

Cockatoo

Gembrook



January 2026 Issue: 64

Read online at [Hillsnews.net](http://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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9754 5401 @danielademartinomp

## *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 1983 and our current-day Brigade members absolutely revel in the community engagement and bringing smiles to children (young and old).

The Ash Wednesday Bushfire Education Centre (AWBEC) can be visited to look back on this tragic day, and to learn how to prepare yourselves and your loved ones should our beautiful town be tested again.

We wish everyone of our community members a Merry Christmas and hope you have a safe and fun time of year.

From our family to yours.    Cockatoo Rural fire Brigade CFA.



Read online at [Hillsnews.net](http://Hillsnews.net)

## **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.<sup>[4][7][3]</sup>

### **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.<sup>[1][3][4]</sup>

### **Cost and sustainability**

After setup, chickens are relatively low-cost pets; feed and bedding are the main ongoing expenses, partly offset by savings on eggs and garden fertilizer. Producing your own eggs reduces reliance on factory-farmed eggs and lowers transport, packaging, and refrigeration impacts, shrinking your household's carbon footprint. Surplus eggs can sometimes be sold or swapped locally, helping with grocery costs and supporting more **local** food systems.

# **CHICKENS FOR SALE**

**0417 318 458**

*The advertiser is a regular sponsor of HillsNews*

# Community Bank Dandenong Ranges

Supporting Local Food Relief



This month, Community Bank Upwey & District and Community Bank Emerald & District proudly provided a total of \$9,500 to support local organisations in continuing their vital charity food programs.

This ongoing quarterly commitment, confirmed for the 2025/2026 financial year, makes a meaningful difference to those doing it tough in our community.

A huge thank you to the incredible teams at: **The Philanthropic Collective, Foothills Community Care - Community Meals** Dandenong Ranges Emergency Relief Service Inc., **The Food Store at St. Luke's**

Your work helps ensure that no one in our community goes without support when it's needed most. Our support is with thanks to our customers.

Community Bank  
Upwey & District and Emerald & District

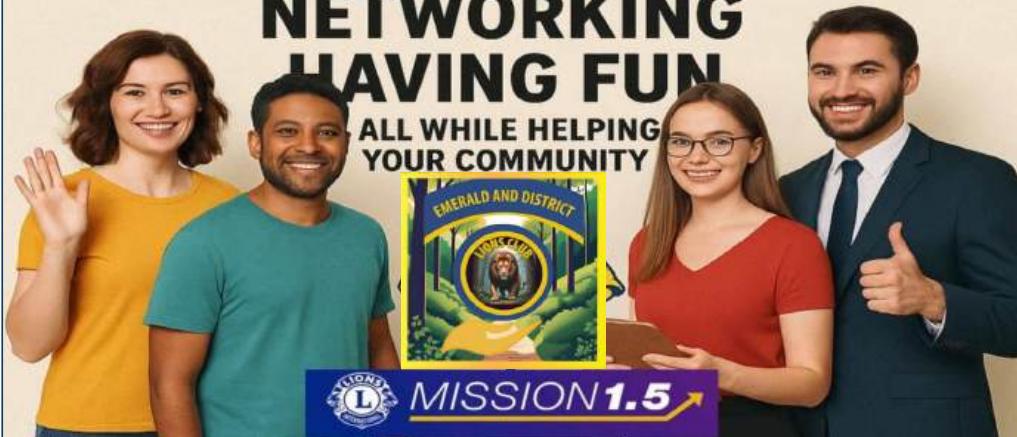
Supporting Local  
Food Relief  
Programs



# WANTED!!!

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NETWORKING  
HAVING FUN**

ALL WHILE HELPING  
YOUR COMMUNITY



# WANTED



## ROAMING PERFORMERS TO PERFORM AT YAKKERBOO

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or email [admin@yakkerboo.au](mailto:admin@yakkerboo.au)*



## **Cr David Nickell - December 2025**

Had a rough night at Monday night's last Council mtg for the year, to be honest.

Recording of proceedings is here - and I had a fair bit to say on some of the items on the agenda, not all positive, unfortunately...

<https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/.../counc.../attachment/2664>



As the year wraps up, it's worth noting some achievements, at least...

- the old cafeteria at Emerald Lake Park saved and now a thriving local Art hotspot thanks to community
- funding finally achieved for a Green Wedge Management Plan for the Hills, updated Township strategies about to start for Gembrook and for Emerald.
- Emerald Lake Park Stakeholders meetings resumed
- urgent drainage problems at Ambrose St addressed
- The usual regular meetings with our essential community volunteer groups, to listen carefully and work in support of their projects. Please join a local volunteer group if you can?... we need people involved in civil society more than ever.

Aside from these, it's been a privilege to work with dedicated and hard-working Council staff, to advocate for residents' issues with the usual roads and trees issues through the year, where maybe a bit more attention or speed was needed.

It's certainly been a mixed bag - some progress on changing things, some setbacks and some where no doubt I've let you down. And I did finish that last meeting a bit grumpy, I admit .

But I wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and New Year with family and friends and may 2026 see some more improvements getting over the line. Cr David Nickell.



Cr David Nickell | Ranges Ward | Cardinia Shire Council

Phone: 0428 630 155 | Web: [cardinia.vic.gov.au](https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au)

PO Box 7 Pakenham 3810 | Customer Service: 1300 787 624



# A revitalised Pakenham



Published: 2 December 2025

Construction is progressing on Stage 1 of Pakenham Revitalisation with works underway on Drake Place near the Railway Hotel.

Cardinia Shire Deputy Mayor and Henty Ward Councillor, Liz Roberts is proud to see progress being made on the streetscape upgrades, and to see how Council has worked with local businesses to minimise disruptions so far.

“We’re committed to working with businesses to find the best ways to support them through our works in Pakenham.”

“Council is meeting regularly with impacted businesses to do this and have so far, been able to make meaningful changes to our construction schedule from the feedback provided.” Cr Roberts said.

To help minimise impacts, maintain access and encourage greater connectivity to businesses and services in the area, Council has broken down stage 1 works into 6 smaller phases.

“We understand that December and early January is a busy time for businesses in Pakenham’s town centre, so we’ve made adjustments and planned our works with this in mind.” Cr Roberts said.

From Monday 8 December, works on Drake Place will be paused to reduce disruptions from Council over Christmas, encouraging the community to shop local. In addition to the works being paused, Drake Place will be temporarily reopened, which will include the reinstatement of two-way traffic in and out, parking bays and a new footpath. This change will reduce congestion and support access around the town centre.

As the festive season approaches, the Pakenham Revitalisation project is encouraging the community to shop local and support the businesses that make Pakenham vibrant and unique.

If you’re hunting for the perfect Christmas gifts, Pakenham has everything you need right on your doorstep. From fashion boutiques offering clothing and footwear, to toy stores for the little ones, and specialty shops for hobbies, crafts, and home décor, there’s something for everyone. You’ll also find jewellery stores, beauty and wellness services, and plenty of cafés and restaurants to relax and enjoy a festive meal or coffee break while you shop.

“Shopping locally not only helps small businesses thrive but also strengthens our local economy, creates jobs, and builds a stronger, more connected community.” Cr Roberts said.

While our works are on pause, Pakenham Rotary Club will be spreading the festive spirit by installing almost 20 Christmas trees down Main Street, Pakenham. Supported by a \$1,000 Small Change Wellbeing Support Grant from Cardinia Shire Council, the trees will be decorated by the community to help establish Pakenham as a place for all people to live, work, play and visit.

“This season let’s celebrate Pakenham by choosing local. Whether you’re buying gifts, dining out, or sourcing everyday essentials, make Pakenham your first choice.” Cr Roberts said.

Works are expected to restart on both sides of Drake Place from early January 2026, and stage 1 works are expected to be completed by mid-2026.

For more information on the Pakenham Revitalisation project and how you can support local businesses, visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pakenham](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pakenham)

## **Help shape the future of arts, culture and events.**

**Published:** 5 December 2025

We're inviting the community to help shape two new policies designed to create a thriving arts and cultural scene in our community.

Cardinia Shire Council is developing a *Festivals and Events Funding Policy*, which will outline how Council supports and funds future festivals and events. Additionally, a *Public Art Policy* is also being created to guide the planning, creation and management of public art across the shire.

To ensure these policies reflect the needs and aspirations of our community, we want to hear from everyone, whether you're a regular festival-goer, an occasional visitor to cultural events, or someone who lives, works, or spends time in Cardinia.

We will also be hosting additional pop-up sessions in January for the community to attend and learn more about these two policies:

- **Cardinia Cultural Centre Pop Up** - 15 January 2026 | 5-6pm | Waterfront Room, 40 Lakeside Blvd, Pakenham
- **Lakeside Market Pop Up** - 18 January 2026 | 10-12pm | 40 Lakeside Blvd, Pakenham
- **Koo Wee Rup Woolworths Pop Up** - 20 January 2026 | 10-12pm | 45 Station St, Koo Wee Rup
- **Bunyip IGA Pop Up** - 20 January 2026 | 2-4pm | 2/6 Main St, Bunyip

**Hills Hub Emerald Pop Up** - 21 January 2026 | 10-12pm | 400A Belgrave-Gembrook Rd, Emerald

You can also share feedback by completing the [Creating Cardinia short online survey](#) or requesting a hardcopy via [mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au).

This consultation is open until 30 January 2026.

To learn more and have your say, visit <https://creating.cardinia.vic.gov.au/shape-our-cultural-future-have-your-say>

## **COCKATOO OVER 50'S**

### **January**



As we head into the Christmas break, please note that our regular meetings will pause for the month of January except for a special outing planned for 19 January 2026.

Our usual weekly meetings will resume on 2 February 2026.

Wishing everyone a joyful and restful holiday season.



# 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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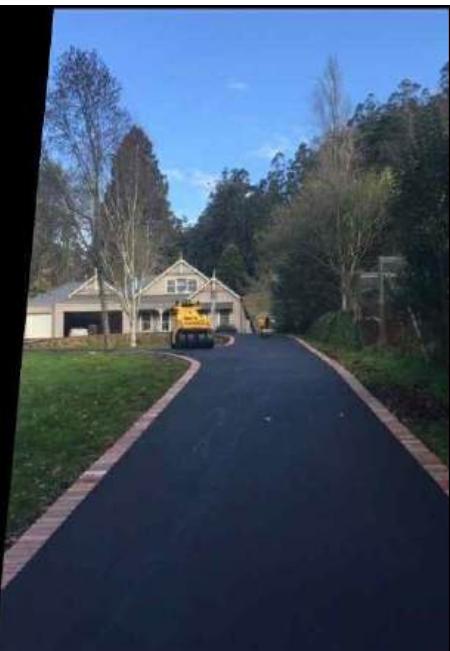
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# MAKING IT EASIER FOR VICTORIANS TO GET CARE AT THE CHEMIST



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*.

It has been a clear winner with Victorians – delivering more than 66,000 services at more than 800 pharmacies across Victoria since the pilot began.

To support the program, the Labor Government also recently announced the Graduate Certificate of Pharmacist Prescribing at Monash University – a new training pathway for more pharmacists to participate.

The course is accredited by the Australian Pharmacy Council and adds to courses developed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and other training organisations.

The Chemist Care Now program adds to other Labor Government initiatives including 29 Urgent Care Clinics, and the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, making care easier to access for all Victorians.

To find a participating pharmacy, please visit [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/about-chemist-care-now](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/about-chemist-care-now).

## Cockatoo Community bus is back on the road

We are pleased to finally announce that the Cockatoo Community Bus Committee, has received news that Cockatoo's Community Bus has been recognised by Roads Victoria ( part of the Vic Transport ) as a Community Bus. This has been a long protracted negotiation with transport Victoria, to move through the legislated requirements to register the bus.



The new committee is -

Chair - Dot Griffin, Secretary - Tina van Shilt, treasurer- Toni- Anne Licciardi.

Booking officer - Rachel Burgh.

Members - Marty Cattanach, Sandy Allan & Collin Griffin.

Public meetings will be held every two months and the first meeting is at Cockatoo Scout Hall on Friday December the 5 th at 7.30.

Phone bookings - 0493 646 318

As we progress, you will be able to do online bookings.

Preference is given to community groups.





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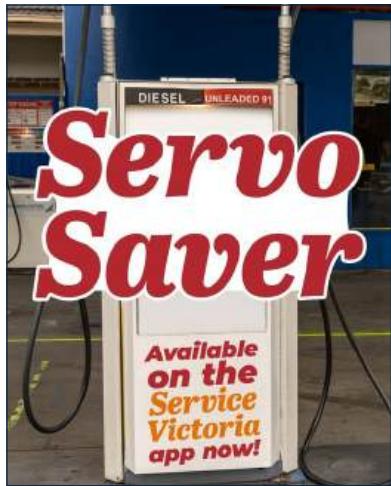


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## ***Pay less at the bowser!***

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.”

Council is proud to work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver this project and welcomes the \$904,000 investment.

Additionally, to support this funding application, Council is working closely with Cockatoo Community House, also located at 23 Bailey Road, to relocate their services to the Cockatoo Community Complex. The move to the new location at 77 Pakenham Rd Cockatoo offers a larger, more functional space for Cockatoo Community House stakeholders and their various needs.

To learn more about this project, please see the Victorian Government's media release <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/partnership-delivering-more-kinder-places-cardinia>





## COCKATOO SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS

Presented by:

JOSE & FRIENDS & COCKATOO RSL

COCKATOO RSL  
SUB BRANCH



Some of the recent performers at Sunday Music Sessions.

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





## COCKATOO SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS

Presented by:

JOSE & FRIENDS & COCKATOO RSL



Some of the recent performers at Sunday Music Sessions.

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



# 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:naomi.dewar@echo.org.au)



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## *Daniela De Martino mp*

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the VICSES Emerald Unit to meet with their Controller, Jess Rice, who stepped into the role earlier this year. It was inspiring to hear about the incredible work this team does to keep our community safe.

I am delighted that the Emerald Unit has secured a VESEP grant for a new vehicle. This will make a real difference for our incredible volunteers, helping them get where they need to be quickly and keep our community safe when the unexpected happens.

A huge thank you to Jess and the entire VICSES Emerald team for your dedication and commitment to our community—you make us proud!



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# Child Online Safety Reform Welcomed.



8 December 2025

Without Broader Action The introduction of legislation restricting social media access for under-16s by the Australian Government has been welcomed by the National Rural Health Alliance as an important first signal that it is willing to act on digital harm – but that is where the comfort stops, unless this is only the first step of a suite of changes. “We all wish for young people to be safe online, but banning under-16s from social media risks pushing them into unregulated spaces, cutting them off from support networks and placing the burden of policing technology onto families that are already stretched” comments Susi Tegen, Chief Executive of the National Rural Health Alliance. “Today’s legislative step is welcome, but it must not be the full stop – it must be the first comma. Real protection comes from regulating platforms, not punishing children. Build safety in; don’t legislate absence.” The NRHA maintains a need for a different approach, one that protects children and their mental health, without isolating them. “The real issue isn’t teenagers – it is the platforms designed to harvest attention, amplify harm and escape accountability” says Ms Tegen. Rural children in particular, often already isolated due to their postcode, rely greatly on social media for communication, expression and to get involved. Globally, leading child and youth advocates and parents have been warning for several years that holistic measures need to be in place. While a welcome start, the under-16s legislative ban is a band-aid on its own. “Children accessing social media are being drawn in by unsafe tech platforms that utilise manipulative algorithms. It is a problem that has already galloped ahead – unless stronger system responses follow in rapid succession,” Ms Tegen stresses. While the ban highlights public concern about exploitation, bullying, harmful body-image content and targeted commercial manipulation, the core issue is due to a lack of tech-corporate responsibility, with young people having already migrated to alternative platforms, VPN enabled tools and encrypted spaces that sit outside regulation.

National Rural Health Alliance.

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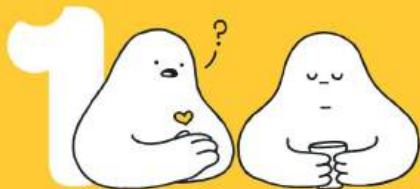
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# Ask RUOK?™ ANY DAY



Have a conversation using these 4 steps



How are you travelling?

You don't seem yourself lately – want to talk about it?

## Ask RUOK?



I'm here to listen if you want to talk more.

Have you been feeling this way for a while?

## Listen



What do you think is a first step that might help you?

Have you spoken to your doctor about this?

## Encourage action



Just wanted to check in and see how you're doing?

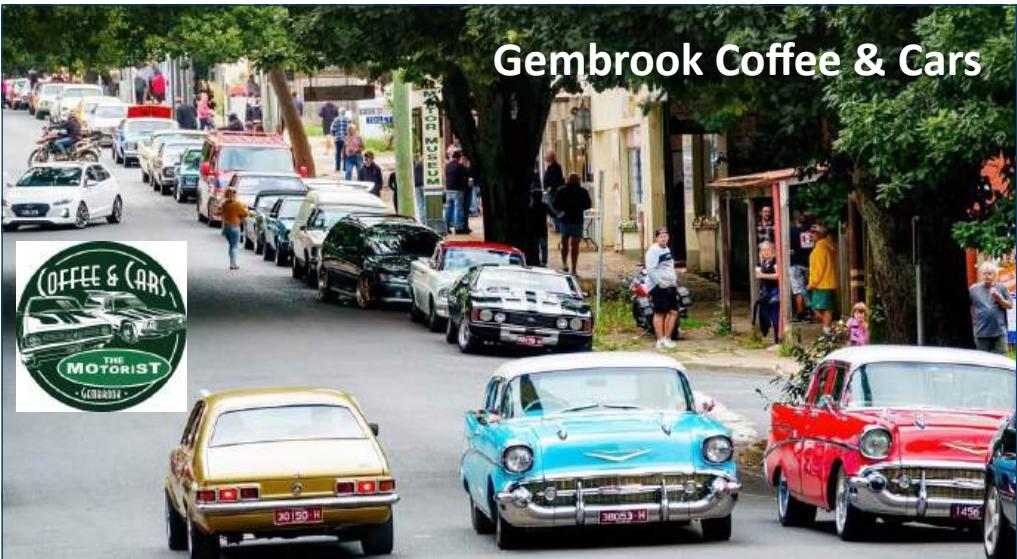
Have things improved for you since our last chat?

## Check in

Learn more at [ruok.org.au](http://ruok.org.au)



# Gembrook Coffee & Cars



2nd Sunday of every month. Show off your cars, grab a coffee and catch up with other car enthusiasts 77 Main St , Gembrook,

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# 1st Cockatoo Joeys/Cubs/Scouts/Venturers, 1923.

On behalf of the 1st Cockatoo Scout Group, I would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to all of those businesses and organisations below.

Over the last year we have been very fortunate to have received community grants as well as have the ongoing and generous support of local businesses.

As a non profit group, your support and generosity allows us to invest in our youth members futures, as they have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities throughout the year. We have been able to update and purchase new equipment and supplies as well as provide ongoing training and support for our Leaders, youth assistants and adult helpers.

We wish you all a happy and safe New Year and look forward to another action packed year. Debbie Regan.



## 1st Cockatoo

Scout Group



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**Gembrook-Cockatoo  
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Please send all enquiries to: [Secretary@gcfnc.com.au](mailto:Secretary@gcfnc.com.au)



## COCKATOO JITTERBUGS

PLAYGROUP



## GEMBROOK JITTERBUGS

PLAYGROUP



### 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  
- 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 1<sup>st</sup>, 2nd April

## Term2

21st, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> April  
23rd, 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:Naomi.dewar@echo.org.au)  
Gembrook email: [gembrookjitterbugs@echo.org.au](mailto:gembrookjitterbugs@echo.org.au)



# THE BLACK COCKATOO

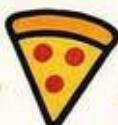
## PIZZA, MEXICAN & BAR



**DELICIOUS PIZZAS & HOT MEXICAN  
WITH YOUR FAVOURITE DRINKS  
TILL MIDNIGHT ON WEEKENDS**

1/27 McBRIDE ST. COCKATOO VIC 3781

**03-5968-8004**



## **Friends of Gembrook Park**

**28<sup>th</sup> December, Facebook.**

We are excited to see that a new bridge and what looks like a section of boardwalk is being constructed on the Ferngully walking track - where the track crosses the Cockatoo Creek. Currently this area is closed to foot traffic.

Pictured is a 'snapshot' of one of the 'views' from this area of track.



**Top Win Tennis Academy**  
**Give Tennis A Try For Free**  
**At Cockatoo Tennis Club**

**0404 352 049**  
**[topwintennisacademy.com](http://topwintennisacademy.com)**

A photograph of a woman in a blue tennis outfit, captured in the middle of a tennis swing. She is on a blue and green tennis court. The background is a bright, sunny day with some trees visible. The text for the tennis academy is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# **Jingle all the way to Council's free Recycling Drive and Drop event**

**Published:** 19 December 2025

Cardinia Shire Council's Christmas drop-off event just got bigger and better!

This year Council is expanding its usual cardboard drop-off event, accepting a wider range of those hard-to-recycle items that pile up over the festive season.

At the upcoming Recycling Drive and Drop event, residents can drop off e-waste, polystyrene, soft plastics, textiles, and excess cardboard — all for FREE!

Running over two days as a convenient drive-thru, all accepted items will be reused, repurposed or recycled.

## **Event details**

**When:** Saturday 10 January, 9am–1pm

Sunday 11 January, 9am–1pm

**Where:** Council depot, 18A Purton Road, Pakenham.

Residents need to register for this event.

## **Accepted items**

- **e-waste** (batteries, electrical devices, appliances and vapes)
- **polystyrene** (packaging and produce boxes)
- **soft plastics** (plastic bags, bread bags, chip packets etc)
- **textiles** (good quality and end of life clothes, shoes, fabrics, towels, bed linen etc)
- excess cardboard** (clean and flat)

This event is open to Cardinia Shire residents only. Residents must present photo ID as proof of residence within Cardinia Shire to access the free service. Residential volumes of accepted items allowed, no commercial vehicles.





Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## HARM A WORKER – FACE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Daniela De Martino, Member for Monbulk, has thanked local retail workers for their hard work and reminded the community to treat customer-facing staff with respect - especially during the busy holiday season.

Daniela visited Woolworths in Monbulk recently to speak with staff about new laws aimed at protecting workers from abuse and violence. These reforms follow the passing of the **Crimes Amendment (Retail, Fast Food, Hospitality and Transport Worker Harm) Bill 2025** in Parliament last week.

Speaking on the Bill in Parliament, Daniela emphasised that no one should go to work fearing abuse or violence. She spoke about the vital role retail and hospitality workers play in local communities and said these reforms send a clear message that harming a worker will not be tolerated. Daniela also highlighted that the new laws give police stronger powers to act when abuse or intimidation occurs, ensuring workplaces are safer for everyone.

The Bill delivers tough new offences to crack down on crimes against workers in retail, hospitality and transport - making workplaces safer for everyone.

Under the reforms:

- Assaulting or threatening a retail, hospitality or transport worker will carry a penalty of up to **five years in jail**.
- New summary offences for intimidation and lower-level assaults will carry penalties of up to **six months in jail**.
- Ram raids will now be recognised as **aggravated burglary**, with a maximum penalty of **25 years** and subject to Adult Time for Violent Crime.
- Victoria will press ahead with **Workplace Protection Orders** to ban violent individuals from entire workplaces.

These changes respond to alarming statistics:

- 800,000 retail crime incidents** were reported nationally last year.
- Almost **9 in 10 retail workers** have experienced verbal abuse.





- More than half of transport gig workers report threatening or abusive behaviour.

The Allan Labor Government introduced the Bill to Parliament earlier this month, and it has now passed – delivering stronger protections for workers across Victoria ahead of the busy holiday season.

### ***Quotes attributable to Member for Monbulk Daniela De Martino***

*"Retail, hospitality and transport workers keep our communities running - and they deserve respect and safety at work. These laws make it clear: harming a worker is never acceptable, and there will be serious consequences."*

*"As a former retail and hospitality worker, owner of retail and hospitality businesses and former Union Official for the retail, fast food and industry union - the SDA - I've experienced and witnessed some terrible behaviour from customers. No worker deserves to be subjected to violence and aggression at work."*

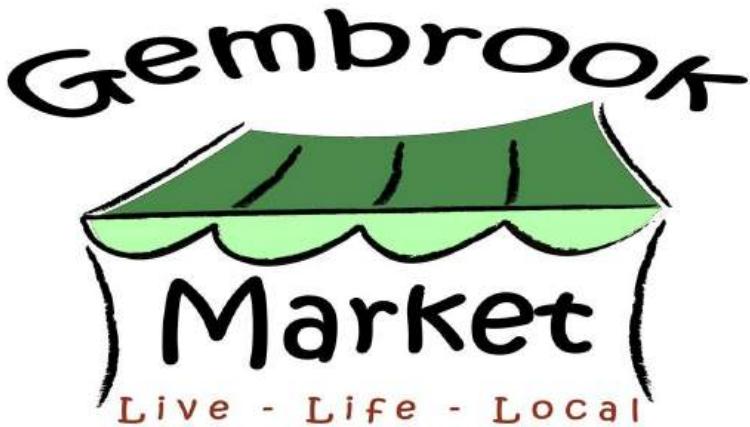
*"I want to thank the incredible team at Woolworths Monbulk and all our retail, hospitality and transport workers for everything they do to serve our community - especially at this time of year when they're working flat out to help local families. Let's make sure we treat the people who serve us every day with respect and kindness."*

1635 Burwood Highway, Belgrave 3160  
P 03 97545401 E [daniela.demartino@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:daniela.demartino@parliament.vic.gov.au)

[f](#) Daniela De Martino MP [i](#) Daniela De Martino MP

**CARING  
CONNECTING  
COMMUNITY**

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.

Flying Fox • Abseiling • Climbing Wall • Boulder Wall • Axe Throwing • Axe Making  
Bush Donuts • Fairy Floss • Food & Drinks • Memorabilia • Displays • Badges for Sale  
and MORE

# Celebrating 100 Years

**Gilwell Park  
Gembrook**

**Saturday 10th January 2026**

**Welcome Ceremony 10:30am**



**Book via Trybooking**  
[www.trybooking.com/DCKHY](http://www.trybooking.com/DCKHY)



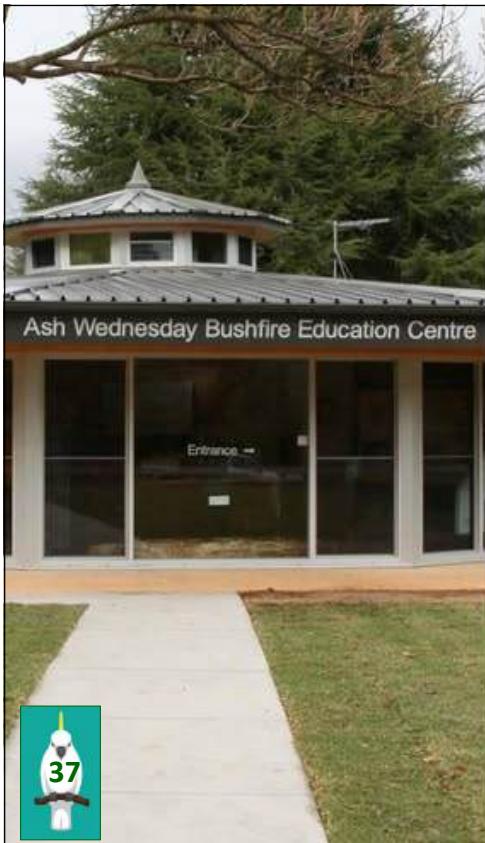
## **Gilwell Park Adventure Centre** turns 100

Gilwell Park, based just 5kms out of Gembrook has been home of Scouting for almost 100 years, a place cherished by locals and those further afield, a place where Scouts, community groups, families, schools and everywhere in between have been able to create memories that will last a lifetime.

This January 10th 2026, the park is celebrating this milestone by opening the gates to the broader community, with heaps of activities and fun to be had by all!

There is a try booking link to tickets on the attached poster! Please share this amongst the community, print it out and tell your friends, family and neighbours.

See you at Gilwell 10th of January for a fantastic day. On behalf of the organising committee of the event, and those associated to Gilwell Park. Feeling excited with **Scouts Victoria at Gilwell Park Victoria**.



## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

We are Desperately needing more volunteers.

Can YOU help us ?

Our centre is open on Sundays between 11.00 and 3.00

Our current volunteers work so hard to keep our centre open. The more volunteers we have the less commitment for everyone. Help keep our doors open. Send us an email to [volunteerawbec@gmail.com](mailto:volunteerawbec@gmail.com)



When to call VICSES on 132 500  
during a storm emergency



Storm damage to roof



Tree damage to home



Tree blocking exit



For more information visit:  
[ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au)

FLOOD STORM  
EMERGENCY **132 500**

LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL: **000**

**FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT!**  
**For all Victorians across the**  
**state on weekends.**  
**From the day the Metro Tunnel**  
**opens in Dec until 1 Feb**  
**Trains. Buses. Trams.**



# ***Awaken Your Feminine Breath Journey. A 6 week Feminine Embodiment Women's Circle.***

Fernlea Community House

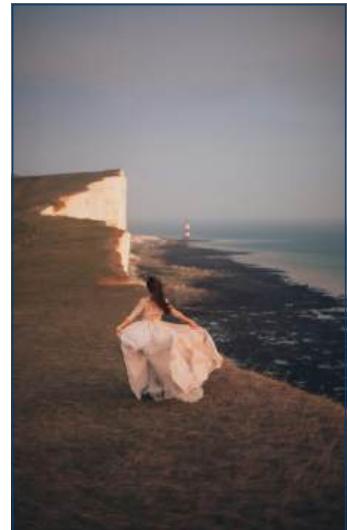
356 Belgrave-Gembrook Rd, Emerald 3782

Saturdays - 2-3pm

February 14 - March 21, 2026

Investment \$150 total for the entire 6-week journey

If you're feeling that deep pull, quiet whisper, or whole body 'YES' to reconnect to your Wild Woman Archetype then this 6-week Breath and Healing Journey offers a warm, supportive and grounded space to do exactly that.



## ***What We Explore Across the 6 Weeks***

Each session blends different modalities that invite you into your body, intuition and feminine energy:

Feminine breathwork: practices that open the chest, enliven the spine, nourish the womb and allow sacred energy to flow freely through rhythmic, nurturing breath patterns.

Somatic embodiment: flowing, intuitive and gentle movements that help you connect with your feminine essence, release emotional tension, and inhabit your body more fully.

Colour healing: using colour energetics to support emotional release, energetic recalibration and intention setting.

Guided visualisation: journeying inward to meet the parts of you ready to be heard, healed, expressed or reclaimed.

Sacred feminine ritual: creating meaning, connection and personal transformation through symbolism, intention and presence.

Meditation + stillness: softening into spacious awareness so your inner world can speak clearly and your energy can reset.

Each week builds upon the last, gently guiding you deeper into yourself.

## ***Bookings & Enquiries***

~ To book your place, please email: [soulfulbrooke@gmail.com](mailto:soulfulbrooke@gmail.com)

~ For questions or enquiries, text: 0434 926 554

~ Please visit <https://www.breathbodyritual.com/> for more info and for other Breath Journeys available in 2026!

Let's start our year rising into our Sacred Feminine.

Imagine the power you could awaken... the power to transform.



# Have Your Say



**Help shape Cardinia Shire's rating system**



Consultation closes 9 December  
[cardinia.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay](http://cardinia.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay)



We're inviting community members to express their interest in joining a panel that will help shape how rates are applied across the shire.

A group of 30 residents will be independently selected to form a representative panel of ratepayers from different property categories. The panel's input will play a vital role in Council's review of its rating strategy

Expressions of interest are open until 5pm on 9 December. Applicants must be aged 18 years or older.

An independent facilitator will support the panel through the deliberative engagement process, which will involve two half-day sessions to be held on Sunday, 8 February and Sunday, 22 February 2026. For more information, or to register your interest, please





# 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.**



## Neighbourhood Watch.

A Neighbourhood Watch interest meeting was held at Menzies Creek 10th Dec 2025. It was a good turn out with residents signing up to become members. There was a presentation about security devices for your home - Monitored CCTV and alarms are your best option. They have battery backup as well in case of power failure. NHW is free to join and this gives you access to helpful hints to keep your neighbourhood and your property safe.

NHW Eastern ranges wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



**Regular Open hours:**

**Monday - Thursday CLOSED**

**Friday 2pm - 9pm**

**Saturday 10am - 2pm**

**Sunday 11am - 6pm**

**Other times by arrangement**

Check online for variations

56-60 McBride  
Street, Cockatoo  
[www.griffs.place](http://www.griffs.place)  
4210 0101

**Arcade entry \$12.50 per person 4+: \$10 each**

Free play on all available games (except prize machines)

Escape Room      \$30 per person    Group of 4: \$90  
Approx. 1 hr game in 1 room. Max. 4 people per session

**Arcade + Mini Golf      \$22.50 per      4+: \$18 each**

**Escape Room + 1 Activity**      **\$38.25 per person**      **4+: \$29.25 each**

The Works \$46.75 per 4+: \$36.15 each

1 hr game in 1 Escape Room, Arcade and Mini Golf

# **Cardinia Shire Council's draft Reconciliation Action Plan now open for public exhibition**

**Published:** 16 December 2025

Cardinia Shire Council is inviting community members to review the draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2025–2027 that aims to further strengthen reconciliation across the Shire.

Earlier this year, Council began developing its third RAP in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, Traditional Owners, the broader community and Council's internal Reconciliation Working Group.

The draft RAP outlines actions to build and strengthen relationships, show respect and create improved opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cardinia Shire Council Deputy Mayor, Cr Liz Roberts said the RAP represents an important step in continuing the journey of reconciliation.

"Thank you to all community members who engaged with us earlier this year during the development of the RAP".

"Our third RAP builds on the progress we've made and reaffirms our commitment to reconciliation and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the Shire. We encourage our community to review the draft plan and share their feedback" she says.

The draft RAP is now available for public exhibition until Monday 19 January 2026. To view the draft plan, please visit <https://creating.cardinia.vic.gov.au/reconciliation-action-plan-2026-2028>

The finalised, designed RAP will be presented to Council in early 2026.

*Supported by*



# **Cardinia**

**Cardinia Shire Council**



# **Cardinia Shire's Gardens for Wildlife program is growing – and we'd love you to be part of it!**

**Published:** 17 December 2025

This program is all about helping Cardinia Shire residents create wildlife-friendly gardens that support local biodiversity and an adaptive environment. And the best part? You get to help shape it!

The program has:

## **1. Easy sign-up**

It's now super simple to join! Submit the [\*\*Gardens for Wildlife registration form online\*\*](#) and you'll receive a welcome email with a voucher for six free indigenous plants to kickstart your garden. Vouchers are valid for six months, so you can plant when the time is right.

## **2. Bloom bonus**

Attend a Gardens for Wildlife event, like a workshop or planting day, and you'll receive a special plant voucher as a thank you for getting involved.

## **3. Inspiration**

Once you've signed up, we'll send you updates with gardening tips, how-to guides, and stories from other locals. You might even see your favourite plant featured!

## **4. Community events – shaped by you**

We'll be organising workshops, planting days, and talks based on the interests and suggestions you share when signing up. These events are a great way to meet others, learn something new and get your hands dirty.

## **5. Local leadership**

We're inviting residents to help guide the program – share your ideas, give feedback, or even take on a leadership role. Your voice matters!

## **6. Partnering for impact**

We're teaming up with local schools, businesses, and community groups to make the program even stronger and reach more people.

## **More information**

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/GardensForWildlife](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/GardensForWildlife)



## **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.

# Council sets the agenda for advocacy priorities

**Published:** 17 December 2025

Cardinia Shire Council has set a bold vision for the future with the adoption of its Advocacy Agenda 2025–29 to drive Council's advocacy efforts in the lead up to the 2026 State election and beyond.

The Advocacy Agenda is anchored by five priority projects across the shire that will headline Council's 2026 Victorian State election campaign – Cardinia Life regional basketball and gymnastics stadium redevelopment, Lang Lang truck bypass, strategic road sealing package, public transport package, and parks and open space package.

These key priorities, along with 13 additional initiatives, will underpin proactive advocacy opportunities over the next four years, shaping Council's Federal Budget submission, strengthening the advocacy prospectus, and driving engagement with Members of Parliament, election candidates and key stakeholders to secure vital funding and support.

Cardinia Shire Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Roberts said Council remained committed to advocating for what the Cardinia Shire community needs.

“As one of Victoria’s fastest growing local government areas with a population that is expected to grow by 40,000 over the next 10 years, it’s vital that we continue to seek support and investment from other levels of government for what our community needs and deserves,” Deputy Mayor Roberts said.

“Our key priorities are projects that will support the growth of our community and address a number of critical needs across the shire.

“We need the support of other levels of government to make these projects a reality and make a positive difference to the lives of people across the shire.”

## Overview of priority projects:

- **Cardinia Life regional basketball and gymnastics stadium redevelopment:** co-investment from the State and Federal governments is sought to deliver the \$60 million stage one redevelopment through an equal three-way funding partnership.
- **Lang Lang truck bypass:** \$57 million in funding is needed for a dedicated bypass for heavy vehicles that connects South Gippsland’s extractive industries to the South Gippsland Highway.
- **Strategic road sealing package:** co-investment from the State and Federal governments is required to seal priority unsealed roads across the shire to improve emergency access, community safety, and climate resilience.
- **Public transport package:** Council is advocating for improved bus services and public transport connections across Cardinia Shire to reduce car dependency, connect isolated communities to essential services and make it easier for people to commute to work.
- **Parks and open space package:** co-investment from the State and Federal governments is needed to deliver three critical open space projects that provide safe, inclusive recreation opportunities for young people and families across Cardinia Shire’s growth corridor.
- **Officer District Park:** \$7 million to deliver stage two.
- **PB Ronald Reserve, Pakenham:** \$10 million for stage one.

**McMullen Recreation Reserve, Officer:** \$10 million.

For a full list of advocacy priorities, please visit: [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advocacy](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advocacy)





# DID YOU KNOW ?

Healthy gums are just as important as healthy teeth. Early gum issues often show no pain - but a quick check-up can catch everything early.



03 4061 3781



[cockatoodental.com.au](http://cockatoodental.com.au)





Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## 125 YEARS OF ICONIC PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY

Puffing Billy, Australia's most beloved heritage train and one of the world's best-preserved steam railways has today celebrated its 125th anniversary.

Member for Monbulk, Daniela De Martino representing the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos, today joined an inaugural Community Open Day which honoured the railway's rich history and enduring connection to the local community.

Puffing Billy welcomes over 487,000 passengers annually and more than 11 million people have experienced the railway since its reopening in 1962.

The iconic rail journey is currently sold out for months in advance, reflecting its status as a premier Victorian attraction.

The railway continues to be an important community focal point with over 300 volunteers supporting up to six daily journeys through the Dandenong Ranges.

Local residents living within a 10-kilometre radius of Puffing Billy Railway stations were encouraged to join the celebrations with complimentary train services provided.

Local community groups hosted unique attractions at each station, highlights included a barbecue hosted by the Country Fire Authority at Menzies Creek and a bush band performance at Gembrook.

The railway's iconic events include the annual running festival, the immersive night light show the *Trail of Lights*, the *Day out with Thomas* featuring Thomas the Tank Engine themed rides and activities, and the *Polar Express Christmas Ride* which is an interactive festive experience with Santa meet-and-greet.

To book your next trip on one of the finest preserved heritage steam railways in the world, visit [puffingbilly.com.au](http://puffingbilly.com.au).

### Quote attributable to Member for Monbulk Daniela De Martino

*"Puffing Billy is a living piece of our history that continues to bring so much joy to so many. A Victorian icon, Puffing Billy not only delights visitors, it supports local jobs and businesses and showcases the beauty of the Dandenong Ranges."*

*"Today we celebrate 125 years of memories and the incredible volunteers and staff who make this experience possible."*



## **Cardinia Dads are doing it for their kids**

Another successful year of the Cardinia Dads support group has come to an end. The Cardinia Dads program, run by Cardinia Shire Council in partnership with Anglicare Victoria, is a vital resource for fathers, helping to foster connections and empowering them on their parenting journey.

Cardinia Dads is a free, six-week support group designed for dads with children from birth to school age. The program provides a supportive environment where fathers can share their experiences and challenges while learning about early childhood development.

Cardinia Dads began in May 2024 as a way to create a safe space for fathers to engage with their children and one another. The sessions, funded by the Victorian Department of Health, and held at Anglicare Victoria's Parentzone on Army Road in Pakenham, encourage meaningful connections between fathers and their children and build social connections with other dads.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Councillor Brett Owen encourages all dads in the shire to participate in the Cardinia Dads program. "Becoming a father is a wonderful journey filled with both joys and challenges," said Mayor Owen.

"The Cardinia Dads groups provide essential resources and information to help dads thrive throughout their parenting journey. By helping dads build friendships and share their experiences with one another, we can strengthen connections and build a strong sense of community."

The Cardinia Dads sessions have captivated local dads, with over 40 participants joining the sessions throughout the year. The final group for the year ran from 22 October to 26 November and was filled with doting dads eager to strengthen their connections with their children.

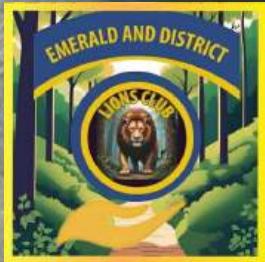
Cardinia Shire Council is committed to supporting parents and families and offers a range of additional Maternal and Child Health services, including health and development checks, sleep settling programs, Smalltalk supported playgroups, and first-time parent groups.

For more information on Maternal Child Health services or the Cardinia Dads support group, please visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/mch](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/mch)

**REMINDER - THERE IS NO COCKATOO  
MARKET IN JANUARY**

**NEXT MARKET ON SATURDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2026**





If you see  
someone without  
a smile, be kind  
and give them one  
of yours

A few small acts of kindness  
can make a difference to many

**Kindness Matters**



**Term  
Deposit.**

**Watch  
your  
money  
grow.**



**Bendigo Bank**  
The better big bank

Consider if this product is right for you and read the T&Cs and TMD available on our website.  
Issued by Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited ABN 11 068 049 178 AFSL 237879.

# WOMEN'S SENIOR FOOTBALL

## SENIOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IS BACK!

The Brookers are excited to announce that Senior Women's Football is returning to the club for 2026!

DO YOU HAVE  
WHAT IT TAKES TO  
BE A BROOKER?

- 16+ years old
- No experience required!



Contact Neil on 0429 112 211 if interested in joining



# Real help. Right now.



Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

The Victorian Government's Savings Finder is making a real difference, helping people across the state access discounts, rebates, and even unclaimed money. With 98 savings and offers across energy, transport, health, education, and more, there's something for everyone. Just answer a few quick questions about your situation to see what you're eligible for.

**\$100 Power Saving Bonus**

Free weekend transport for seniors

Free transport for kids under 18

**Free dental for public school students**

**Free zoo entry for kids under 16**

Fishing licences and digital concession cards for veterans and seniors

And more, including over \$200 million in unclaimed money waiting to be claimed!

Real help, right now, easing cost-of-living pressures for Victorian families





*Cockatoo RSL (sub branch)*

*Local Container Returning point.*



**The club will close  
Sunday 21st Dec  
and re-open Fri  
16th Jan.**

**Bingo at  
Gembrook RSL  
finishes with last  
day 15th Dec and  
will resume 2nd  
Feb.**



**COCKATOO RSL SUNDAY MUSIC SESSIONS  
FROM 2PM EVERY SUNDAY  
FREE ADMISSION**