, poetry, singing, monologues or anything you wish to show!. Running the first Sat of every month, now starting at 7pm!

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MAKING IT EASIER FOR VICTORIANS TO GET CARE AT THE CHEMIST



Friday, 19 December 2025

Victorians will now be able to get more conditions treated at the chemist – with the Allan Labor Government expanding its Chemist Care Now program.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today joined the team at Richmond Traders Price-line to announce new conditions have been added to the program – helping Victorians avoid an unnecessary trip to the doctor while freeing up GPs to see people with more complex conditions.

With consultations remaining free, busy families will now be able to seek treatment for the common skin infection impetigo, known as ‘school sores’ – making it easier to get their kids the care they need.

Access to affordable and convenient care for Victorian women will be strengthened, with the addition of two new hormonal contraceptives options – the injectable depot and the vaginal ring – available for resupply, without needing a prescription.

Women experiencing menopause will also benefit, with pharmacists able to provide a resupply of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) without a prescription later next year.

Over the next two years, Chemist Care Now will grow to include 22 treatments for common health conditions – with participating pharmacists able to undertake short-form training to deliver each new service.

It builds on the existing program which currently offers treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections, skin conditions such as shingles, travel vaccines including hepatitis A and B, and the resupply of the contraceptive pill.

Following a successful pilot, the Labor Government made Chemist Care Now permanent earlier this year, supported by a \$18 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2025/26*.

Pay less at the bowser!

Servo Saver has been launched in the Service Victoria app - a simple way to check real-time fuel prices before you fill up.

- See prices from 1,200+ retailers statewide.
- Save up to \$333 a year by choosing the best deal near you or along your route.
- Under the next phase of our Fair Fuel Plan, fuel



Fire season is here!

Create or update your written bushfire survival plan now!

Having a written bushfire plan will help you make decisions more quickly and confidently during an emergency.

Facing the threat of a bushfire can be a highly stressful experience, and having written procedures in place can help you act with more focus. Knowing that you have a plan in place may help reduce anxiety during bushfire season.

For businesses, a fire plan will help minimize damage to your property, protect your employees and clients and make it easier to get back to business faster. It can also play an important role in ensuring your business remains compliant with all relevant regulations.

You should familiarize your staff and clients with the bushfire plan each fire season to help reduce the anxiety and uncertainty that people may feel.

Tips for looking after your people during bushfire season include:

- Involving as many people as possible in the creation of your bushfire plan.
- Being aware of people's personal needs when creating the plan.

Practice your bushfire survival plan so that people know what to do.

Council welcomes Victorian Government funding to expand kindergarten places in Cockatoo

Published: 16 December 2025

Cardinia Shire Council is pleased to announce that Cockatoo Kindergarten will soon benefit from additional kindergarten places and upgraded facilities, with support from the Victorian Government.

Located at 23 Bailey Road Cockatoo, the kindergarten will undergo significant improvements including:

- Upgrades to the existing community room into a licensed 33-place kindergarten room and integrating the existing kindergarten room and shared indoor/outdoor spaces, all under the existing roofline.
- Upgrades to amenities to meet the latest accessibility and compliance standards.

Renewal of existing kindergarten room, including upgraded children's amenities to improve accessibility, inclusion and functionality.

These upgrades will enable the kindergarten to deliver up to an additional 63 places for local children and families from Term 1 2027.

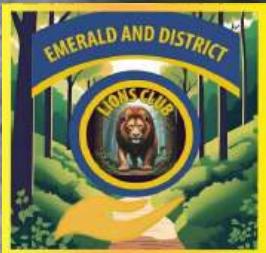
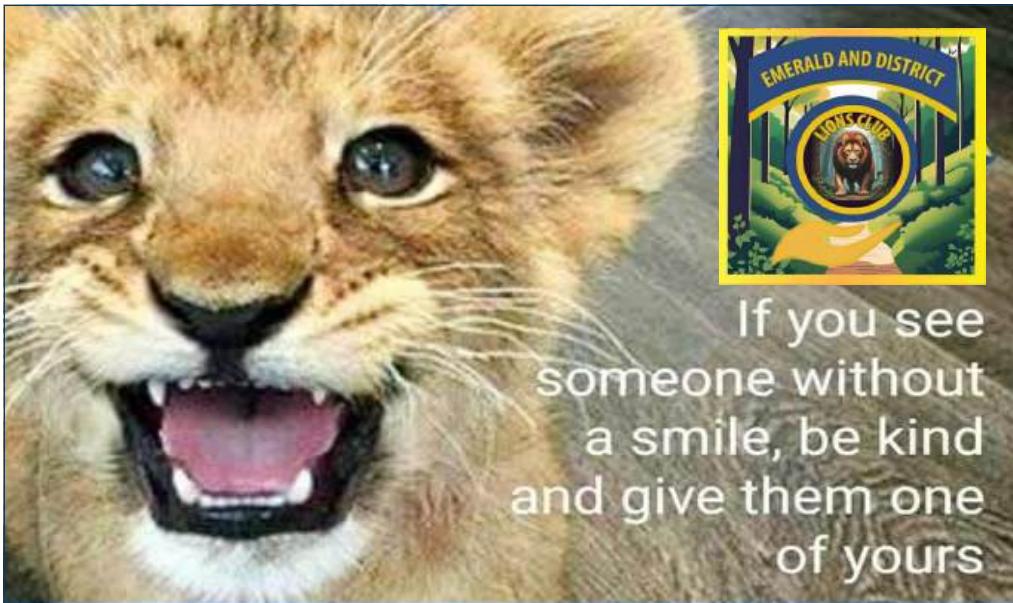
Cardinia Shire Council Deputy Mayor, Cr Liz Roberts welcomed the funding as a positive step forward for the community.

“Cardinia is grateful for the Building Blocks Partnership with the Victorian Government as it provides a framework for collaboration and co-investment in early years infrastructure which is particularly important in our growing region.”

Cr Roberts said the expansion will ensure the facility is future-ready to meet growing community demand and the increased hours of kindergarten delivered as part of the Best Start, Best Life reforms.

“These upgrades will allow more children in Cockatoo to secure a kindergarten place and enjoy improved facilities that support their development.”





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Cockatoo RSL (sub branch)

Local Container Returning point.



COCKATOO RSL
SUB BRANCH



BINGO Mon 2 February



Gembrook RSL. 6.45 opens



UNO Friday 6 February

7.30 pm



POKER Saturday 7 February

7.30 pm

POOL COMP Sat 14 Feb.

7.30 pm



DARTS Friday 20 February

7.30 pm



DOUBLES POOL Frid 27 Feb.

7.30 pm



TRIVIA Sat 28 February

7.30 pm



KARAOKE with Shelly

Friday 6 March

Saturday 4 April

7.30 pm

COCKATOO RSL SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS

FROM 2PM EVERY SUNDAY

FREE ADMISSION