

HARCOURT NEWS THE CORE



Edition 134 – February 2026

Produced by: Harcourt Progress Association Inc

Online: harcourtprogress.org.au/news or harcourt.vic.au/news



The photo above is of the Harcourt Fire Brigade members in front of the fire station following the fire emergency which began on Friday January 9. The brigade had gathered to record its thanks for a donation of \$500.

Raewyn and Tyrone Rice pictured at the right of the front row showed great dedication and courage by turning out for firefighting, understanding that their home was possibly in danger. Sadly, their home was lost to the devastating fire in Coolstore Road.

Tyrone has written the CFA article for *The Core* every month since its inception, and this month is no exception! Thank you Tyrone, your dedication to all the causes you are involved with is outstanding.

Readers might notice that the CFA members are holding little bags – they contain biscuits and other sweet treats sent to our fire brigade by children who benefit from a charity called “It’s the Little Things Community” (www.itsthelittlethingscommunity.org/).

Raewyn told *The Core* that she knits for the charity. She said, “I knit baby things, mainly bonnets, cardies and socks. I began during COVID, because I needed to do something positive, rather than scrolling on the iPad.” Brigade members were moved to tears, by these small but special gifts from youngsters in the city.

Harcourt is united in its thanks to our brigade and all the other brigades (you will find a list of the brigades on page 4) that served here in the fire emergency.

Continued page 4 ...

Editor's message – publication dates 2026

Our local newspaper *The Core* has been a monthly publication which is now entering its thirteenth year. We appreciate and thank our volunteers for their consistent and faithful efforts in writing, proofreading, printing and distributing *The Core*.

The Core aims to promote the positive and productive happenings in Harcourt. It becomes a permanent record for much of what happens in Harcourt, as it is kept in the National Archives, and therefore contributes to the history of our nation. It is also stored electronically by the Harcourt Heritage Centre and is available online on the Harcourt Progress Association site. I stress 'permanent record', because the daily newsfeed, Facebook and other electronic forms of messaging, while extremely useful, informative and often entertaining, vanish from our screens while we search for even more updates or entertainment.

The team at *The Core* have come to the difficult decision, that for the first six months of the year, we will publish for the months of February, April and June; with publication dates for the second half year to be considered. This is partly due to the need to regroup and take a break after the fire and very much to do with a major personal loss for one of our team.

If you have editorial or production skills or can contribute in any way, please contact me.

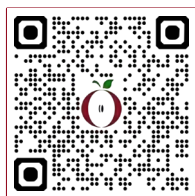
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Use this QR code to read
The Core online.

DEADLINES & PUBLICATION DATES

We aim to publish online by the 6th of the month. The deadline for submissions is the 24th of the month prior. Advertisers and community groups will be sent reminder emails. There is no edition in January.



COMMUNITY DIARY

Monday February 16: Deadline for nominations for Harcourt Lions Youth and Community Member of the Year (see page 17).

Carpet Bowls: 7.30 pm Wednesdays, Leisure Centre, Bingham Road, Harcourt.

CFA: Brigade meets at 8.00 pm on the third Monday of each month. Sunday morning equipment checks and maintenance runs start at 9.00 am. Siren is tested on the first Sunday of the month at 9.15 am. Contact: Captain Andrew Wilson for further details 0428 387 339. CFA is located at 56 High Street, Harcourt.

Community House: See page 3 for December activities. Open each Wednesday from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm, closed in school holidays.

CWA: First Thursday of the month, 1.30 pm at Harcourt Leisure Centre, Bingham Road, Harcourt.

Grace Church: Tuesdays at 10.30 am – Morning tea and prayers; Sunday Service at 11.00 am; 30 Buckley Street, Harcourt. Tuesday evenings at 7.30 pm – Zoom Bible Study: A Christian discipleship course covering the basics of the faith. All welcome, you can commence at any time. Please contact the Pastor for a link: pastor@gracecastlemaine.org.au

Harcourt Bowls Club: see page 20 and the website: www.harcourtbowlingclub.com.au

Harcourt Lions Club: Third Monday of the month at the Victorian Miniature Railway, Harmony Way at 6.30 pm. Gathering for dinner (something to share) followed at 7.30 pm by general planning and discussion.

Heritage Centre: Every Wednesday at the ANA Hall from 9.00 am–3.00 pm or by appointment – 0400 916 527.

Leisure Centre Committee: 7.30 pm on the fourth Thursday of each even-numbered month at the Harcourt Leisure Centre.

Pony Club: Second Sunday of the month. Contact Peggy Mills, 0419 902 400. The Pony Club is located next to the swimming pool.

Repair Café: Last Sunday of the month from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm. See ad on page 23 for more information.

Uniting Church: Sundays at 9.00 am in the Uniting Church, Buckley Street, Harcourt. The service is followed by morning tea. All welcome. Donations of food and other household needs for St Vinnies can be left at the Church door on Sunday mornings 9.00–10.00 am or contact Jan on 5474 2226, to arrange for collection.

Walking Group: Monday and Thursday at 9.30 am. Meet at the ANA Hall. The one hour leisurely walk is usually followed by morning tea, and new members are always welcome.

Victorian Miniature Railway: Open 11 am to 5 pm every Sunday. Old Calder Highway C794 just north of Barkers Creek Bridge in Harcourt. See the website for the latest news: vmr.com.au



Chairperson's Message

A warm hello to Greater Harcourt residents. It is a sobering experience to drive around our beautiful township and surrounds and see the level of damage caused to so many of our residents, businesses and their properties and our countryside.

Of critical importance is to assist and support our community in what will likely be a lengthy and difficult recovery process.

Our HPA Committee Members, together with a range of both government agencies and community organisation, have been overseeing the initial community support program:

- ▶ Providing some immediate levels of support and assistance to those who have been severely impacted by the fire.
- ▶ Contacting and liaising with our elected members of parliament, community organisations and government agencies, each providing a range of advice, support and recovery services to residents who have been impacted by the fire.

Our HPA Committee Members have a desk at the Harcourt Leisure Centre so that we are able to :

- ▶ Issue some immediate assistance in the form of gift cards and cash denominations to enable access to a range of emergency support to residents who have been impacted.
- ▶ Refer individuals to a range of community and government agencies which are able to provide a range of goods and services and guidance, both in the immediate and the longer-term recovery.

On behalf of our community, I would like to extend our highest level of appreciation to the many community volunteers who tenaciously and selflessly provided support via our local fire brigades and other services:

- ▶ The CFA volunteers, in fighting the fires and taking other appropriate actions to protect our community and its infrastructure, and in some instances, suffering in the extreme, from their own personal losses caused by the fire.
- ▶ The many volunteers who have come forward to provide amazing and selfless assistance at our recovery centres, in Castlemaine and at the Harcourt Leisure Centre.

Our committee considers it critical that we come together as a community and to especially, work for and pursue support from every avenue possible to ensure that Harcourt and District, its community, its businesses, its activities, its tourism and its facilities will not just be returned, but will be bigger and better.

Our vision includes: Attracting more visitors to support our community and businesses in both the immediate recovery and in the development of a vibrant, long-term future.

To this end, Harcourt Progress Association will be pursuing government, philanthropic and other community organisations in seeking any assistance that may be available to help our dedicated, innovative and vibrant community.

The HPA Committee is reviewing an appropriate process for distributing the very generous financial contributions and other forms of support which have been received from government agencies, the wider community, from many individuals and from philanthropic agencies.

Ivan Gilbert, Chairperson

HARCOURT COOPERATIVE COOLSTORE REBUILD AND OTHER RECOVERY MEASURES ANNOUNCED

Following the devastating January 2026 bushfires, the Albanese and Allan Labor Governments are working to deliver vital funding to help support businesses, primary producers and households.

State Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards and Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters have announced \$500,000 towards accelerating the rebuild of the Harcourt Cooperative Coolstore facility, kickstarting agricultural recovery.

More than 95 businesses in Harcourt and the surrounding region rely on the facility to keep apples, pears, seed potatoes, wine, craft beer and beehives at temperature.

This funding is part of a bigger package of measures of up to \$158 million that is being jointly funded by the Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

Other important measures include financial counselling and advisory support for businesses, prolonged power outages and clean-up cost support.

The Business Recovery Advisory Service will be available on the ground

and through the Business Victoria website. Business Recovery Advisors will deliver free, confidential, one-on-one support to business owners, tailored to their circumstances and supporting their long-term recovery.

The Small Business Financial Counselling service will provide free and confidential financial counselling to businesses that are in financial risk or at risk of it due to the bushfires.

More information is available on the Business Victoria website: business.vic.gov.au.

Almost \$1.4 million will ensure businesses are able to access Prolonged Power Outage Payments if they have been without power for seven or more days within a two-week period.

Affected businesses can apply for a payment through their electricity distribution business.

More information is available at: energy.vic.gov.au/about-energy/safety/power-outages.

An additional \$112 million will expand the state-coordinated Clean-up Program

with Forge Solutions now appointed as lead contractor. Forge Solutions have extensive experience in disaster clean up and will prioritise engaging local contractors to support their work.

Clean-up support will be available for uninsured and underinsured residential homes and structures such as sheds or garages.

It will also be available for businesses if uninsured or underinsured structures have been damaged or destroyed by the January 2026 Victorian bushfires.

This funding builds on the more than \$210 million in already announced relief and recovery supports for bushfire-affected Victorians, including emergency relief payments, grants for primary producers, access to emergency accommodation, and support for councils.

From a joint press release by Lisa Chesters MP, Member for Bendigo and the Hon Maree Edwards MP, Member for Bendigo West

From Harcourt Progress Association Facebook Page

There are no words to cover the gratitude we have for the heroes of the [CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#). To the volunteers who put their lives and health on the line to save ours and our properties, thank you so much.

Over 150 CFA vehicles fought, sourced from all over the state. From as far as Red Cliffs and Merbein (Mildura), and Bass (Phillip Island). Without you, we would've lost a lot more.

Saluting the CFA legends from, but not limited to:

With so many tankers on the ground, we may have missed a few brigade names. We know crews came from everywhere to help. Please shout any missing out in the comments so we can thank them properly!

- Axe Creek ● Balnarring ● Bass ● Bendigo ● Bolinda
- Bullengarook ● Bunyip ● Campbell's Creek ● Castlemaine
- Chewton ● Creswick ● Crib Point ● Daylesford ● Dingee -
- Tandarra ● Eaglehawk ● Echuca ● Elphinstone ● Eltham
- Fryerstown ● Gisborne ● Golden Square ● Guildford
- Harcourt ● Junortoun ● Kangaroo Flat ● Kyneton
- Lockwood ● Macedon ● Maiden Gully ● Maldon
- Malmsbury ● Mandurang ● Merbein ● Myrtle Creek
- Newlyn ● Newstead ● Pyramid Hill ● Ravenswood
- Red Cliffs ● Riddels Creek ● Rochester ● Sedgwick
- Strathfieldsaye ● Sutton Grange ● Talbot ● Taradale
- Tarnagulla ● Walmer ● Warrandyte ● Wattle Glen
- Wendouree ● Woodend
- And, of course, the Water Bombers, fighting from the air.

These were added by readers who replied:

- Arthurs Creek ● Axedale ● Ballarat ● Barraport ● Bolinda ● Boort ● Bridgewater
- Bung Bong ● Diamond Creek ● Dunnolly ● Forest Fire Management ● FRV strike teams
- Grader & bulldozer drivers ● Inglewood ● Lake Boga ● Langley ● Marong ● Mernda
- Murphy's Creek ● Murrabit ● Mysia ● Natte Yallock ● Newbridge ● Plenty ● Redesdale
- Rheola ● Rushworth ● Serpentine ● Swan Hill ● Trentham ● Wareek ● Wedderburn
- Whittlesea ● Woodstock West

Continued from front page ...

Just this afternoon (February 4), I saw that, yet again, the Walmer/Fogarty's Gap fire had flared again, with eleven brigades in attendance.

As a community, Harcourt has pulled together in a spectacular fashion. Kindness and generosity has been the outstanding feature of this truly awful event. Many are still hurting, having lost their homes. We can only hope that, eventually, everyone whose home was destroyed will be able to return to Harcourt and recover their former lives.

For assistance, contact the Shire at: www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Community-and-Wellbeing/Emergencies-and-preparation/January-2026-fire-and-heat-updates/Financial-and-legal-support and see the Harcourt Progress Association Facebook page for daily updates about the opening times of the Harcourt Bushfire Donation & Distribution Centre and The Harcourt Leisure Centre for pantry items and

lunch. This site also contains videos on important topics relating to recovery from the January 9 bushfire.

The Governor's visit

Our other front page photos feature the visit by the Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner. She is shown talking with representatives of the CFA and with the Harcourt Progress Association members. The association has taken the lead with the Harcourt Progress Relief Fund, which is the only officially endorsed campaign fundraiser.

The prime minister, Mr Albanese, the premier, Jacinta Allan, Lisa Chesters MLA and our local MP, Maree Edwards were present at a number of occasions during the weeks following the fire.

For donations to the Harcourt Progress Relief Fund go to The Harcourt Fire Relief Home Page, at the Harcourt Progress Association web site.





Harcourt Heritage Centre

Statement by Harcourt Heritage Centre Chairman George Milford

Harcourt 11 January 2026

Two days after the catastrophic fires, we still do not know of the extent of the losses of the homes and outbuildings in the Harcourt district. We have been told that more than fifty homes have been razed; this is a tragic loss to the residents and of many precious memories.

We were present at the Castlemaine Town Hall meeting on Saturday afternoon. It was only fitting that there was prolonged applause for the first responders; a genuine heartfelt thanks for the courageous and effective firefighters and volunteers.

The Town Hall meeting enabled the locals to regroup after what has been "trauma on steroids" which occurred in Harcourt on Friday afternoon.

It was good to see people meet up with their friends and neighbours, to hug, to swap experiences and to check up on each other.

The good news is that Harcourt is alive, peopled by folk that have vision and determination - optimistic one and all - people who in recent times have built the Victorian Miniature Railway, the mountain bike park, a new preschool, who put together the annual

Applefest and numerous twilight "Gather" events.

Although there has been much property lost, the precious community assets are all intact, namely: children's playground, leisure centre, heritage centre, primary school, kindergarten, recreation reserve, bowling club, swimming pool, Uniting Church, community house, fire station, petrol station, post office, James Park and Stanley Park. None of these were damaged in the fire.

The Coolstore, unfortunately was burnt to the ground. It will be a big task to rebuild, but the Coolstore was burnt down previously in 2001 and even with some delays, it was rebuilt in nine months ready for the next season's harvest.

The great thing about Harcourt is that all the skilled trades are available within the Shire. A whole range of tradies is just a stone's throw away. There should be no delays due to travel time or remoteness.

It will be a big task to rebuild over thirty homes, but we understand that insurance companies are already contacting their Harcourt policy holders to facilitate assessment of what will be

a big swag of claims.

Remember that the Federal Government encourages insurers to cut the red tape after natural disasters. Remember also, that the sites of the homes that were destroyed already have connections for electricity, water and sewerage, so much of the preliminary work is already in place.

Plans are afoot for new housing developments to the south and north of the Harcourt township, so we can be confident that the town will not just bounce back, but it will grow as more and more people move into one of the best situated communities in Central Victoria.

Harcourt survived the millennial drought, it survived a loss of thirty-eight homes when the Calder Freeway upgrade works took place, and each time grew back bigger and stronger.

So, despite the blackened paddocks, and the tangled ruins of many dwellings, Harcourt will once again be known as the core of a thriving, prosperous and forward-looking community.

George Milford

Book Launch

Following the runaway success of *The Foundry – 150 years of Thompsons of Castlemaine*, Harcourt Heritage Centre is launching its latest book at the 2026 Harcourt Applefest.

The new publication is *Pioneers of Harcourt* a 250 page collection of thumbnail sketches gathered from 75 monthly articles in the Harcourt newsletter *The Core*.

This book will sit alongside, and complement, previous histories by Howard Carr: *Bridging the Generations*, and *Barkers Creek-birthplace of the Mount Alexander Goldfields*.

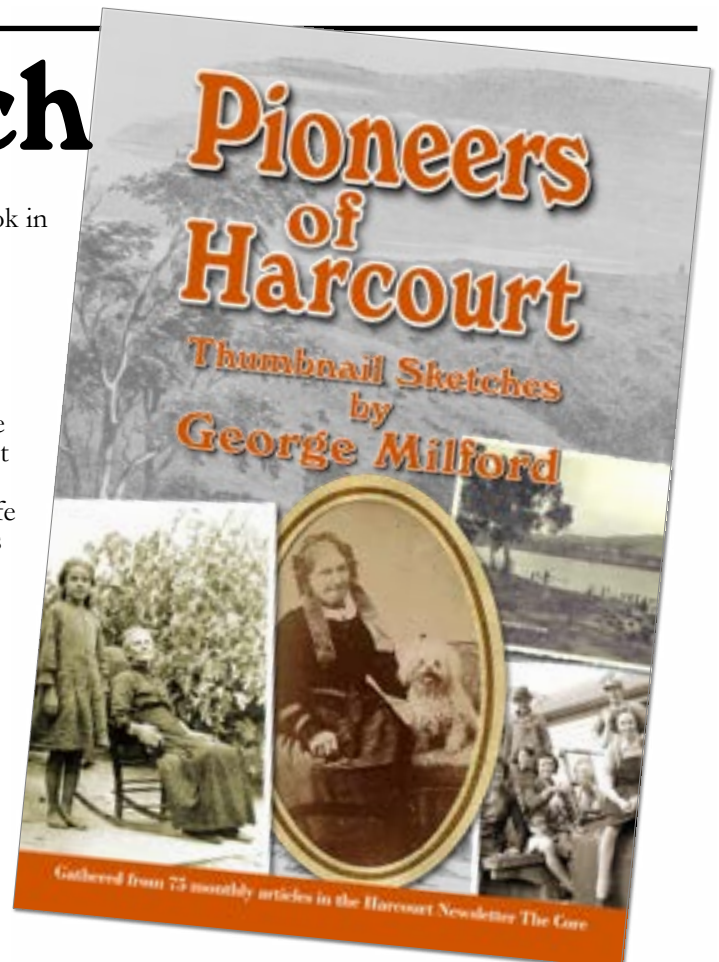
In the unique CH James collection at the Harcourt Heritage Centre are many stories, some heroic, some amusing and all interesting – stories of exploits and initiatives that have shaped the community of the Harcourt valley. These stories have now

been collected into a book in roughly chronological sequence.

Commencing with the cultural history of the original inhabitants, the stories in the new book serve as a highly readable series of anecdotes about Harcourt's story. They paint a picture of how life was lived by the pioneers who each made some impact on the township of Harcourt.

The book will be 'hot off the press', when it is made available for sale at Harcourt Applefest. Be sure to pick up a copy!

Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to Harcourt's Recovery.



Michael's Story

Warning, Michael describes the fire in detail. You can read the first paragraph and then skip ahead to read the text in the third column, under the photo.

There is an old rural Aussie joke that you're not a local in town until you've lasted thirty years. I've called Harcourt Valley home for twenty-nine. On January 9, the bushfire that roared through our community tested that claim with a fury I'd never known. It tried to rewrite my story, but it underestimated the stubbornness it takes to put down roots here.

It began with the ping of the Vic Emergency app: a fire on Fogarty's Gap Road near Walmer. From the family farm on the other side of the valley from my house, I watched the smoke plume grow. Soon, it was more than a column; it was a shadow eating the sun. I knew I had to move.

In the five minutes to my place on Twyford Street, the world turned an eerie, orange-brown. Time compressed into minutes. There was no grand salvage, just a frantic grab: my three cats, my passport, and, remembering my tenant in the bungalow, her two dogs and her own vital documents. As I reversed out of the driveway, the true beast revealed itself, flames, vivid and roaring, crested the western hills of our valley. That sight is now a ghost that lives behind my eyes.

Back at the farm, a hurried conversation with my mother, who has faced heart surgery and a hip replacement, confirmed the inevitable. We had to evacuate and trust everything to the bravery of the CFA. For a brief, cruel thirty minutes, we dared to hope as winds pushed the blaze south between Harcourt

and Barkers Creek. That hope died when the wind swung eastward, driving the fire straight at us. The moment the smell of hot ash and burning grass hit, we left.

Our refuge was a tense, helpless hour at the roadside stop in Ravenswood, watching an apocalyptic glow engulf our home. We were unaware of the heroic deeds at VMR or the insane bravery of legends like Buzz Nunn, in thongs and a singlet, saving the kindergarten. We could only watch the Vic Emergency app in horror as the burnt area expanded, swallowing my place, then the farm, then climbing Mount Alexander itself.

Asked to move on to make space for CFA respite, we continued to Bendigo. I spent an agonising evening at my partner's house, cramped with far too many anxious people, cats, and dogs, yet clinging to gratitude for the shelter.

After a day of tortured waiting, Mum and I could bear it no longer. We found a way back in. The relief at seeing the farmhouse and sheds standing was immense, a testament to the CFA's valiant, focused stand. But the cost was utter: the orchard scorched, the land blackened. Their priority was lives and structures; they succeeded heroically, but the landscape was sacrificed.

My own shock had to wait. Spot fires smouldered everywhere. For the rest of that afternoon and through the night, I fought them alone, a lonely, grimy vigil to defend what had been saved.

It wasn't until late morning on January 11 that I finally went home. Or to the spot where it once stood on the corner of Twyford Street and Harmony Way. Driving up, I saw it: twisted iron sheets warped by heat, piled on mounds of ash that held my life. A single brick chimney stood like a grave marker. I think I drifted through the ruin for two minutes before I had to flee, the totality of the loss a physical force I wasn't ready to meet.



Michael Henry flipping chops with Steve White at the recovery centre.

From that ruin, I went directly to the first relief lunch at the VMR. There, amidst the organised chaos of care, I saw the Harcourt Progress Association, a group I'd had a significant hand in starting years ago, marshalling forces to help rebuild. In that moment, the path forward became clear. I quickly volunteered. Helping this town and its people pick up the pieces is what I have always done, and it was the only thing that could make sense of the ashes on Twyford Street.

The fire took my house. It took away my sense of safety. It took the view from my window and the fruit from our trees. But it showed me, in the starkest terms, the fabric of this place I've chosen for twenty-nine years. It showed me the selfless wall of the CFA, the crazy courage of neighbours, and the quiet, determined network of care that has risen from the ashes.

So, if the fire thought it could force this stubborn old bugger out before I earned that thirty-year badge, it had another think coming. I am staying. We are rebuilding. Not just structures, but our shared spirit. The scar on the land is deep, but so are our roots. And now, more than ever, I'm rolling up my sleeves with my neighbours to do the work that is needed. I'll see you all at the thirty-year mark.

Michael Henry

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Harcourt CFA

History of Large Fires affecting Harcourt

In early January 1944, a fire started on the Calder Highway at Buckeye Creek Ravenswood when a gas producer on a car was being cleaned and refuelled. Hot coals fell on to grass on the roadside. The fire quickly took hold and spread in a south westerly direction. There was great devastation in the district with North Harcourt and Sutton Grange taking the brunt as the fire continued towards Macedon.

On 8 January 1969, a fire started around 10:30am at Bells Swamp northwest of Maldon. The wind had been very strong from the northwest from before daybreak and the fire took hold very rapidly. It burnt on a wide front north of Maldon, virtually wiping out North Walmer and, by late afternoon, was in the area of Ravenswood South and Porcupine Hill, spotting as far as Mount Alexander. Fortunately, the combinations of the highway, the railway line and the orchards had the effect of splitting up the head of the fire and it was brought under control.

On 29 February 1980, a fire started off Woodbrook Road, Woodbrook at about 3:30pm. This rapidly spread into bushland towards Barkers Creek. By nightfall it had crossed the Midland Highway and into the Moonlight Flat pine plantation. Damage was mainly to fencing and outbuildings. Support to the brigade came from as far as Birchip in the Mallee. Four days later the fire burnt another 250 acres when a

smouldering tree root burned to the surface outside of the fire edge.

Friday 9 January was a day of catastrophic fire danger rating. We are all aware of what happened around 2:30pm when a fire broke out at the corner of Fogartys Gap Road and Woodbrook Road. The devastation once again ripped through the Harcourt Valley before ascending up Mount Alexander and down into Sutton Grange and being stopped before crossing the Bendigo-Sutton Grange Road. Support came from as far away as Bass in the southeast to Red Cliffs in the northwest.

History shows that communities have recovered from these previous fires, and the way the greater Harcourt community has come together on this occasion, we will do it all again. Yes, it does hurt! The loss is real. Disasters build resilience but, more importantly, like in the past, we learn from this experience. Being the appointed Brigade Community Safety Coordinator, I am aware of the many of you who took the opportunity to heed the CFA advice to "Leave Early" and this no doubt ensured the safety of yourselves, your loved ones and your pets. There will be many questions you will have and some of these may have been already answered at community meetings or other community engagements. But if you still have unanswered questions, please write them down so you do not forget them



and ask the appropriate authority. If we can help with any fire related questions, then please ask us and we will endeavour to either provide an answer or if we do not know, then find an answer for you.

Community Safety starts with knowledge, knowledge gives power and power is supposed to give control. On Friday the 9th there was no chance of controlling this fire. It wrote its own rules and indiscriminately chose its path. It was only when conditions changed was there the opportunity to stop the spread of this fire.

Stay safe, watch out for each other, continue to support a friend or neighbour.

Help Harcourt Heal!

Tyrone Rice
Brigade Community Safety Coordinator

***Some of the information for this article came from brigade records – Harcourt Rural Fire Brigade 1944 – 1994.**

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Councillor Comment

Hi all,
I am writing this on Australia Day–Survival Day. Despite the hot conditions all events were well attended.

The citizenship ceremony in the Castlemaine Town Hall was great with twenty-four people taking the final step to become Australian citizens. Seeing the excitement on people's faces is really great and it makes you appreciate the diversity and strength of our community.

Talk about strength of our community – a huge shout out to all of our emergency services workers, support staff and volunteers following our recent fires.

Our hearts go out to all who lost property, but particularly those who lost homes. It will take a lot of work to recover, but the efforts of so many community members is amazing – those who assisted our community at the town hall, at the former Mitsubishi garage and at the Leisure Centre. Then of course there is the team at VMR and what about our Harcourt Progress Association!

I thought VMR would get buried by hay donated to our community from all over the place – a huge shout out to Stacey for organising hay deliveries. Thank you to everyone who has helped kick start our recovery.

Just remember there is help out there if you are doing it tough.

Reach out and talk to a friend or the person next door. Many are trying to deal with the same problems and can offer advice.

Best regards to all, Tony

AG Cordy

0439 742 434

Personal Recovery

Words from Lifeline

Kath, a representative from Lifeline gave a talk at the Community Gathering at the Leisure Centre on January 21. This is a summary of the main points. The original is available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/live/7Jrp8tEUg8I?si=2VeTyEeSAI9NRbL>

Kath emphasised that grief and response to trauma is very individual – we all respond in different ways.

“Today, I just want to touch on a few suggestions and ideas to help you all continue to support each other and yourself while you work to rebuild Harcourt.”

Guilt is designed to help us learn from our mistakes. Guilt is not designed to be all-consuming. If not managed, it can lead to anxiety and panic attacks.

Managing guilt can come from perspective. Natural disasters do not have a method or a reason why some houses are destroyed and not others. This is not our guilt to hold. Talking through your guilt with someone you trust can lead to permission to ease that burden on your mind.

“Responses to trauma in disaster vary from person to person. We do not know where people's journeys have led them here to Harcourt today.”

Those who have suffered trauma before may seek memories and strategies to protect you from threat and harm. These can be a positive support providing the know-how to help others in distress. But it can also be a negative support with adrenaline-fueled responses.

“Be kind to yourself.”

Expect disturbed sleep, poor short-term memory loss, inability to make simple decisions, being teary and emotional over little things, numbness and exhaustion.

Look out for changes in yourselves and others around you whom you're supporting – such as night terrors, looping images, rapid breathing, hyper-behaviour and speech, as they're all symptoms of PTSD.

Understanding your mental load and capacity. Some of you have mental health challenges that are just that, a challenge – without this trauma on top. Now, you might notice your challenges are exacerbated.

“Be kind to yourself.”

“Talk to someone. Seek help if you

need it. We'll nut it out together. All of us are here to help you. We'll work it out if we don't know the answers.”

Long-term symptoms will put you in hospital. Self-regulation is a really important process so Harcourt is able to keep delivering support to yourself and to the community over these next weeks, months, time to rebuild.

“Many of us know to breathe. Many do not know we need to breathe out again. Start noticing your out-breath, a sigh, a long exhale. Notice it when someone is talking at you. Take an out-breath when the task is too big. Take an out-breath when you're feeling overwhelmed, take an out-breath. And when you want to cry, but it's not the right time, take that out-breath.”

“This is a great tool to do all day until you can rest and sleep and recover enough to take the next step.”

Small steps lead to long-term capacity.

Mother nature takes her time to heal and regrow after a fire and we should do the same. We want to have the capacity to continue helping ourselves and others.

Do only as much as you can manage in the moment and try again tomorrow. The support will be there for you.

You have permission to be gentle with yourself. If you go back to work and find your mind cannot manage the little tasks, go home or find a safe space, and try again tomorrow. If the washing or the insurance task is the only thing you get done today, then you have permission that that's okay.

“Be kind to yourself.”

“You cannot help others if you're not looking after yourself. Burnout is real. Compassion-fatigue is real. The body needs to keep repairing through rest and sleep to function.

Wellness is part of a continuum. The mind and body are constantly talking to each other. Listen to what yours are telling you. Today might be a “two” day, but tomorrow might be a “five”. Some are at an “eight”, but next week you're on a “three”. Notice these changes. Listen to what you're needing and act on them to sustain capacity. A broken leg needs rest to heal. So too, you need to rest your mind.

Lifeline's here to help you.

It's going to be a long road. We're going to be gentle and we're just going to take our time, just like mother nature.

Lifeline: <https://www.lifelineml.com>

Phone: 13 11 14

Go Harcourt

Photos: Lana May Photography



Harcourt Relief Efforts:

Path to recovery

The community-led recovery effort for fire-affected residents of the Ravenswood/Harcourt fire is gaining powerful momentum, marked by significant financial support and a series of events signalling a strong path forward. This report is dated February 1, 2026.

Community Resilience on Display

The enduring spirit of Harcourt is shining through. Key local businesses, Harcourt General Store, Rodilesa Nursery, Woop Woop Gardens, Henry of Harcourt, the Harcourt BP Service Station and Post Office, have reopened, providing essential services and a sense of normalcy. In a vibrant sign of looking ahead, the Harcourt Applefest Committee has announced the beloved Applefest will proceed on Saturday, March 7, promising to be a "bigger and better" celebration of community resilience.

A symbolic 'Harcourt Reopen' event will be held on Saturday, February 21, hosted by the Victorian Miniature Railways (VMR) in conjunction with events at Woop Woop Gardens. VMR, whose members were instrumental in firefighting efforts and provided the initial coordination base for the relief hub, will be open for the entire weekend (February 21-22) to welcome the community back.

Significant Recovery Funding Announced

The recovery effort has received two major financial boosts:

1. The Harcourt Progress Association (HPA) community GoFundMe has

surpassed the \$300,000 mark, a testament to incredible statewide generosity.

2. Premier Jacinta Allan has announced a \$500,000 support package specifically to assist the local coolstore operations that were destroyed, providing crucial aid to the region's agricultural heart.

Ongoing Essential Support Services

Core, in-person support continues for affected residents at two locations:

Harcourt Leisure Centre Community Hub:

Open Wednesdays and Fridays (support services and community pantry 11 am - 3 pm, free community lunch 12 pm - 2 pm).

- Services Australia
- Anglicare
- Dhelkaya Health
- Red Cross
- HPA desk

Castlemaine Distribution Centre

(5 Johnstone Street, Castlemaine)

Open for fire-affected individuals on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am-1 pm, and working to connect residents with donors of larger items.

February Schedule: Learning, Wellbeing & Fundraisers

A full calendar of events supports various recovery needs:

Practical Sessions:

"Livestock Management after Fire"

February 4, recording available

"Farm Fencing & Land Planning"

February 11, 11am start

A recording of the January 30 clean-up session is on the HPA Facebook page.

Wellbeing:

Free yoga with Symmetry Life (Feb-Mar): at the Harcourt

Community House on Station Street. The 'Thread Together' mobile wardrobe will be at the leisure centre the last three Fridays of February.

Community Fundraisers:

PubSing for Harcourt: February 14: The Taproom Castlemaine. 7.30 - 10.30 pm.

Harcourt Bushfire Benefit & Art Auction: February 14, Old Castlemaine Gaol. Midday until late.

Rock for a Cause: February 15, The Handlebar, 73 Mitchel St, Bendigo, from 12:30 pm

Rods'n'Riffs for Harcourt: February 28, Union St Blues Club, 20 Trantara Court Bendigo; from 1 pm.

A Commitment to the Long Term

"These funding milestones and events are powerful fuel for our recovery," said a relief coordination spokesperson. "Our focus is firmly on ensuring this support translates into long-term resilience, responsible distribution of funds, and a stronger community for all."

About the Harcourt Progress Relief Group

The Harcourt Progress Relief Group is a volunteer-driven initiative, overseen by the Harcourt Progress Association, coordinating with local organisations, businesses, and government agencies to support the recovery of fire-affected residents of Harcourt, Ravenswood, Walmer, Sutton Grange and surrounds.

- Website: www.harcourtprogress.org.au

- Email: harcourtrelief@gmail.com

- Relief Centre Phone: 5415 3101



Maree Edwards with Michael Henry

Lmct:10769





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Gather Harcourt NYE

Photos: Lou Citroën





Chatting with Harcourt CWA

A busy start to 2026

Hello there, everyone.

Bev Orgill here, reporting for the Harcourt Country Women's Association (CWA) Branch again. Since my last report, Harcourt CWA has been active doing what we do best – blending community support with a warm start to the New Year.

Celebrating our Youth:

We were delighted to recognise the achievements of some of our young people recently. Our president, Robyn McConville, had the pleasure of presenting awards to Chevelle Burns and Ada Webb, two Grade 6 students graduating from Harcourt Valley Primary School. We wish them, and all the HVPS 2025 graduates, the very best as they begin their high school journey!



Community Spirit and Recovery:

The year started on a high note with a chatty, friendly lunch hosted at a CWA member's home – a perfect way to relax and reconnect. However, our focus now remains firmly on our neighbours as we become more actively involved in supporting the local community following the recent fires.

Looking Ahead – Harcourt Applefest:

A landmark year is shaping up for us in 2026. We are currently gearing up for Harcourt's annual Applefest weekend (March 7), which promises to be bigger and better than ever. While we are famous for our award-winning scones, we are equally proud of our reputation for friendship and community commitment.



Why join Harcourt CWA?

Coming along to a CWA meeting is a fantastic way to meet your neighbours, especially if you are 'newish' to the Harcourt area. It is a great chance to give back to the community if you have a few hours to spare, and it offers you a great opportunity to have fun while raising funds for local organisations.

When and where do we meet?

We meet on the first Thursday of each month at the Harcourt Leisure Centre at 1.00 pm for a 1.30 pm start. If you want any more details, please contact our secretary, Helen Hand – 0448 510 996.

Our next meeting will be Thursday March 5. You are very welcome to come along and join us.

Until next time, bye for now
Bev Orgill for Harcourt CWA

Vale Neil McLean



Notice taken from Thompson Family Funerals

13.5.1962–9.1.2026

Loving Son of Max & Muriel 'Tuppy' (Both Dec).

Loved Brother of Jeanette & John Teague.

Proud Uncle of Bradley & Kelly; James & Katie; Jessica & Wayne.

Adoring Great Uncle of Corbin, Dita, Robbie, Dany, Chris, Mia & Lily.

A Big Hearted Man – So sadly missed

The Funeral Service for Neil was held at the Leisure Centre, Bingham's Rd, Harcourt on Thursday 5 February at 12.30 pm.

A Graveside committal was held prior at 11 am at the Harcourt Cemetery.

To view this Service via live stream, please visit:

thompsonsfunerals.com.au/live-streaming/

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the Harcourt Cemetery Trust to help restore essential equipment lost in the recent Harcourt Bushfire. Donations can be made via the secretary at harcourtcmemetery@outlook.com



HARCOURT APPLEFEST 2026

MARKET STALLS

COMPETITIONS

ENTERTAINMENT FOR
THE WHOLE FAMILY

Saturday 7th March
10am to 4pm

James Park
& surrounds



HARCOURT

For more information - <https://applefest.harcourt.vic.au>



HARCOURT APPLEFEST 2026

The Applefest committee has received many offers of help from the community, and many people have asked that the 2026 Applefest be bigger and better than ever, a fitting offset to the trauma that beset the valley on January 9.

While thinking about this situation, I was listening to ABC Radio774 one morning when a talkback caller said "The people I appreciate the most are the folk who help to pack up after the school fete." Practical help on the day will be necessary if the Committee is to achieve the expected bigger and better Applefest.

Applefest 2026 is to be held on **Saturday March 7**. Despite the success of last year's venue it has been decided to hold the festival on High Street, Harcourt, in the village green spaces. Centre stage will be in James Park, along with stalls for food and beverage vendors.

The Art Show will be in the Heritage Centre. A massive street market is expected to occupy High Street, Wright Street and Stanley Park (South). In other words, the Applefest will stretch from the Market Street war memorial southwards to the Victoria Rd extension. That's what 'bigger' means! As for 'better', some great on-stage entertainment has been booked. Be on the watch for more comprehensive details of the attractions to be found at Harcourt on March 7.

The market will open at 10.00 am, we can be sure of that. But the committee is not sure of the finish time. Some people

have asked that the party kick on until 7 pm. The people of Harcourt wish to kick up their heels! The market will conclude at 4.00 pm, but we have heard that the food, beverage and entertainment will continue. More particulars will emerge nearer to the day.

Of course, there will be the traditional mainstays: the **cooking competition** and, always good for a laugh, the **apple pie eating competition**. **King Jonathon and Lady William**, (John and Jeanette Teague,) will grace the proceedings with their royal presence, along with **Granny Smith** (Kay Francis). Best of all, every one of your neighbours will be there, enjoying a chat, a catch up. Harcourt folk have been through so much and the Applefest is a good excuse for a catchup.

Applefest 2026 is to be a fundraiser for the local fire brigades. Just for this year, the entry fee will be \$10 (children free of charge), with half of the gate takings to be donated to local fire brigades. Harcourt owes an incalculable debt to the CFA for their efforts on January 9. This is one way in which we can help equip the local volunteer brigades of Harcourt, Sutton Grange and Walmer.

The thirty-fifth Harcourt Applefest 2026 promises to be a memorable occasion. Let's all join together to make it bigger and better.

George Milford

The Applefest Art Show

The Applefest Art Show and sale will be held at the ANA Hall/Heritage Centre March 6–8.

Regional artists have been invited to submit three works each. Now in its 32nd year, the Applefest Art Show features 'smaller works' no larger than 40 cm by 40 cm. It is this feature that makes the Applefest Art Show so special.

High quality paintings depicting a variety of subjects will be on sale. The subject of the paintings can range from decorative to whimsical. A favourite scene or a loved pet has often been the subject of paintings submitted for the Art Show.

As we see the world through the artist's eye we may gain a finer appreciation of our surroundings. We look forward with eager anticipation to see what this year's artistic output might be.

Entry forms will be available at the Harcourt Heritage Centre or on the Applefest website. Entry forms are to be submitted by February 20, and the works themselves are to be delivered to the Harcourt Heritage Centre on Monday March 2.

Judge for the 2026 Applefest Art Show is Dr Chris McAuliffe, BA, MA and PhD. Now retired, Chris has a high profile in the Arts as Professor of Art, curator, Art Museum Director and member of various art gallery boards. Judging an art show is a particular challenge, but we believe that Chris is up to the challenge! The Official opening of the Art Show is not to be missed. **Note the date, Friday March 6th.**

The Applefest Art Show is a fundraiser for the Harcourt Heritage Centre and is an integral part of the annual Harcourt Applefest.

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COOKERY COMPETITION

Please complete this form and present it to the Fruit Growers Tent by 10.15 am on March 7

Open Section

- ☐ 1. Apple Pie
- ☐ 2. Apple Muffins (x4)
- ☐ 3. Apple Muffins Gluten Free (x4)
- ☐ 4. Apple Cake
- ☐ 5. Apple Cake Gluten Free

Secondary School

- ☐ 6. Apple Muffins (x4)
- ☐ 7. Apple Muffins Gluten Free (x4)

Primary School

- ☐ 8. Apple Muffins (x4)
- ☐ 9. Apple Muffins Gluten Free (x4)

Preserves Section

- ☐ 10. Apple Chutney
- ☐ 11. Apple & Berry Jam (at least 50% Apple)
- ☐ 12. Dehydrated Apple

Conditions of Entry

Tick the box next to your entry. One form per entry.
Apple Pies: Must be baked in a 20cm pie dish. Must have a bottom & top crust. Pie top must be whole. Homemade pastry only. Do not add other fruit to the apple pie. To be presented on the plate or dish on which it was baked. To be covered in clear wrapping.
Apple Muffins & Apple Cakes: 4x Muffins on plate. No packet mixes. To be covered in clear wrapping.
Apple Chutney, Jam & Dehydrated Apples: Jars 250g - 350g only, labeled and dated. Jars to be clean and polished.

Name Phone

Address All entries to be picked up after 2pm on Applefest Day March 7



LEGO COMPETITION

Please complete this form and present your creation to ANA Hall, James Park (opposite the Post Office) Wednesday 4th March between 8.30am & 4.00pm

Tick	Class	Age	Creation	Awards
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	4 years and under	Using Lego or Duplo: Make a building using 3 colours only	Lego prize for First and sashes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	5-6 years	Build a Bridge	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	7-8 years	Build some Bumper Cars	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	9-10 years	Build a Marble Maze	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	11-12 years	Construct a Complete Dinner, with main dish and dessert	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	13-17 years	Create a Beast and a hero to fight it	

Exhibitors, Please Note

Your amazing creations must be on strong sturdy bases so they can be moved easily, like a cake board, bread board or tray.

Kit models & freestyle welcome, no size limit.
Please label with your name, age, class and contact number on the bottom of the board/tray.

Name Phone

Address All entries are to be picked up on Applefest day, Saturday 7th, after 4pm – or Sunday 8th, 10am–12pm, from the ANA Hall. Any queries Contact Diane Dooley on 0456 309 020

Vale Phillip Hay

Phillip Maxwell Hay was born on 2 February 1955 in Meercroft Maternity Hospital, Devonport Tasmania to parents Russell Edward and Iris Jean Hay (nee Braid). He joined older brother Malcolm, born 1953. A sister Jennifer was born in 1969 and a brother Andrew arrived in 1962. The family lived in Devonport.

Phillip's love of the outdoors was fostered by family outing and holidays in northern Tasmania. Something he shared with his own family through regular bushwalks and camping holidays.

Phillip attended Devonport Primary School, the nearby Reece High School, and he completed his schooling at Devonport Matriculation College. He then commenced a Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Chemistry at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education in 1975. As part of his studies, he started a cadetship as a lab assistant at Associated Pulp and Paper Mills (APPM) in Wesley Vale.

It was during his time at university that Phillip met his wife to be, Ruth. The pair crossed paths at political debates and conventions held by the Young Liberals. During their courtship, as Ruth lived at Table Cape, there were many expensive long distance phone calls and swift car trips between Devonport and Table Cape.

Phillip and Ruth married in April 1978 in Wynyard and spent their honeymoon on a driving tour of Tasmania – for two reasons: they had no money to permit anything more lavish, and he had to attend university classes in Launceston.

Phillip and Ruth moved into a flat in Ulverstone, which featured a picture window, giving them postcard views of Bass Strait. In 1980, they bought their first house, this time with notable views of the Don Heads in Devonport. Phillip continued to work at APPM.

Phillip was awarded his bachelor's degree, along with a Graduate Diploma of Agribusiness from Monash University in 1981 – the year they started their own family with the birth of a daughter, Naomi.

In 1983 Phillip took a job with Dow Chemical as a senior research chemist in Altona. Phillip was responsible for the Asia Pacific area from New Zealand to China, with most of his work being conducted in Indonesia.

Phillip's new job gave him his first overseas trip to New Zealand in 1983, and the next four years saw him on a plane to New Zealand, China, or Indonesia about every three weeks. At home, the family grew, with Douglas arriving in 1984 and Stuart in 1985.

These early business trips instilled in Phillip a love of travel, not as a tourist insulated from local culture. Rather, Phillip explored and immersed himself in the culture, typically with camera in hand, recording the images and moments that best captured his experiences.

Phillip and Ruth travelled extensively, to South America and the Pacific Islands, Vietnam, England, France, Thailand and Europe. Their trip to Kenya, Zanzibar, and Oman was a photographic highlight for Phillip.

However, the constant business travel was taking its toll. Phillip wrote in a travel diary: "I have to get out of this business – the suffering I put Ruth and the kids through is ridiculous."

Phillip left Dow Chemical in 1987 and joined a small start-up, called Kaomin, as a technical manager. The stock market crash later that year cut his tenure short. However, he was quickly head-hunted to join Albright and Wilson, an ICI subsidiary.

In 1988, the family welcomed Fiona. At work, however, Phillip was finding that the tasks he was being expected to perform didn't match the job description he had agreed to. He recalled that "to this day I don't know if I walked out or I was sacked. But whatever happened, I was unemployed with four children, one three months old, and no government money coming in."

Phillip picked up a casual job with Nufarm. Two weeks later, he was summoned to the chief chemist's office to discuss a new position the company was about to advertise. Phillip declined the position as felt he had no expertise in the specific job on offer. A few days later however, they offered him a casual job at a professional hourly rate. Two months later Phillip was given a permanent job, with no specific job description!

The early 2000s were a round of chauffeuring children to sports events and training – fencing, cricket, rugby and netball – and attending as many musicals, plays choir recitals and circus performances as he could.

As part of a global restructuring, Phillip was made redundant from Nufarm in 2020. During his more than thirty years with the company, his work had included technical roles both in and out of the lab, advising on patents, research projects, including field trials, where he got the opportunity to combine his work with his interest in meteorology, and much, much more. For someone who had started with no job description, he had contributed a vast amount to the growth of the 'small' company he had joined in 1988. He continued to provide consultancy services to Nufarm up until 2024.

In 2020, seeking a quieter lifestyle, Phillip and Ruth moved to their piece of land in Harcourt. Phillip dived headfirst into working the property, creating a sanctuary not only for himself and Ruth, but also for the wildlife they shared the land with. He enjoyed watching the kangaroos and wallabies when they came close to the house and was keen to point out where he'd most recently spotted the resident echidnas. Phillip loved having the grandkids visit and help him look after the property, and it was often hard to tell who had the bigger smile as he drove them around in 'the truck'.

Phillip joined Rotary Castlemaine, serving as Environment and Sustainability Director from 2021 to 2025. He volunteered with



Ruth and Phillip were Applefest Royalty in 2022.

Harcourt Applefest and Gather Harcourt and led a Nordic Walking group with Ruth. He was a social member of the Harcourt Bowling Club and enjoyed hearing yarns about old Harcourt from the long-time locals over a drink, or two, on a Friday night.

In May 2023, Phillip was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Phillip set about learning as much as he could about this new challenge and researched the various treatment options, looked at statistical data, and reviewed the latest research. Thankfully, he was pain free throughout the majority of his treatment, however, he was frustrated at the impact the side effects had on his ability to enjoy the things he loved. Phillip also saw his diagnosis as a teaching opportunity, telling every male he met to get tested regularly, regardless of age, and to monitor not only their PSA value, but the rate at which it increases between tests. So, you men, or you wives of men, on behalf of Phillip, check when your next test is due, or talk to your GP about having your first test.

Phillip died peacefully next to his loving wife Ruth at Castlemaine Hospital on the 11 January 2026, aged 70.

Tributes, messages, and conversations have extolled Phillip's qualities. His obvious and vast intellect, fed by a love of reading and learning. His ability and willingness to guide and mentor gently, freely sharing his knowledge and experience with anyone. The patience he had, and the time he took, to make sure others understood what he was teaching them. The quiet, kind support and encouragement he gave those who needed it. And the unwavering love and devotion he had for his family, by whom he will be greatly and forever missed.

"Take the adventure, heed the call, now ere the irrevocable moment passes! 'Tis but a banging of the door behind you, a blithesome step forward, and you are out of the old life and into the new! Then some day, some day long hence, jog home here if you will, when the cup has been drained and the play has been played, and sit down by your quiet river with a store of goodly memories for company."

Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows



Harcourt Valley Primary School

and four trees identified for pruning to reduce risk to school infrastructure. There will be recommendations for replacement trees/shrubs in the near future.

As part of their care of students and families the following session has been arranged:



From the highs of a successful 2025 with a wonderful class of Grade Sixes graduating (see above), to the difficult start of 2026, HVPS continues to care for students and families.

Prior to school commencement, The Principal, Andrew Blake communicated with school families to let them know the situation re opening the school. He said, 'Prior to school commencing, the school buildings will be cleaned internally to remove soot, air conditioners will be cleaned and sanitised, and all air-conditioning mesh covers will be upgraded. You will also see that fences are being pressure washed and painted.

An arborist has assessed all trees on the school site. Six trees have been identified for removal due to high risk to safety

Helping Kids After Disaster

How do you support your kids process the trauma associated with natural disasters in your community?

11th Feb 5pm -7.30pm

Harcourt Valley Primary School,
3 Wilkinson St, Harcourt
Contact: CCH Reception 5472 4842
Free BBQ @ 5pm Session start @ 6pm
Registration required. Childcare available.
This session is part of Community House's School Can't Parent Support Program

scan to register

Logos at the bottom: CASHMERE COMMUNITY HOUSE, Obedience Health, VicHealth, WOMA, and CarerLIVE.

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Bushfire recovery

Accessing support in a place that feels right for you

If you are seeking supports from Dhelkaya Health following the recent bushfires, our health service is available in locations that feel safer and comfortable for you. This includes the current Harcourt Recovery Centre, Dhelkaya Health Maldon or Castlemaine campuses, and where appropriate, other community-based or home-based settings. We also have telehealth available for most programs. Our priority is to meet you where you are, both physically and emotionally, and ensure you can access the care and support you need in a way that feels right for you.

If you'd like to discuss alternative options, please contact our team and we'll work with you to find a suitable arrangement. Email us at intake@castlemainehealth.org.au or call 5471 3555.

Get moving and connect through our walking groups

Walking is a simple way to stay active, boost wellbeing, and connect with others. We offer a range of inclusive, volunteer-led walking groups for all ages and fitness levels, from gentle social walks to Nordic walking and one-on-one companion walks. Most groups are free or low cost. Walking groups include:

- Rainbow Steps – LGBTIQ+ friendly walk, Tuesdays at Castlemaine Botanical Gardens (dogs welcome).
- Castlemaine Social Walkers – Gentle Thursday morning walk with optional blood pressure checks.
- Maldon Walking Group – Walk and enjoy a cuppa on Mondays, Tuesdays or Fridays.
- Monthly Walking Tours – Explore local trails on the last Thursday of each month.

- Nordic Walking – A more energetic option using poles, with intro sessions available.
- Companion Walking Program – One-on-one volunteer support for those who prefer not to walk alone.

Everyone is welcome – whether you'd like to join a walk or volunteer.

For more information, call 5471 3555

Maldon Vintage Machinery Museum walking tour

Enjoy a morning at the museum, exploring its treasures while meeting new people or catching up with friends. Free and no bookings required!

When: Thursday 26 February 2026

Time: 9.30 – 10.30 am

Guide: Alan Miller

Call 5479 1000 for more information.

Carols in the Park

On Sunday December 14, the focus of community life in Harcourt was the ever-busy children's playground and the shade of the nearby trees in Stanley Park where a crowd assembled for the Harcourt Progress Association's annual Carols in the Park. Teenagers lounged on the swings, little kids clambered over the play equipment, and the brave ones climbed to the top of the slide, ready to descend with a mighty whoosh!

In true Aussie Christmas fashion, the barbeque was soon frying sausages and onion, popcorn was handed around and a bubble machine delighted the kids.

Heralded by a green-clad elf, the fire truck arrived with Santa climbing down from the cabin to distribute Zooper-Doopers, always a welcome gesture on a warm December afternoon.

While Santa's helpers were handing out the goodies, Bronnie was handing out carol books, and the attention of the crowd shifted to Thompson's Foundry Band which had assembled under the trees at the southern end of the Park.

In a program interspersed with singing and storytelling, several members of the crowd revealed unsuspected acting talents as they

took part in an impromptu nativity play. With a light-hearted touch, the play told the Christmas story through the eyes of an inn-keeper, the inn-keeper's wife and a wise man. Other members of the crowd – Rena, Bronnie, Ivan and Toby – courageously consented to join the hastily assembled choir to lead the singing. Thompsons Foundry Band provided accompaniment.

Soon the valley echoed to traditional and not-so-traditional Christmas Carols. The Mayor, Cr Toby Heydon brought greetings from Mount Alexander Shire Council. Then it was time to crown the Applefest Royalty for 2026.

Jeanette and John Teague have accepted the roles of Lady William and King Jonathon. With suitable ceremony, retiring Applefest Royalty Bonnie and Remy Sowman conferred the colourful robes and glistening crowns onto Jeanette and John.

Jeanette Teague is well-known as treasurer of Harcourt Progress Association, volunteer manager of Harcourt Valley Community House and, for 2026, alongside husband John, is carrying out the role of ambassador for Harcourt's Applefest.

So, with colour and ceremony, with green-clad elf and red-suited Santa, with the hubbub of children playing at the foot of the rise, the melodious brass band competing with a blustery wind and the distinctive smell of the barbeque, Harcourt celebrated Christmas 2025.

George Milford





Harcourt Bowling Club

While the recent fire in and around Harcourt devastated our community our spirit remains strong.

Fortunately, Harcourt Bowling Club was not damaged by the fire, but many of our members have been affected – some more than others.

We have been overwhelmed by the generosity and donations by other bowling clubs and bowlers, and offers of assistance and support.

On Wednesday 14 January the Castlemaine Bowling Club dedicated their charity day to the Harcourt community and raised over \$2,700. The bowlers of Harcourt who attended were so touched by the generosity; Castlemaine clubrooms bedecked in Harcourt colours of yellow and blue, and a logo on mugs and aprons of the caterers which read "Helping Harcourt together we can make a



difference". Thank you to everyone who has supported and is supporting our community in the long journey to recovery.

When the Harcourt Bowling Club opened on Friday 16 January, it was abuzz with locals and visitors connecting and sharing experiences. On Sunday 18 January a free BBQ lunch was offered at the club for members and those affected by the fires. More than 200 adults and children filled the club with joyful laughter



and yes, there were tears; and stories of luck and bravery and misfortune. The feeling of community was profound.

Support workers from the Shire and emergency services were on hand to give assistance as needed. As always, State member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards was there to join in with the community she is familiar with – and to play a game of bowls. Thanks to Russell Maltby and Brian Buchanan for their work at the BBQ, and Kaye and the catering crew.

On Friday 23 January the club put in a free sausage sizzle for members and anyone from Harcourt who was affected by the fires. Thanks to John and Locka for manning the BBQ.

Club Singles Championships

Men's Singles Championship

The Men's Singles Championship Final was held on the afternoon of 23 January between Rod Harris and the reigning Club Champion Mark Swain. Rod got off to a good lead at 10 to 1, then Mark found his pace and slowly caught up to be within 3 at 18/15 then, 22/19 and 24/22. The gallery was indeed treated to first class bowling by the pair as each end had special moments. After just under three hours of 31 ends Rod Harris claimed victory on 25 to Mark Swain 23. Congratulations!



Rod Harris (left), Mark Swain (right) with president, Gary Maddern.

Ladies' Singles Championship Final

The final of the Ladies' Singles Championship was also held on Friday 23 January, with a late start, following the Men's game.

Diane Marsh and Wendy Chaplin bowled well and gave the gallery a good display of competitive bowling. Diane kept up to Wendy for 18 ends at 17/13, but Wendy slowly drew away from her over the next six ends to win at 27 to 16. Congratulations! (see attached photo).



Wendy Chaplin (left) and Diane Marsh.

As a side note; Diane had lost her usual bowls in the fire and, after searching through the house, she was able to find her old set of bowls so she could compete in the Championship.

Thanks to President Gary Maddern who marked for both of the contests.

The winners Rod Harris and Wendy Chaplin will now go on to contest the Divisional Championships in Bendigo. We wish them good bowling and good luck.

Other Club Championships

Competition for the Ladies' and Men's Pairs and the 100-Up Championships will be played out over the next month. Results will be in the March Core.

Pennant

In the last week of pennant for the Charity Round, pennant players dressed in the Starlight Foundation colours of purple and yellow to mark the occasion. The Harcourt players' fees and other donations collected by the club were donated to the Starlight Foundation.

Continued next page ...



Since resuming play after the holiday season, the Harcourt Weekend Pennant teams have improved their ladder positions. Division 2 is now on 6th; Division 4 is now on 4th and Division 7 is also now on 4th. If they keep this up there will be finals to play.

Midweek Pennant teams ladder positions are: Division 2 on 7th; Division 3 on 7th and Division 6 on 8th.

Green Matters

Thanks must be extended to our green's manager, Gary Maddern and the green's committee for all the work done during the Christmas break – extreme weather and fires – to keep the green in such good condition. There were a couple of issues that needed prompt attention and Gary was on to it, with his helpers. Consequently, we are enjoying the improved surface. Thank you and well done! To ensure the ongoing quality of the surface, the green is now closed on Tuesdays.

Friday Night Meals

Members and friends continue to enjoy the fortnightly meals provided by Kayla and Ebony, which will resume in February.

Christmas Break-up

Harcourt Christmas Party held on Saturday 13 December was a great success. The club was festooned with amazing decorations by Carrol Frost and a stunning balloon display by Julie and Ray Dejong. Kaye Grant and the catering team provided the usual delicious meal.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this such an enjoyable occasion.

Girls on the Green

With a full calendar for February and March, it is unlikely to be able to hold Girls on the Green.

What's on in February & March

Sponsors' Night will be scheduled for a Tuesday on a date to be confirmed.

Men's Annual Fours Tournament

The Harcourt Men's Invitation Fours Tournament will be held on Sunday 8 February.

Ladies' Annual Fours Tournament

The Harcourt Ladies' Fours Tournament will be held on Thursday 19 February.

Kidman Mixed Fours Tournament

Sunday 22 February

Harcourt/Campbells Creek Triples games 5.30 for 6.00pm

At Harcourt – Thursday 26 February

At Campbells Creek – Thursday 5 March

Grant Pairs

Saturday 14 March



A moment to process...

On the January 9 2026, Harcourt was impacted by a fire that has significantly impacted our beautiful town and surrounds.

From the bottom of our hearts Harcourt Valley Landcare would like to thank the CFA, DEECA and all the other services, and community members who fought the fires.

We grieve with those who've lost their homes, pets and livestock. We grieve with Djaara people for their djandak/ Country. We grieve for our backyards and properties that linked us to nature, and the old-growth trees that anchored the landscape and provided hollows for so many animals. We grieve for the biodiversity that surrounded us and the time we spent nourishing and growing that biodiversity.

We are giving our members a moment to process what has unfolded. We'll be back to support our community regroup and regrow shortly. We look forward to reconnecting, sharing information, by running workshops and getting back into working bees. Watch this space...

If you would like to support recovery efforts, you can contribute to the Harcourt Progress Relief Fund: at the Harcourt Fire Relief Home Page, at the Harcourt Progress Association web site.

Terry Willis
President

Some Good News

Harcourt Valley Landcare is very grateful to the Woodend Men's Shed! Having heard about our calamitous fire, the Woodend Men's Shed has reached out to Harcourt Valley Landcare and offered to make nesting boxes to replace any lost.

They have offered 50 nesting boxes, and after discussion we have settled on:

- ▶ 10 phascogale boxes
- ▶ 10 rosella boxes
- ▶ 10 owlet nightjar boxes
- ▶ 10 glider boxes and
- ▶ 10 pardalote boxes



Thank you Woodend Men's Shed!

See Harcourt Valley Landcare's Wildlife Support Guide on page 23.

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- ▶ 2021 Brides Choice Awards winner

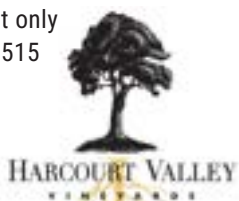
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Wildlife Support Guide

Water: The most important support. All wildlife will benefit from clean, fresh water.

Provide two water sources:

- Ground-level: Good for lizards & small birds. Put a stone in so they can get out
- Raised like a birdbath
- Place near trees or shrubs so critters can hide from predators
- Wash containers regularly with soap to prevent the spread of diseases

Food: Optional

If you choose to provide food, select foods which support the health of wildlife.

Birds

- ▶ Cockies and parrots: select a high-quality native bird mix or fruit
- ▶ Wrens and finches: smaller seed, mealworms, garden worms
- ▶ Magpies: Use insectivore mix mixed

with human grade mince, in small amounts (make up in ice cube trays and freeze). Do not feed bread or mince only - it can lead to nutrient deficiencies.

Kangaroos and wallabies: Pick up a specialist mix from a pet store

Lizards: Mealworms or crickets

Tips

- ▶ Feed irregularly or in different locations (1-3) to avoid dependence on the food source
- ▶ Seeds will sprout - keep this in mind selecting a spot to feed
- ▶ Jump online to learn more. Birdlife has a great article about feeding birds. If in doubt, reach out to us or ask a pet store for assistance.
- ▶ Bendigo Wildlife Rescue might be able to support with feed donations

Thank you for caring for our wildlife

Grace Church

This is a statement of belief by Grace Church

We have all reeled from the effects of the devastating bush fire which on Friday January 9 and the days following.

Fifty-four homes have been lost in Harcourt, Ravenswood, Walmer and Sutton Grange, but the majority of those are in Harcourt. As far as Harcourt itself is concerned, the area bordered by Coolstore Road, Station Street, and Victoria Street was the epicenter, with the most homes lost.

There has been an enormous outpouring of support for those affected – donations of groceries and clothing, emergency accommodation, donated hay and fodder, cash and gift cards, meals, and services in kind, such as clean ups – the list goes on. Many individuals have given up copious quantities of their time to the voluntary effort.

How are we to make sense of this from a Christian point of view? We shall try. There is to be a combined open air Church Service to be held in James Park (opposite the Post Office) at 2pm on Sunday February 22. All are welcome to attend. Churches from Harcourt and Castlemaine will be represented.

The service is conceived as an opportunity for the community to heal, a statement of solidarity and support from the Churches for Harcourt residents. We shall touch on the fact that the fires are not the result of God's wrath, rather they are an unfortunate fact of life in Victoria. As the book known as Ecclesiastes says in the bible, there is a season for everything under the sun, and, unfortunately, in Victoria, that includes bushfires.

God's love for His creation means that we can give thanks for the lives that were protected and the homes that were not destroyed as we grieve with all who have been affected.

Please do remember to bring a folding chair, as seating in James Park is extremely limited. And please do join in prayers for a mild day on the 22nd, so that this service can be held outdoors with the maximum participation from members of the general public as possible.

Ps Roger Thurecht



Weather & Water

On February 3 Coliban Water issued a press release signalling that central Victoria water storages were under pressure from the hot weather in January.

Water usage records were broken in a number of towns, plus the bushfire emergency in Harcourt created 'an unprecedented challenge' to the region's water network.

Here at Reservoir Road the rainfall total in December was 34.5 mm bringing the total for the year to 473.5 mm, the lowest since 2019 when we received 358.5 mm. January 2026 has been exceedingly dry with only

2 mm. There have been some very light showers which did not register.

Coliban urged residents in its supply area to stick to the permanent water saving rules as storages are now at 59% capacity compared to 65% as at the same time last year. Coliban Water Managing Director, Damian Wells spoke of the drying trend in the climate and increased population numbers putting stress on the water supply. He indicated that if the trend continues we can expect water restrictions next summer which will obviously affect our agricultural industries in Harcourt.

Grace Church

Service: 11.00am Sunday
All Welcome

Pastors: Roger & Glenise Thurecht
0422 605 897

gracecastlemaine.org.au

30 Buckley Street, Harcourt

KATIE FINLAY'S FRUIT GROWING TIPS

Hi everyone — what a massive year it's been already, and it's only February! Commiserations to everyone who lost something significant in the fire on January 9, and our condolences to Jeanette Teague who lost her brother Neil. After people, houses probably come top of the list, but also animals, businesses, irreplaceable possessions, gardens, sheds, equipment, and plans for the future. Collectively, I think we've lost the feeling that "it will never happen to us", because it did!

Our fire plan was to stay and defend, and it worked well on the day, though in the end we were also very lucky, as well as indebted to the wonderful fire services who managed to stop the inferno jumping many roads. We also experienced first-hand the protective power of fruit trees to dampen a fire. The fire burned around us on three sides but didn't make it through the neighbour's orchard to get to our property. Our orchards are thankfully undamaged, but our sympathies go out to the orchardists who have lost trees and now have some difficult decisions to make.

It's been heart-warming to watch the town pull together in response to the fire. The shared meals and outpouring of support have been incredible — we've probably met more people in the last month than in the last ten years! A huge thank you to the HPA and everyone who has stepped up in some way to offer support. As the initial emergency flows into the recovery phase, we're aware that it's easy for people to fall through the cracks and start feeling like they should be "over it" by now. For anyone who lost something significant, the reality might only just be setting in, and for those who are rebuilding, the hard work is just starting and is likely to go on for years. We are so grateful for the continued opportunities to connect, chat and check in with people, and are thinking about how we might be able to offer ongoing support to backyard fruit growers as their trees recover — stay tuned for news about that.

We're aware that there are many people with burnt fruit trees in varying states of damage and shock. We've had first-hand experience of this in the family because Katie's sister Liz and her partner David lost their house in Twyford Street, but their orchard survived (though with some damage). We've spoken to lots of other people whose houses were saved, but their gardens (and fruit trees) were burnt

to varying degrees. So, unsurprisingly, our focus for this month is how to look after your fruit trees after the fire.

How to assess the fire damage to your fruit trees

The first thing to do is to assess your fruit trees as soon as possible. The aim is to try to decide whether they're likely to live or die — we'll share a system for how to do this, but it's important to know that if you can't decide, it doesn't matter! Just give your trees the benefit of the doubt for now, and you can decide later (we've got tips below for how to care for the trees in the meantime).

One of the reasons it can be hard to assess whether a tree will live or die is because there are lots of different types of damage they might have experienced. For example, radiant heat and direct flames (a "blowtorch" fire) may burn and kill top of the tree, but the roots might survive and grow suckers. Very often a tree will have incomplete damage, where the fire has burnt part of the trunk or branches. A "slow cooker" fire is when the understorey catches fire, burning the trunk and lower branches. The severity of this type of damage depends on things like how much dry grass was under the tree.

After bushfires in South Australia in 2024, SARDI (South Australian Research and Development Institute) worked out a system to rate orchard blocks after a fire, and we've adapted it here to suit backyard fruit trees. This system works better for fires damaged by blowtorch fires than slow cooker fires, though of course your trees might have been affected by both types of fire!

The aim is to come up with an impact rating from 1 to 5 for each tree:

- 1 = no damage
- 2 = low impact
- 3 = moderate/high impact
- 4 = severe impact
- 5 = tree dead

To help you decide how to rate each tree, it's easiest to break it down to different categories, and give each of them a score. Once you've scored all sections, look at the overall pattern — trees with mostly 1s and 2s are likely to recover well, while trees with several 4s or 5s may not be worth saving. You don't need to add the numbers up, just use them as a guide to help decide whether to look after or remove each tree.

Leaves:

- 1 = no damage
- 2 = leaves shriveled or dried
- 3 = leaves and shoots scorched
- 4 = severe scorching to foliage and shoots
- 5 = completely burned

Fruit:

- 1 = no damage
- 2 = more than 50% of fruit is OK
- 3 = more than 50% of fruit is burned or dropped
- 4 = all fruit burned, dried, or dropped
- 5 = all fruit burned

Trunk:

- 1 = no damage
- 2 = 0-25% of the trunk burned or scorched
- 3 = 25-50% of the trunk damaged
- 4 = more than 50% of trunk damaged
- 5 = whole trunk burned

Trunk damage is one of the main things that determines the tree's future, particularly the damage to the cambium layer, which is the layer between the bark and the heartwood. It can be very hard to accurately assess how bad this damage is, so at this stage, make your best guess.

Understorey plants/Soil:

- 1 = understorey unburned
- 2 = understorey mainly intact
- 3 = understorey partly burned
- 4 = understorey all burned
- 5 = scorched earth

Irrigation:

- 1 = intact
- 2 = mostly intact but minor repairs needed
- 3 = significantly damaged but fixable
- 4 = Significant parts need replacing
- 5 = completely gone

Regrowth:

- 1 = leaves growing normally
- 2 = healthy regrowth from trunk, branches, and laterals
- 3 = regrowth on more than 50% of tree
- 4 = regrowth on less than 50% of tree and growth unhealthy
- 5 = no regrowth

Be aware that initial regrowth can be misleading. Trees might look OK for a while, and even regrow, but then grow poorly or die in the next couple of years. This is a symptom of partial bark damage — if the inner cambium layer WASN'T

damaged, water and nutrients can travel up the tree and stimulate growth, but if the outer cambium layer WAS damaged, the top of tree can't send sugars back down to the roots, and the tree will die.

Immediate care for your fruit trees after a fire

If you're still not sure whether a tree is worth saving using the rating system, give them the benefit of the doubt for now.

Fruit trees are incredibly resilient and may bounce back even if they seem to rate low at the moment, especially as it's too early to rate them for regrowth. Some trees that we've seen have already started to re-shoot, and you can expect to see regrowth over the next few months, particularly if we get some rain. Be aware that one of the impacts of fire damage can be early autumn-symptoms of leaves changing colour, and this can help to diagnose trees that are not likely to survive long-term.

Follow these steps for now, and over coming weeks, rate your trees again to see if a clearer picture is emerging.

- ▶ Water the trees. If the irrigation system was damaged, this might need to be by hand. Try to re-establish the irrigation ASAP if possible, and if you think the trees are worth saving. If they're not, then salvage anything re-usable from the irrigation system to re-use when you replant your trees.
- ▶ Remove any remaining fruit to reduce stress on the trees. If the tree is relatively undamaged and still has plenty of green leaves, it's OK to leave the fruit on the tree as long as it's getting enough water. However, if the tree is next to a house or structure that burned (including treated pine poles), there's a good chance the fruit will be contaminated with toxic ash, so it's best not to eat it.
- ▶ Don't prune until regrowth has been established so you can clearly see where there is new growth and dead wood.
- ▶ You may need to protect trees from sunburn if they've lost all their leaves.

Use shade cloth or paint the trunk and branches with diluted water-based white paint.

In future issues of the Core we'll be talking about:

- ▶ Pruning fire damaged trees.
- ▶ What to do with a tree that has died on top, but the roots have survived and grown healthy suckers.
- ▶ Potential grafting repairs to trees, and how grafting can help to save a treasured variety.
- ▶ Deciding whether or not to remove trees.
- ▶ Our Fruit Tree Action Plan Course is Going Ahead

In other fruit tree news, we've decided to go ahead with our online course to help you write a fruit tree action plan for 2026. It's called Learn.Plan.Succeed and it kicks off on February 17 (it's worth registering even if you miss the live sessions because the replays will be made available). You can register for it here: growgreatfruit.com/product/learn-plan-succeed-7-registration-february-2026, and if you've been fire-affected, please get in touch because we'd like to offer you a free ticket.

Lastly this month, if your fruit trees are unaffected by the fire, make sure you protect the fruit from birds, because they've turned up in force! We've had no sign of fruit fly yet this season, but if you have traps out, please keep monitoring them regularly so you're not caught unawares if they show up.

Hope we see you at a shared meal very



New shoots growing on a burned fruit tree that in time will replace the wood that was burned.

soon — feel free to ask us your fruit tree questions, and we'll answer them if we can!

*Happy fire recovery,
Katie and Hugh*

Hugh and Katie Finlay are organic orchardists and offer Grow Great Fruit organic home fruit growing courses. They're also founding members of the Harcourt Organic Farming Co-op. Head to growgreatfruit.com to sign up for their free Weekly Fruit Tips newsletter, and register for one of their free online workshops. For Orchard Keepers news, sign up to the newsletter at: orchardkeepers.us6.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=fbf79adb0e1751518422ab3a9&id=d1ead3ac67 (or use the QR code).



You Can Help ...

If you know someone who would like to get a copy of *The Core*, either in print or online, but is having difficulty accessing it, let us know. We can make sure they get their preferred version – we can have it put in their letterbox, or we can send a copy by email.

Let us know by sending the person's details to: news@harcourt.vic.au

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Council news

Thank you for your support

Following the bushfires in Harcourt, Walmer and surrounds on Friday 9 January, our community has come together to care for impacted residents.

We'd like to thank you for your donations, fundraising, volunteer efforts and support.

A big thank you to our first responders who worked tirelessly to keep our communities safe.

Thank you to the agencies and organisations who worked at our recovery hubs, offering food, showers, advice, support and more.

While it's been a difficult time, everyone's care, compassion and generosity has been inspiring.

There's still lots of work to do. If you'd like to help, visit mountalexander.vic.gov.au/How-to-help.

Apply for a Community Grant

Our Community Grants program supports local groups and individuals to deliver new or emerging projects that benefit people in the shire.

Applications are open from Monday 2 February to Monday 23 February.

Apply at mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Grants.

Keep cool in the pool this summer

Outdoor pools in Castlemaine, Harcourt, Maldon and Newstead are open until Monday 9 March.


They offer a variety of family-friendly activities including inflatable fun, barbecues and live music.

Follow @mountalexanderpools on Facebook to see what's on.

Working together for a healthy, connected shire

mountalexander.vic.gov.au (03) 5471 1700





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LISTEN LOCAL

February 2026 Xword

Tom, our cruciverbalist, has sent this message:

"No crossword for the foreseeable future: Tom's a bit burnt out."

All your fans wish you the very best, Tom.

I hold Listening Posts in Harcourt & district regularly.

To make an appointment, please contact my office.

Maree Edwards MP
State Member for Bendigo West

16 Lockwood Road, Kangaroo Flat VIC 3555
maree.edwards@parliament.vic.gov.au
03 5410 2444 mareeedwards.com.au



Victorian Labor

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		Full page	\$160

Castlemaine Bus Lines

Harcourt Services Monday to Friday

	am	pm	pm
Market St/Harmony Way (Harcourt)	8:55	12:05	2:25
Coolstore Road/Midland Hwy (Harcourt)	8:56	12:06	2:26
Coolstore Road/Midland Hwy (Harcourt)	8:57	12:07	2:27
Blackjack Rd/Midland Hwy (Harcourt)	9:03	12:13	2:33
Halford St/Barker St (Castlemaine)	9:05	12:15	2:35
From Castlemaine to Harcourt Monday to Friday			
Castlemaine RSL/Mostyn St (Castlemaine)	8:45	11:55	2:15
Wimble St/Barker St (Castlemaine)	8:48	11:56	2:18
Blackjack Rd/Midland Hwy (Harcourt)	8:53	12:03	2:23
Coolstore Rd/Midland Hwy (Harcourt)	8:54	12:04	2:24
Market St/Harmony Way (Harcourt)	8:55	12:05	2:25



**2026
Feb 22**

THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 10AM TO 1PM

**Castlemaine Community House
30 Templeton St**

For information phone Chris 5470 5568

First in first served, so be prepared to wait.

We will try to repair clothes, small wooden items and furniture, electrical appliances, toys. You can learn basic bicycle maintenance, crochet and darning. Get Apple Mac advice, knives sharpened. Consider repairs and clean items before taking them to the Café.

You can join our fixers to learn how to repair your useful items and avoid tossing items into landfill. If the Café is busy the last item must be in at 12.15. Gold coin donation appreciated.



Castlemaine Repair Café



castlemainerepaircafe.wordpress.com



December Solution

9	8	3	5	4	2	6	1	7
5	1	6	8	7	9	4	2	3
2	7	4	1	6	3	8	9	5
6	5	1	3	9	8	2	7	4
4	3	9	7	2	5	1	8	6
7	2	8	6	1	4	3	5	9
8	6	5	2	3	7	9	4	1
1	9	7	4	8	6	5	3	2
3	4	2	9	5	1	7	6	8

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Fill the grid so every row, column and 3x3 frame contains every number from 1 to 9.

For early access to the solution to this month's puzzles, email: news@harcourt.vic.au

3				7			4	
	6	1		4			5	
	2		6	5		1	3	
		8	1			3		
							1	2
		4	2					
9		2			7			
8					3			
						5		9

Heroes wear yellow

To the CFA volunteers who stood between
our community and disaster – who put yourselves
in harm's way to protect our lives, our homes
and our businesses – thank you.

To the volunteers who stand up for us, every time:
We stand with you.

We are grateful for your service.

Thank you, CFA.

Photo: Malmesbury CFA



Mount Alexander
Shire Council