

HARCOURT NEWS THE CORE



Edition 135 – April 2026

Produced by: Harcourt Progress Association Inc

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

Thank You, HPA



Congratulations to the committee of Harcourt Progress Association for their organisation of the response to the bushfire disaster in Harcourt.

Our community thanks them for stepping up and demonstrating a broad and compassionate approach in

organising and working as a team with other vital service providers, especially Mount Alexander Shire Council.

Thanks also go to Tania Butterworth for her fabulous work at the Castlemaine Distribution Centre which will continue to operate. For details of the ongoing bushfire response and further assistance, see the HPA article

on Page 3 and the Harcourt Community House article on page 19.

Shown here are: Back row: Remy Sowman, John Baldock, Ivan Gilbert (Chair), and David Dean. Front row: Rena Geroe, Phil and Di Lederman, Bev Orgill, Bronnie Dean, Jeanette Teague and Alison Curtis. (Debbie Lawn was unable to attend on the day).

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* has 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.

Robyn Miller
0467 670 271

rmillerharcourt@bigpond.com

COMMUNITY DIARY

Friday April 10, and each Friday following: Community Lunch, 12 noon to 1.30 pm Community House, Station Street Harcourt. See page 19 for other dates and times of Community House activities.

Saturday April 11: Footy and Netball season begins.

Sunday April 12: Concert "From the Ashes" at the Uniting Church, Harcourt. See page 6 for details.

Wednesday April 15: 7.30 pm Carpet Bowls season begins. See page 9 for details.

Saturday April 25: ANZAC Day Service, see page 6 for details.

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: Open each Wednesday from 12:00 am to 3:00 pm, closed in school holidays. See page 19

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: Over the two-week April school holiday, VMR will be open on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from 11.00 am – 5.00 pm. Old Calder Highway C794 just north of Barkers Creek Bridge in Harcourt. See the website for the latest news: vmr.com.au

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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.





Harcourt Progress Association

Chairman's Message

Special greetings to our Greater Harcourt Residents

I am pleased to advise that our HPA Committee Members, supported by a dedicated group of volunteers, together with a number of government agencies and community organisations, are continuing to provide a range of support services in connection with the bushfire recovery process.

The many organisations that have come forward to assist residents in starting their recovery process are immensely appreciated. I have been approached by a number of residents and asked to pass on a special thank you to groups such as BlazeAid, Samaritan's Purse, Anglicare and other support agencies for their dedicated and kind assistance.

We must, however, not overlook that the pathway ahead for many residents may be challenging and long term as they negotiate their way through processes such as insurance claims, clean-up and permit applications, and then engaging appropriate tradespeople to undertake rebuilding works. The above issues and the associated waiting times can potentially lead to stressful health or psychological issues.

Our Committee Members would encourage residents who are experiencing challenges to connect with any of the agencies – including Anglicare, Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry, St Vincent de Paul, the Mount Alexander Shire and a number of government agencies – to seek assistance.

Some of the HPA Committee joined a special community-wide meeting on 9 March at the Leisure Centre where community members were encouraged to raise matters of interest or concern that they would like to be addressed as we move forward in the recovery process. Some great suggestions were presented, and these will become guiding points for the Recovery Committee, which is to be overseen by Mount Alexander Shire in the ongoing recovery planning. Of particular note was that a number of community members indicated their wish to have the ongoing recovery guided by a positive and wide vision for the future of what our Greater Harcourt district could be ...

“Let us rebuild with a positive and wide vision of providing a great future for Harcourt and District, its community, its businesses, its tourism attractions and its community facilities.”

HPA conducted two special 'thank you sessions' on Thursday 19 March to extend our huge gratitude for the selfless contribution by the many volunteers who have generously enabled the Castlemaine Distribution Centre and the Harcourt Relief Centre to function and support our community in the recovery process. Volunteers have displayed a gracious and selfless contribution in the immediate recovery process, providing a compassionate listening ear, tireless effort, a sense of connection, the sharing of grief and the overall support for their impacted fellow community members.

As we move forward, the operation at the Leisure Centre is winding down and some activities will move to the Harcourt Valley Community House in Station Street. We extend our appreciation to the Management Committee and the sporting bodies, whose homes are at the Leisure Centre, for enabling that facility to be used as our Community Recovery Centre over the past few months.

Some New Funding Programs

Of note, is that we have recently been advised of the following funding programs:

- ▶ The Victorian Emergency Relief and Recovery Foundation (VERRF) Board is to provide a one-off payment of \$1,000 to those who have been most impacted through the loss of their primary place of residence.

Applicants will be required to complete a simple form and provide two forms of identification to demonstrate that they were living at the house at the time of the bushfire. The application process closes on 1 May 2026.

Details about the grant and the application process are outlined on the following website: www.vic.gov.au/apply-victorian-emergency-relief-and-recovery-foundation-support

The VERRF will be undertaking targeted communications on the payment to ensure that those who

need access to these payments are aware of the opportunity to apply. Should you know anyone who may be eligible, however, please encourage them to apply.

- ▶ The HPA has also received special grant funds to assist farmers in the rebuilding of fencing lost in the fire. This program will provide the fencing materials with the construction to be undertaken through the generous assistance of BlazeAid volunteers.
- ▶ The HPA has also been successful in obtaining a grant from the Tiny Towns Funding program to set up a community food garden and a secure play space for children at the Harcourt Valley Community House.

Community and Business Donations

On behalf of our HPA Committee and the community of the Greater Harcourt area (Ravenswood, Barkers Creek, Harcourt, Harcourt North, Sutton Grange, Walmer), I wish to extend our heart-felt appreciation to the many community and charitable organisations, businesses and individual persons who have generously contributed to our Harcourt Bushfire Appeal Fund through the running of fundraising events, the generous contribution of goods and materials, direct donations and so on.

Important Information Re Phase 1 Gift Cards

The funds for Phase 1 Gift Cards are now exhausted. If you have not participated in Phase 1 Gift Cards and believe you may be eligible, please email the HPA Secretary at secretaryhpa3453@gmail.com.

Special congratulations for the fantastic 2026 Harcourt Applefest!

On behalf of our community, I would like to extend huge congratulations and our great appreciation to those who organised the 2026 Applefest Event and the Art Show. It was a fabulous success, drawing huge crowds and promoting Harcourt, and bringing enjoyment and celebration to our township and community.

Ivan Gilbert, Chairperson.



Harcourt Valley Primary School

Term 1 Overview

Principal Andrew Blake welcomed students and staff back to school, acknowledging the impact of the bushfire on January 9. "Students appreciated the gentle return to school, they have enjoyed reconnecting with their peers and have done an incredible job looking out for, and caring for each other." He also welcomed new families that commenced at HVPS this year saying, "I do know that with us all continuing to work together, caring for each other, and importantly, caring for our personal wellbeing, we can navigate our way through this challenging period."

A big focus for the school in first term was of course Applefest. Mr Blake thanked all staff, students and parents, who put in hours of work preparing for Applefest.

The reports below come from some term 1 school newsletters and bulletins, with content provided by Mr Blake.

APPLEFEST

School Choir

What a great way to open Applefest with our school choir formally opening Applefest. Students sang very confidently and kept the Applefest crowd well and truly entertained. Congratulations to the school choir on their great effort. Thank you to Mrs Hood for all of her work preparing the students for this performance in the lead-up to Applefest.

Art Show

Congratulations to all students on their completed art work and taking the opportunity to have their creations on display throughout Applefest. We have some very talented students, and I received numerous comments about the high quality on show. Thank you to Mrs Hargreaves for ensuring everyone had some work to put on display at the art show.

Grade 6 Students

Congratulations to the Grade 6 students on raising approximately \$500 at Applefest. They have made a commitment to work hard to raise funds towards their end of year Big Day Out. Congratulations, Zoe, Raf, Olivia and Corben on a wonderful effort.

Apple Pie Sales – 680 pies sold!

Funds raised at the Applefest Stall totalled \$13,938.20.

Congratulations to everyone on a wonderful effort! A very big thank you goes to all who assisted with our major fundraising event for the year. School Council have commenced discussions on how our locally raised funds can be best spent to support the learning and engagement of all students.

School Council

On 25 March, we held our School Council AGM. I am pleased to announce our 2026 School Council members are: President: Christine Webb, Vice-President: Katie King, Treasurer: Remy Sowman, Secretary: Lou Simpson, DET: Stacey Turner, Anna Pidgeon, Collie Mannix and Georgie Boucher.

End of term fun – Smoothie Bikes

To celebrate the end of term, students made their very own smoothies on smoothie bikes. What are Smoothie Bikes you ask? Smoothie Bikes are bikes attached to a blender allowing students and staff to make a healthy smoothie. Thank you to Plate it Up for organising volunteers and the smoothie bikes, and the McKern Foundation for donating the smoothie ingredients.

Term 2 important dates

- ▶ April 20: Curriculum Day
- ▶ April 25: ANZAC Day
- ▶ April 27: Monday Morning tennis sessions return at 8:00 am
- ▶ April 27–30: Book Fair
- ▶ May 7: Mothers' Day Breakfast



L-R Ruth Hay and George Milford of the Harcourt Valley Heritage and Tourist Centre, Nicole Funston, Community Bank Maldon and District, Trevor Bray and Marina Scott, Rotary Club Castlemaine, Naomi Hay, Australian Women's Choir, with young Teddy, Rebecca Morecroft, Community Bank Maldon, Diana Cork, Harcourt Valley Heritage and Tourist Centre, Toby Heydon, Mayor of Mount Alexander Shire.

Harcourt's New Stage in James Park

Over several years the Applefest committee has requested that a permanent stage or sound shell be built in James Park.

Mount Alexander Shire Council took up the idea, commissioned a design and submitted an application to government for funding under a "Tiny Towns" grant scheme.

The late Phil Hay kept the project alive and raised the idea with possible funders. In the meantime, the estimated cost kept increasing. However, we were encouraged when the Shire Council included James Park improvements in its annual budget.

The Rotary Club of Castlemaine expressed support, the Castlemaine Lions Club offered financial support and the Harcourt Heritage Centre committed the profits from the 2025 Applefest. On 27 January, in the aftermath of the January bushfire tragedy, Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation provided the shortfall in funding. Work started on 4 February, and the stage was completed by 5 March. This was a great achievement.

The James Park permanent stage has reduced reliance on event volunteers who would otherwise need to organise, set up and dismantle a hired stage.

The stage was immediately put to use as the focal point for the entertainment at the Applefest in March, and then, two weeks later, the Neil Diamond Concert. It is available for community get-togethers such as the quarterly Gather Harcourt events. A temporary cover was erected over the stage during the March events. Enquiries as to the possibility of funding a permanent shade structure over the stage have been made via our Federal MP

The new stage is a welcome addition to the public amenity of Harcourt for locals and visitors.

George Milford



Harcourt Heritage Centre

The answer came in a dream.

The collection of Harcourt Heritage Centre includes five sewing machines, two of which carry the distinct black enamel and gold embellished Singer brand. Two are hand driven and one is an electric model from the 1950s.

But the most instructive sewing machine in our collection is a tiny, British-made, scale model toy sewing machine. This model, which dates from the 1940s, helps us understand the hidden workings of what, to many, is a mystery. The model shows two of the essential-but-hidden features of a sewing machine – the action of catching the thread under the press-foot and the mechanics of moving the cloth forward.



The back-story of the invention of these features takes us to the year 1845 in the USA. It involves a wild and scary incident in the life of a man who was struggling with an invention that simply baffled him.

Elias Howe was the inventor. He wanted to mechanise the task of sewing. From his knowledge of clockwork cogs and levers his invention was nearly complete. But how to stitch the cotton thread into the cloth? He could not see how a conventional needle could be set into the workings. One night in 1845 he had a scary dream, of a savage king in a strange country, a king surrounded by warriors. The dream was vivid and frightening. Wikipedia tells us, when Elias Howe awoke at 4 am, he could recall every detail of the dream. He was about to be speared ... as the warriors advanced he could see that their spears had a broad tip with a hole just above the sharpened blade. That's when he woke.

Excitedly, he realised that this was the answer he had been looking for. He

jumped out of bed, ran to his workshop and by 9 am had crafted a needle with the eye just above the sharply pointed tip. This enabled him to push the thread from the reel through the cloth to the point where the thread could be caught up by a shuttle using thread from the bobbin.

Elias Howe went on to patent a sewing machine featuring the lockstitch design. Elias Howe then organised a contest, challenging five of the fastest seamstresses to a sewing race. Using his machine, Elias could sew 250 stitches a minute. He won the race by producing five seams in the time that it took the fastest seamstress to produce one. Howe's seams were the neatest and strongest, proving the advantage of using the invention.

Howe's machines were first used in tailoring shops and factories. It was not until 1856 that Isaac Singer designed a smaller machine for use in the family home. The Singer sewing machine had many practical features: an eye needle, a shuttle, the lock stitch, continuous thread from spool and bobbin, tension control, a presser foot and a handwheel or treadle drive. Women readily took to the new machines, as clothes made by this machine did not fall apart. Up to that time a hand-sewn seam fell apart if a stitch was torn.

And so we consider the lives of the women of Harcourt in the pioneering era. An old man, son of a pioneer of the gold rush era, told me that his mother raised ten children. When this old man was a child, he said, there was no running water, no electricity, no refrigeration and no labour-saving devices. He admired his mother because she worked late into the night with needle, thread and scissors, sewing and mending her children's clothes. Long hours were spent in hand-sewing, hemming, tucking, basting and gathering. The basic stitches were running stitch, over stitch, back stitch, buttonhole stitch, chain stitch and cross stitch. If the clothes became torn it was common to pull a very long thread, requiring a lot of stitching to repair the tear. He said it was a great day when his mother



obtained a labour-saving, hand-operated sewing machine. This must have been in about 1882.

It seems that the first sewing machines used in the Harcourt valley were sold by a local, Michael Kimber, as agent for JP Carolin of Williamson Street and Queen Streets, Bendigo. (Michael Kimber was my great-great uncle.) Kimber's dealings with JP Carolin featured in the columns of the *Mount Alexander Mail* in a report of a court case heard in the County Court in 1887. The case sheds light on the marketing of sewing machines in and around Harcourt.

Michael Kimber of Faraday Road, (now 3281–3301 Harmony Way) sued JP Carolin in an attempt to recover commission and expenses earned from the sale of sewing machines (and some cottage organs) over the period from 1882 to 1886. It appears that Michael Kimber, as agent for JP Carolin, had gone from house to house demonstrating and selling sewing machines.

Kimber's case petered out when it was proved that informal changes to the Agency Agreement had been made. As an historian, the writer is grateful that Kimber brought the action, because it reveals when and by whom a technological advance had taken place in the lives of Harcourt's pioneering women. It is fascinating to think that the technological advance came about because of a nightmare that featured spears with a tiny hole in the shaft just above the sharp tip!

Harcourt Heritage Centre is open each Wednesday from 9 am to 3 pm. Next time you visit, take a moment to pick up the toy sewing machine, turn the handle and marvel at the mechanics, normally unseen, that pick up the stitch below the press foot. When you next tear your clothes as you catch them on the rose bush or the barbed wire fence, think on the invention that ensures that the stitches don't immediately fall apart.

George Milford

ANZAC Day in Harcourt Saturday April 25

Castlemaine Highland Pipe Band and HVPS
Children will be in attendance.

2.30 pm meet at Heritage Centre (ANA Hall)
for afternoon tea.

3.00 pm Proceed to Stanley Park war
memorial for ceremony and wreath laying.

Petrol Relief

From April 1 2026, local households and small businesses should feel some relief at the petrol pump.

The Federal Labor Government has halved the fuel excise on petrol and diesel for three months, reducing the cost of fuel by 26.3 cents a litre.

We expect this measure to reduce the price of a 65-litre tank of petrol by \$19.

We're making fuel cheaper because we understand that Australian households and small businesses are under serious pressure.

Local businesses and motorists have raised with me the impact the Iran war is having on petrol and diesel prices.

Whilst we cannot stop the war, we can reduce fuel excise and that's exactly what we're delivering.

*From a Press Release by
Lisa Chesters MP
Federal Member for Bendigo*

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

From the Ashes



Sunday 12 April at 2:30 pm
Harcourt Uniting Church
Buckley Street Harcourt

Songs and stories:

Keith McKenry, Fay White,
George Milford,
Kate Nannestad, Jake Fry

A singalong and afternoon tea
Donations for Harcourt Bushfire
Relief Fund

Enquiries to solway@mmnet.com.au
or 0410 799 297

FROM THE ASHES

*A concert in the Uniting Church in
Harcourt*

*Sunday 12 April – one week after
Easter*

In the next concert of our twice-a-year series there will be music and stories, featuring local performers Keith McKenry and George Milford, and from around the Shire, musicians Fay White and Jake Fry, story-teller Kate Nannestad, plus a singalong by the audience.

Singer-songwriter Fay White is well-known for her ability to create an instant choir, as well as choosing very meaningful songs. Jake impresses his listeners with his singing and guitar playing, much of it his favourite genre within the Blues. Kate is a published author who writes for young adults, appealing to many with ages above that category. Keith could be described as a folk poet and social historian. He is adept at mixing his original verse with social commentary and a bit of bush poetry. George is a great raconteur and historian. He tells marvellous stories of real events in the past of Harcourt and the Mount Alexander area.

Everyone is welcome to come to enjoy these offerings, with afternoon tea to follow. The concert is free, but if you wish to make a donation it will go to the Harcourt Bushfire Relief Fund.

**Come along to the Uniting Church in
Buckley Street, Harcourt, for a
pleasant Sunday afternoon on 12
April at 2.30 pm.**

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Barkers Creek



Harcourt CFA

After the Fire

Thank You, Thank You & again
Thank You

The Captain, Officers and Brigade Members wish to say "Thank You", first to our wonderful community for the donations, support and appreciation expressed to the Brigade after the fire of 9 January. Second, thanks for all the other donations and support from outside our brigade area from: CFA, other brigades, community groups, organisations, businesses, families and individuals. The support has been truly staggering and heart-warming.

Celebrating Applefest 2026

At Applefest, the CFA North West Region Community Education Group shared their resources with our brigade, including the Little Red Fire Truck for the kids to play on. This supplements

the brigade's squirty trucks which are always a hit with children of all ages!

The brigade was honoured to accept The Harcourt Heroes Award from the Harcourt Lions Club. A newer member Kate Wilson was delighted also to be presented with the Youth of the Year Award.

Applefest gave us a fruitful opportunity to talk to the public, provide general fire information, answer individual questions and have just a good old fashioned chat. We were very busy for the whole day!

The Bat Phone

As there were many re-ignitions, burning stumps, smokers, and other hazards within the fire footprint, a procedure was put in place to alleviate the standard three brigade turnout. Our fire call centre would call a dedicated phone (quickly labelled the Bat Phone) that was monitored by a nominated brigade member who would then directly call the rostered crew to attend and deal with the situation. During this period, the station fire siren was also deactivated.

After some initial teething problems where some calls were

sent out as pager messages, this worked very well, continuing for many weeks until the calls stopped coming in, and a decent, welcome rain fell. Everything is now set back to normal.

End of Fire Danger Period (FPD)

The fire danger period will end in District 2 which includes the City of Greater Bendigo and Mount Alexander Shire, at 1:00 am on Tuesday April 7.

While this means you can now conduct private burns, please be sure to register your activity and also take all precautions to ensure nothing goes wrong. While there is now green grass, and we have had some good rain, conducting a burn should always be done with care and with close attention to conditions.

Maintain Your Smoke Detectors!

The end of daylight saving means it is time to check your smoke detectors, give them a clean and change the battery in the older types.

Remember: only working smoke detectors can save lives.

Easter Torchlight Processions

Our brigade will again participate in the Maldon Easter Fair Torchlight Procession and has also accepted an invitation to the Bendigo Easter Fair Torchlight Procession. As these two events occur on the same night, one tanker, with crew, will attend each event.

Tyrone Rice
Brigade Community Safety Coordinator



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*Based on Roy Morgan's survey of 1000+ Australian farmers in June and July 2024. Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited, ABN 11 068 049 178 AFSL 237879. 1985262-2009517 OUT_45591092, 16/06/2025





Councillor Comment

Hi all,

It's encouraging to see the land green since the rain, and amazing seeing the trees respond to the conditions.

At a special meeting of Council we will hear budget submissions from the community. Some great ideas come up but while funds are limited, and costs keep rising, cash to fund them all is hard to find, unless we cut services. We have worked very hard at living within available funds, but let's face it, if we spend more than we earn it eventually catches up with us.

The Council is currently working to recruit our next Chief Executive Officer. The CEO can look like an easy job when things are going well, but something always comes up to make it demanding. Over the past ten years the Council has worked in a very positive way with the CEO and executive team. The directors are all appointed by the CEO. This says a lot about the leadership, the quality of the executive and our elected Councillors.

On the weekend I attended the music fund-raiser at James Park in Harcourt. Three bands played while I was there followed by the Neil Diamond tribute show. Congratulations to all involved with another great event. My own band, Mercury, has been playing regularly in the region, so I don't often see other bands. You can always learn by listening to others.

On the home front a big shout out to BlazeAid and all the volunteers working hard to clean up our community. If you have a spare day, volunteer with BlazeAid, they would be happy to see you.

Busy week here: fencing and feeding stock continues. Meanwhile it was my birthday yesterday, and a new grand-daughter arrived this morning. Congratulations to Grace and Phil.

Best regards, Tony
AG Cordy
0439 742 434



Harcourt District Lions Club Does your club need funds?

The Harcourt District Lions Club has been busy fundraising with the intention of helping the Victorian Miniature Railway erect a covering over the Community BBQ area. This is to enhance the experience for groups raising funds with sausage sizzles on Sundays when the trains are running.

To date a number of clubs have found this fundraiser very beneficial. A permanent structure over the barbecue is necessary, especially on a windy or inclement day, and would save time by eliminating the need to set up and take down the gazebo. It is hoped that the permanent structure will be soon finished, but funds still need to be raised to complete the work.

Presently there are a number of places available for clubs to put in a request for a Sunday BBQ at VMR. To make a booking contact the coordinator Diane, on 0456 309 020, with your club's details.

Special thanks go to the Livingstone Family at Harcourt Valley Vineyards for supplying 600 bottles of 2024 Cabernet Shiraz to be sold to raise funds for the victims of the fires on 9 January 2026. If you're quick, I believe there are some bottles still available at the Harcourt General Store.



Campbells Creek school



Harcourt Lions Clubs using the gazebos for fundraising.

The Lions Club is now meeting on the third Monday of each month at VMR. Our meeting consists of a shared meal commencing at 6.30 pm, with club members providing the meal, followed at 7.30 pm by a discussion to organise any coming events.

Loretta Rice

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THE CORE VOLUNTEERS

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Harcourt and Footy and Netball Celebrate Season Opening

Harcourt Football Netball Club officially kicked off the 2026 season on Sunday 22 March with a successful Season Launch. The day brought together junior and senior players, supporters, sponsors and members for a true family celebration of our Club community.

It was a fantastic occasion, with all players proudly presented with their jumpers and dresses. The event also provided an important opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who has supported HFNC in the wake of the devastating events earlier this year.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, the "Shout a Membership" initiative has already enabled more than 140 residents and supporting volunteers to become part of HFNC—further strengthening the connection between our club and the broader community.

The home and away season begins on 11 April, with Harcourt travelling to Talbot, followed by our first home game on 18 April. We warmly encourage all locals to come along and support our teams throughout the season.

It's shaping up to be an exciting year for HFNC. To stay up to date with fixtures, news and events, follow us on Facebook (Harcourt Football Netball Club) or Instagram (@harcourt_fnc).

Di Selwood

Thank you to Disaster Relief Australia and Samaritan's Purse

After a number of weeks working at numerous properties in the area, the clean-up crews from Disaster Relief Australia and Samaritan's Purse have completed their efforts in Harcourt.

Both organisations have deployed and coordinated large teams of volunteers, both local and from further afield.

To each and every individual involved, we say thank you for your efforts and care in Harcourt and surrounds.

disasterreliefaus.org/

samaritanpurse.org.au/

Robyn Miller



The crew from Samaritan's Purse did a wonderful job of cleaning up some of the damage on our property. We appreciated their kindly and thoughtful approach. Nick and I accepted their offer of joining them for an evening meal, at their 'camp' at the Olivet Christian College property, and enjoyed a happy social evening with them.

Harcourt Carpet Bowls Come Along!

The Harcourt Carpet Bowls Association is hoping to hold their yearly bowls competition once again, but this can only happen if we have enough interested community members to join us at the Harcourt District Leisure Centre of a Wednesday night.

Let's get this season off to a good start! All interested or prospective bowlers and past bowlers are invited:

► **When:** 15 April 2026

► **Time:** 7.30 pm

► **Where:** Harcourt District Leisure Centre, Bingham Road, Harcourt.

The competition is played from May to September on Wednesday nights from 7.30 pm to approximately 9.00 pm. There are mixed teams of four players from 8 years old to 100+ and everyone (including families) is most welcome. No previous experience is needed, as you learn the game as you play.

We have a yearly registration fee (\$5.00 adult and \$2.50, U17) and a nightly game fee (\$5.00 adult and \$2.50 U17 year old) to pay for hall hire and insurance.

**Anyone who is interested but cannot make the meeting can show their interest by contacting:
President John on 5474 2226 or
Secretary Loretta on 0411 193 661.**



Maree Edwards – MP

In recent months, Harcourt has faced one of its most testing periods—and met it with determination.

The January bushfire left a deep mark on this community, impacting homes, livelihoods and the landscape itself. In the immediate aftermath, I spent time at relief hubs and the recovery centre, listening to residents and business owners and witnessing both the scale of the challenge and the strength of the response.

Recovery is ongoing. It unfolds incrementally—decision by decision, day by day. Across Harcourt, progress is taking shape: land is being cleared. Businesses are reopening. Families are moving forward.

A significant package of support has been made available for those impacted. If you need assistance—financial, business or wellbeing—I encourage you to visit the VicEmergency website or contact my office. We can help connect you to the right support.

Alongside that recovery, Harcourt has done what it does best—come together.

Last month's Harcourt Applefest reflected that spirit. With more than 8,000 attendees, over 115 stalls and a full program of local entertainment, it was the festival's most successful year to date—and a strong vote of confidence in Harcourt's future, delivering a welcome boost to local businesses.

Across the region, that same spirit has been evident. Fundraisers throughout the shire—and beyond, including in Bendigo—have brought people together and raised vital funds. Individuals, businesses and community groups alike have stepped forward.

Community life is returning. The Castlemaine State Festival has brought renewed energy and visitors to the region, reinforcing the role of arts and events in both recovery and local economic activity.

My focus remains clear: to ensure Harcourt and the wider region have the support and investment needed not only to recover, but to continue to grow and thrive.

I want to acknowledge those who have led from the front, and those working quietly behind the scenes to support Harcourt's recovery. To everyone who has contributed—on the front line, behind the scenes, or simply by checking in on a neighbour—thank you.

That kindness and compassion is what sustains a community long after the immediate crisis has passed.

We are also continuing to invest in Harcourt's future. Through the Victorian Government's Tiny Towns Fund, \$50,000 has supported upgrades to James Park, a space many enjoyed during Applefest.

Cost-of-living support remains a priority. Initiatives such as free public transport for under

18s, free weekend travel for seniors, people with disability and carers, the Power Saving Bonus, Smile Squad dental care, the Affordable School Uniform program, and Active Kids vouchers are helping ease pressure on household budgets.

Finally, I encourage you to take a moment to recognise those who give their time so generously—not only during fire response, but in the everyday work that keeps community life moving.

The Victorian Volunteering Awards offer one way to do just that. Because while communities may be tested in emergencies, they endure because of those who keep showing up—quietly, consistently, without expectation.

If you know someone who embodies that spirit, I encourage you to put their name forward. Nominations close on 27 May. For more information, visit: volunteeringvictoria.org.au.

As Easter approaches, it offers a moment to pause—a time for renewal, for quiet hope, and for looking ahead with care for one another. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and peaceful Easter.

And as always, my office is here to assist with any state government matter. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely

*The Hon. Maree Edwards MP
Member for Bendigo West
Speaker – Legislative Assembly*



Catch all the latest news for your local Landcare Group here:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1LqeTeNQbJ/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

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Pensioners receive a boost from Federal Labor Government

Every person receiving the age pension will receive a boost in their payments when indexation takes effect from 20 March 2026.

Aged pensioners, disability support pensioners and carers will receive about \$22.20 extra in their fortnightly payments which will help them make ends meet.

The boost to payments will make annual pensions \$5545 better off since Federal Labor formed Government after the 2022 Federal Election.

People receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance, JobSeeker, ABSTUDY (aged 22 and over), and Parenting Payment will also see an increase to their payment.

These increases are putting more money into the hip pockets of local pensioners who rely on the social security system for support, and that's a good thing.

Increasing rent assistance, freezing the cost of PBS prescriptions and support through home care packages is also how our Government is making sure all older Australians live their twilight years in dignity.

The complete list of payments to increase as of 20 March 2026 can be found on the Department of Social Services website.

If you are experiencing challenges with navigating Service Australia, you can also contact my office on 5443 9055 or Lisa.Chesters.Mp@aph.gov.au

*Lisa Chesters MP, Federal Member for Bendigo
(From a Media Release.)*



© Diana Domonkos

Harcourt's fences arise from the fires

The response to help families and businesses directly affected by the Harcourt fires has been overwhelming. But there is a long road ahead for the farming community; even if their own houses were saved, many have lost livestock or their feed for months to come. Moreover, there are kilometres of damaged fences all around Harcourt that need urgent repairs or replacement on fire affected properties.

This is where BlazeAid comes in. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that steps in to help rural families recover after natural disasters, such as fires, cyclones, droughts, and floods. Its mission statement says it all: "BlazeAid's purpose is to relieve the poverty, suffering, distress, misfortune, destitution or helplessness experienced by survivors of bushfires and other natural disasters through the help of volunteers." BlazeAid grew out of a Victorian farmer's call for help after the Black Saturday Bushfires, and it now operates in all states and is supported by a wealth of corporate sponsorships.

There are now ten camps of volunteers operating in Victoria alone. The Harcourt camp is run from the former Blue Light Foundation camp at Derby Hill (16 Phoenix Street, Maldon), and is very well coordinated by Lyn and Stan Rasmussen, assisted by many helpers behind the scenes. Lyn and Stan have a wealth of BlazeAid experience from first working at the fencelines and later running camps like this one.

The camp offers free accommodation and excellent meals to sustain volunteers working on the fencelines. Volunteers come from all over Victoria and far beyond, including young people on Working Holiday Visa from Germany, Chile, Argentina, and Thailand, learning new skills. Fencing teams include experienced fencers but also volunteers of all ages and from all walks of life, so no prior experience is necessary. Each team has their own trailer with all the tools needed to remove old fences and put up new ones. On-site training as well as all the safety and protective gear is provided.

It is not hard or difficult work, but the fire grounds are dirty, the landscape is ravaged, and will recover, and many farmers are still traumatised from their loss. The Harcourt camp has a strong emphasis on support and respect, and all volunteers work with compassion, great camaraderie, and good humour for a very worthy cause.

While many hands make light work, it will take months to restore the fences around Harcourt. So far, there are seventy affected properties on the books, and the number is still growing. There are now nearly 140 reg-

istered volunteers; not all are here at any one time, but the camp sends about 30-40 volunteers out to the firegrounds every day, six days a week. Coming back after a long day, there is a hot shower and scrumptious dinner awaiting the volunteers. It is a happy and joyful camp.

So, if you have seen the devastation first hand and are encouraged to give our farmers and community a helping hand, any time you can give would be fantastic. A day, a week or even more. You just need to dress sensibly and come to the BlazeAid office at the Phoenix Street camp in Maldon around 7 am to complete the necessary registration forms for insurance before the daily allocation of teams and the Muster Call at 7.30. You will be most welcome and you'll come home with new skills and a real sense of achievement.

Mikael Hirsch





Chatting with Harcourt CWA

Hello again, everyone. Bev Orgill here with Harcourt CWA news.

The Harcourt branch of the CWA has experienced a month of both sadness and community celebration, as we balance the loss of one of our cherished members with the success of our local festivities.

Vale: Carmel Berry

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of long-time member Carmel Berry. Carmel was a loyal member of our branch, serving as our secretary and contributing her time and talents across various other roles over many years. A number of our members attended her funeral to honour her memory and her significant legacy of service. Carmel's presence will be missed by all who had the pleasure of working alongside her.



Vale: Carmel Berry.

Harcourt Applefest Success

On a celebratory note, this year the Harcourt Applefest proved to be a resounding success. We were heartened by the overwhelming support from the local community, which saw our stall remain a hive of activity



Jill and Pauline loading up the tables with goodies for sale



throughout the day. Our members outdid themselves this year with all the goodies they made.

The hundreds of items on sale were supplemented by dozens of jars of jams and relishes donated to us by the generous Chewton Phoenix CWA branch ladies and the Queen of Applefest, Queen Jeanette, even had time to make and donate dozens of home made Plum Sauce for us to sell as well.

Our home-baked treats were in high demand, selling almost as soon as they were placed on the table and we are pleased to report that our entire range of jams, pickles, relishes, and cordials was completely sold out by the conclusion of the event.



Everybody loves Bluey

Jill's handknitted Blueys all found good homes and many of the home-made cushions, teddies, bath and face washer sets were snapped up as soon as they hit the table! It was quite clear that people had come to Harcourt, after the recent fires, to support local groups and businesses and they certainly did. All stall holders reported having had a very successful day.

Raffle Results

Our raffle, featuring five substantial hampers of gourmet goodies and other yummy food items and a huge boiled fruit cake, was exceptionally well-received. We extend our sincere thanks to Cheryl Kennedy from the Chewton



Above: George and Alison draw the winning raffle tickets. Below: Bev O selling raffle tickets.



Phoenix CWA for her generous donation of the prize-winning cake. Bev O and Judi sold hundreds of tickets. It was hard work but they had lots of fun.

Congratulations to our raffle winners:

The Hampers of Goodies went to: -

- ▶ 1st Prize: Sally (Sedgewick)
- ▶ 2nd Prize: Maree (Bendigo)
- ▶ 3rd Prize: Denise (Strathfieldsaye)
- ▶ 4th Prize: Julie (Bendigo East)
- ▶ 5th Prize: Kat (Harcourt) and
- ▶ 6th Prize (The Cake): Luke (Glenroy)

Upcoming Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday afternoon, April 2nd at 1.30pm at the Harcourt Leisure Centre.** Please feel free to pop along. You will be made very welcome. We are a friendly bunch!

Bev Orgill for Harcourt CWA



Harcourt Uniting Church

Thanks to the Furies

As we begin the process of rebuilding our town, both physically and emotionally, after the Harcourt fires, this prayer offers thanks to the many volunteer fire brigade members from as far as Bass in the south (near Phillip Island) to Merbein in the north and all brigades in between – while not forgetting our own amazing Harcourt Fire Brigade members. There were also fire brigade members from the Northern Territory assisting in the control room in Epsom.

The original prayer, written by Pam Scott of the Kerang Uniting Church, has been modified to give thanks for our Harcourt Fire Brigade members – with Pam’s permission.

Jesus said: “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. The fishermen dropped their nets and followed him.” Matthew 4:19

The fire siren and the pagers sound, the volunteers drop whatever they’re doing, climb into their fire gear and head to the Harcourt Fire Station ready to serve their community as volunteers. And we are thankful.

Harcourt’s brigade was formed in 1944. From that time on we have been blessed to have had men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting our homes, properties, farms, crops and lives. And we are thankful.

We remember the Ladies Auxiliary of the past. Thoughts go back to the ladies who would head to the Fire Station to make sandwiches and a cuppa, and then drive out to the fire with the esky of food and multiple pots of tea for the hungry firefighters. And the fire firefighters were thankful.

Along with many hours of training and fighting fires, we remember the State Fire Demos where our running teams would compete for trophies – using some of their firefighting skills – competing against other Brigades. What excitement when the Harcourt team won the Stationary Tanker at Ararat in 1982. Change comes and now women work side by side with men on the fire ground. And we give thanks.

We give thanks to the members who have taken the fire truck to the school and preschool to educate the children on fire safety. Many young children say, “When I grow up, I want to be a fireman,” and many have become just that. And we are thankful.

We say thank you to all members whose keen observations may have

saved someone’s haystack, livestock or crop, but most importantly the many homes that have been saved in the recent Harcourt fire. We thank them for their many hours dedicated to training in skills necessary in the use of equipment whilst keeping themselves safe. We pray especially for those who lost their homes (some who were out on the fire trucks fighting the fires) but give thanks that no lives were lost in our Harcourt fire. And we are thankful.

Times continue to change. Modern technology, equipment and trucks play an important part in the way brigades function these days. We remember severe fires of years past that scarred the land and took the lives of many. We remember them in silence.

We give thanks that advice warnings to leave were acted on, which meant no lives were lost in the recent fire. And we are very thankful.

We thank employers who have given our furies the freedom to leave their place of employment to attend a fire. Without their support, protecting our community would be so much more difficult. We are grateful and we say thank you.

To the families left at home when the pagers sound—they are often the forgotten ones who are left to finish whatever was being done, to organise the family and to worry – especially when there are fires in other regions. Not knowing exactly where their loved ones have gone can be very stressful. For those families who must stay strong—we give thanks.

Help us never to take these special people for granted. May we be ever mindful of the sacrifice and service freely given in protecting our town, our district and our fellow Australians.

And we say thank you.
Amen.

Harcourt 2026

It’s after the Equinox.
The weather has cooled,
Rains have come,
Lifting a weight from the shoulders and
minds of many.

Some fire ravaged homes,
Have been cleared,
Years of memories and family history
swept away.

Others wait their turn,
Their twisted corrugated iron and stone
chimneys,
Monuments to what once was.

While those damaged,
Abide their time until repairs and safety
checks,
Allow owners to return.

Yet amidst these charred surroundings,
Homes and buildings stand unharmed,
The randomness of the carnage in stark
view.

And apples trees,
Once netted for a promising harvest,
Are now veiled in loss.

People ache in disbelief,
Pain, like blood, flowing through veins.
Relieved in part by the kindness of
others.

In mourning throughout the town,
Blackened trees stand,
Wearing an early winter foliage.

But within some,
The sap still flows,
Spouting tufts of green.

Nature and the community in its
extremes

*Jennifer (McKenry) Dichiera
March 2026*

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HARCOURT APPLEFEST 2026

From the Applefest Chairman

Congratulations to our wonderful and very hard-working committee, partner organisations, volunteers and helpers. Your efforts made a great Applefest. It was so successful! The committee is grateful to many people. We have listed below all the organisations and community groups that have helped this years Applefest be so successful. There are numerous individuals within each of those groups, far too many to thank individually.

In the aftermath of the bushfire, it was suggested that it would be 'a tough gig' to stage an Applefest this year. The community rose to the challenge. The March 7 Applefest was a whole-of-community event. It was definitely 'bigger and better', with 122 stalls, a successful Art Show and Sale, children's entertainment, competitions, food and beverages, two stages with non-stop performances (well, almost non-stop), a showcase for local producers and an event that occupied the entire centre of town.

Credit is due to the following people and groups (in alphabetical order)

- ▶ Ann Allenby
- ▶ Wendy Barron
- ▶ Bendigo Car Club
- ▶ Brendan Blake and Josh at Maxi IGA
- ▶ Bunnings
- ▶ Ann-Maree Burgess
- ▶ Campbells Creek Primary School
- ▶ Deb and Leigh Carnt
- ▶ Castlemaine Historic Vehicle Club
- ▶ Church of Christ, Castlemaine
- ▶ Diana Cork
- ▶ George Milford
- ▶ Harcourt CFA
- ▶ CWA Harcourt branch
- ▶ Rosie and Neil Critchley
- ▶ Alison Curtis
- ▶ Kerrie Douglas
- ▶ The Hon Maree Edwards
- ▶ Elliott Midland News
- ▶ Katie Finlay
- ▶ Kay Francis
- ▶ Simon Frost and The Little Red Apple
- ▶ Harcourt Football Netball Club
- ▶ Harcourt Progress Association
- ▶ Harcourt Valley Primary School
- ▶ Ruth Hay, Doug Hay
- ▶ Michael Henry
- ▶ Sandra Knox
- ▶ Diane Lederman
- ▶ Joan Lienhop
- ▶ Lions District 201, Harcourt Carisbrook, Castlemaine.
- ▶ Dr Chris McAuliffe
- ▶ Gary and Callum McClure
- ▶ Ann Marston
- ▶ Mark Mitchell
- ▶ Wayne Mitchell
- ▶ Paul Mizzi
- ▶ Mount Alexander Shire Council
- ▶ Phil Musat
- ▶ Linda Newton
- ▶ Anne-Marie Primmer
- ▶ Fiona and David Redding
- ▶ Redlands Orchard
- ▶ Jill Reynolds
- ▶ Rotary Club of Castlemaine
- ▶ Mike Rule
- ▶ Bernie Schultz
- ▶ Bonnie and Remy Sowman
- ▶ Taradale Mineral Springs Festival Committee
- ▶ Jeanette and John Teague
- ▶ Thompsons Foundry Band
- ▶ Goldfields Ukestra
- ▶ Victorian Miniature Railway
- ▶ Visit Victoria
- ▶ Trevor Wilkinson
- ▶ Woolworths

With sincere thanks ...

Soon after the January 9 catastrophic fires, the Hon Maree Edwards MP suggested that the March 2026 Applefest should be 'bigger and better' to show the region that Harcourt is still in business, despite the tragedy of the bushfire.

At the same meeting, Ms Edwards suggested that \$5 from every adult entry fee be donated to the local CFA brigades. The Applefest committee was enthusiastic about this suggestion and soon found that a permit from CFA Chief Financial Officer was needed before we could conduct fundraising on behalf of the Country Fire Authority. The permit was duly obtained.

On Applefest Saturday, the numbers who attended the Applefest far exceeded the committee's expectations. In fact, the crowd was estimated at 8,000, more than double that of the preceding year. Not everyone paid at the gate – children, Applefest volunteers, performers and first responders were given free entry. Only the adults passing through the four entries were invited to pay an entry fee.

Figures tabled at the Applefest committee meeting on March 23 revealed that \$22,000 had been raised for the CFA through the gate takings. A further \$960 had also been donated via the Applefest Committee, making a total of \$22,960 to be distributed to the Harcourt, Sutton Grange and Walmer brigades.

In this practical way, the community has clearly made known its deep and sincere gratitude, and its admiration, for our heroic volunteer firefighters.



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Applefest Art Show 2026

AWARDS

Best in Show (Chairman's Award)

Artist: Ben Winspear.

Title: "Old woodshed, Sutton Grange"

Highly Commended Oil/Acrylic

Artist: Janice Nokes

Title: "Lamb's Ear"

Best Oil/Acrylic (Cameron Lang Memorial Award)

Artist: Rinke Slotegraaf

Title: "Bright, 25/02/2024"

Highly commended Watercolour

Artist: Erica Sayers Title: "Tree Trio"

Best Watercolour (Shirley Stewart Memorial Award)

Artist: Bronwyn Tracey Title: "The work goes on (in Rosie's garden)"

Highly Commended Other Medium

Artist: Leah Mow-Yoffee

Title: "Golden Wattle"

Best Other Medium

Artist: Linda Newton

Title: "Trio Magpies"

Highly Commended Local Subject

Artist: Chris Moule Title: "Sutton Grange Bridge & Environs"

Best Local Subject

Artist: Kate Smith Title: "My Apples"

STUDENT AWARDS

Highly Commended Junior 12 years & under

Artist: Sienna Bish Title: "Poppies"

Best Junior 12 years & under

Artist: Lucy Barnett Title: "Hazel"

Highly Commended Senior 13 to 18 years

Artist: Beth Carlton

Title: "Lines of Logic"

Best Senior 13 to 18 years

Artist: Holly White

Title: "Vase of Flowers"

Art Show judge, Dr Chris McAuliffe, was very encouraging in his comments on the excellent standard of the entries in this year's Applefest Art Show and Sale.

As can be seen from the list of awards, the art works submitted ranged over many subjects and were painted in many media. Perhaps the most unusual was an Eco-Print "Golden Wattle" by Leah Mow-Yoffee.

The artists who practised acrylic pouring showed great courage in their use of the paint. In fairness, it must be stated that all the displayed works involved careful use of materials. It was clear that some artists have become very proficient.

The 2026 Art Show attracted highly-skilled works submitted by regional artists, enhancing the reputation of one of the region's earliest art shows.

The Art Show is the annual fundraiser for Harcourt Heritage, with all profits helping to meet the ongoing costs of operating a small museum. Harcourt Heritage committee thanks all helpers and artists who supported the Art Show.

George Milford



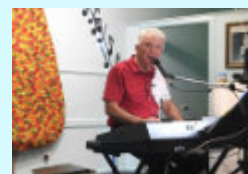
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Castlemaine Social Group Raises \$4,933 for Harcourt Bushfire Appeal

The Alluvians, a Castlemaine-based social group for gay, bi and trans men, has raised \$4,933 for the Harcourt 2026 Bushfire Appeal, presenting the funds to Ivan Gilbert, President of the Harcourt Progress Association.

The fundraiser was held on Sunday 22 February at Harcourt Valley Vineyard, where around 70 members and friends gathered for beverage tastings, bingo and local trivia in support of bushfire recovery efforts.

The afternoon began with wine, ginger beer, limoncello and mangocello tastings by gold coin donation before moving into bingo, music bingo and a Harcourt-themed trivia quiz.

Just before proceedings commenced, organisers received an unexpected call from two people claiming to be royalty – which proved entirely accurate.

Each December, the Harcourt Apple Fest crowns a King and Queen named after heritage apple varieties. This year's title holders – King Jonathan and Lady William, represented by Jeanette Teague and John Teague – arrived in full regalia to promote the upcoming Apple Festival, which will also support bushfire recovery and bring valuable tourism to the region.

The afternoon then encountered what all volunteer groups fear: a microphone failure mid-call. With no immediate technical fix available – a familiar challenge when hosting community events – a committee member stepped in, projecting clearly across the room and keeping the games moving with good humour. The very rural “make it work” solution became one of the day's highlights.

Prizes were handmade and kept secret until revealed. These included rainbow “Thinking Cap” hats, gold-painted EP records for music trivia winners, and custom tote bags featuring pride-coloured bingo balls. Each reveal drew enthusiastic applause.



Welcoming Harcourt Applefest Queen and King: - L to R: Ian Gould (Alluvians Committee); Ivan Gilbert (HPA); Applefest's Lady William, Jeanette Teague; Matthew Parsons (Alluvians Committee) Applefest's King Jonathon, John Teague and Steve Bell (Alluvians Bingo and Trivia Master)



Presentation of fundraising cheque: L to R: Ivan Gilbert (HPA); Russell Vickery (Alluvians Committee) and Matthew Parsons (Alluvians Committee)

The Alluvians traces its history to the 1980s, when it operated as a confidential phone network supporting rural gay men seeking a local community. Today, the group is recognised as one of Australia's longest-running rural-based LGBTIQ+ organisations.

“Rural communities pride themselves on looking after each other,” a spokesperson for the Alluvians said. “We're proud to show that this spirit of care applies to everyone – no matter their gender or sexuality – and that when someone needs help, as in the tragic Harcourt bushfire, we, their neighbours will be there.”

Support also came from Defence Bank, which contributed \$500 and supplied the “giant cheque” for presentation photos. Pride Foundation Australia (PFA), Australia's first national LGBTIQ+ philanthropic fund, donated \$500.

PFA advances equity for LGBTIQ+ communities and individuals in Australia most disadvantaged by discrimination and structural inequalities. GLOBE Melbourne donated \$500 and connects LGBTIQ+ people professionally and socially, to create opportunities, recognise contribution, and support success in LGBTIQ+ communities. “GLOBE is very proud to be assisting with the recovery of bushfire affected communities, and has a presence in Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Campaspe and Mount Alexander shires through its association with Thorne Harbour Country and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals,” a representative commented.

Further information about The Alluvians can be found at:
pridecentre.org.au/resources/the-alluvians-castlemaine/

Harcourt Valley Community House

Room Hire

Our multipurpose room for meetings, workshops, etc, offers heating, cooling and wi fi. It can accommodate up to 40 people seated in rows, or about 30 seated around tables. There is a fully equipped kitchen.

Hire rates are \$12/hour (community or not-for-profit organisations) or \$20/hour for business or private use. Savings are available on half or full day rates. Call or email us to book a tour of the facility or to discuss your needs.

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A public access computer is available at HVCH for your email access or research. It's free during drop-in hours: Wednesdays 12 noon to 3 pm. A donation for access is welcome.

Harcourt Valley Community House



Big News: HVCH is offering Harcourt Community Pantry and Community Lunches from Friday April 10.

We are pleased to announce that, after the Recovery Centre is wound down on April 1, the Harcourt Valley Community House at 23 Station Street Harcourt will continue to offer community lunches, and access to the Harcourt Community Pantry.

Community Pantry

The Pantry will be available from 10 am–3 pm each Friday. Please come along for grocery items any time during that period. Discreet access will be available via the platform of the old station. Otherwise, please come along for community lunch and pick up grocery items before you leave.

Community Lunch

Lunch will be offered from 12 noon to 1.30 pm each Friday from April 10. We appreciate a small voluntary donation of \$5 to support ongoing community lunches.

What's happening at HVCH?

Press Play Cafe Playgroup is running each Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon except during school holidays. Bring your pre-schooler along to playtime and meet other parents/carers. BYO your own child's snacks please. Next session will be on Wednesday 22 April.

Drop in, have a cuppa and a chat on Wednesday afternoons
12 noon–3 pm.

Community Library is up and running - take a book, bring a book, it's free. Have a cuppa while browsing the books in our community lounge room. Access

the library anytime the Community House is open for other activities like Playgroup, Drop-in or Fridays at Community Lunch/Pantry.

Postcard Campaign

Thank you to everyone who signed a "Keep Our Doors Open" postcard last year between October and December.

The purpose of the postcards was to highlight the desperate need for increased support for the Neighbourhood House sector across Victoria. Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP) funding no longer covers basic costs of operations. Half of all NHs (400+ across the state) have operated in deficit for the past two years! Harcourt Community House is an unfunded CH. We need NHCP funds for a manager for 25 hours a week, especially now, as HVCH is a significant source of support in the ongoing recovery of our community.

We collected a remarkable number of postcards – 415 to be exact. These included 171 answers to the question "Why I love my Neighbourhood House". On December 11 we presented them to the Hon. Maree Edwards MP who was so impressed that she immediately wrote to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, the Hon. Ros Spence MP urging her to provide the recurrent NHCP funding. Ms Edwards wrote again since the fire on January 9. We are awaiting the outcome of these requests made on our behalf.

10c Cans and Bottles

A big thank you is extended to the whole community for supporting this vital fundraiser at HVCH. As we are an unfunded Community House your donations of cans and bottles have

Contact the Harcourt Valley Community House

Visit us: 23 Station Street Harcourt Vic 3453 (Wednesdays during school terms, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm)

Email: harcourtvalleych@gmail.com

Phone: 4417 8742 (Please leave a message as this phone is monitored regularly)

Phone Jeanette: 0438 579 987



helped keep the lights on in the past year. A couple of reminders: please do not crush cans or plastic bottles and please do not include wine bottles or mini yoghurt bottles as they are not eligible for refunds.

Fun facts:

- ▶ 25,990 cans/bottles collected since 12th Sept 2024 (19 months) = \$2,599.00
- ▶ Average monthly income in that time = \$139.43
- ▶ 17,936 collected in the year 21 March 2025 - 20 March 2026 = \$1,793.60
- ▶ Our electricity bills in that time = \$1,501.15 (\$292.45 surplus paid for one water bill)!

Grateful thanks go also to our community partners who have donated cans and bottles during the period, including the Coolstore Cafe, Harcourt Produce & General Store, Gather Harcourt (2 events), Le Coq Door and the Victorian Miniature Railway (VMR).

That's all HVCH news for now; we hope to see you soon at the Harcourt Valley Community House, 23 Station St, Harcourt.

*Cheers, Jeanette
(Voluntary Manager HVCH).*

YOGA PLEASE

After a wonderful term one, **Symmetry Yoga** will continue at the Harcourt Valley Community House in term two in the week starting 20 April. It has been great welcoming back regular faces and meeting lots of new students.

We now have a Men's class and continue with Mat, Restorative and Chair yoga. Classes have been full, so booking early is recommended.

Book online:
www.symmetrylife.com.au
or phone: 0433 823 378.

Timetable:

Tuesday
6.30 pm – Men's Yoga

Wednesday,
7.15 am & 6.00 pm – Flow Yoga
8.30 am – Chair Yoga
7.15 pm – Relax Yoga
Sarah Allen



Harcourt Bowling Club

The Harcourt Bowling Club has been very active since the February edition of The Core. We have been delighted to welcome new faces through our doors, and indeed onto the green.

The Friday meals provided by Kayla and Ebony each fortnight have provided an affordable dining option for singles and families alike. The menu for each date will be available at the Club along with the list for names and numbers. All names must be in by the Wednesday prior to the meal date. We hope this can continue, albeit monthly in the cooler weather.

A successful **Men's Annual Fours Tournament** was held on Sunday 8 February; the equally successful

Ladies' Annual Fours Tournament was held on Thursday 19 February.

On Sunday February 22, the **Kidman Mixed Fours Tournament** was won by Brett Jenkinson, Libby Harris, Rod Harris and Wendy Chaplin. Runners up were Stephanie Holt, Wendy Kays, Mark Swain and John Kays.

On Monday February 16, the **ABC Radio Drive** program was broadcast at the Bowling Club.

Many people were interviewed: Buzz Nunn, the CFA Commander, Michael Henry, Andrew Mierisch from VMR, Remy from the Coolstore Cafe, the Mayor, Ruth Hay from Applefest and many more. There was a roving reporter who also interviewed our bar manager Barry, Wayne Walsh at the end of his pairs game (which they won), Fairlie Harman and Diane Marsh and others from the community. We had great representation from bowls members and the community attending; and the Bowls Club got plenty of advertising throughout the program. Well done Harcourt.

Sponsors Night March 3

Six teams competed for the coveted Chappies Challenge trophy on Tuesday evening of last week in ideal bowling weather.



Six teams competed for the Chappies Challenge Trophy

Representing the Club Sponsors – Toyota/Mitsubishi, K&J Bagley Paints, Mount Alexander Funerals, Butterfly Audiology, BuildPro and Little Red Apple – the teams took on the challenge with enthusiasm and much laughter.

President Gary Maddern thanked the sponsors for their contribution to the ongoing viability of the Club. He then presented the trophy to winners, Mount Alexander Funerals. The encouragement award went to K&J Bagley Paints.

Club Championships

Men's Nominated Pairs Championship

The Final of the Men's Nomination Pairs was held on Tuesday March 10, when Gary Maddern and Steve Douglas played off against John Kays and Carl Roberts.

As expected, it was a keenly contested game with Gary and Steve holding a slim lead until the last two ends. Some very fine bowling by both John and Carl ensured that they got over the line to take out the Championship. Congratulations and well done to all.

Men's Gough Drawn Pairs

The Men's Drawn Pairs was held on Thursday evening March 12. This was another keenly contested Championship game. After finishing under lights, the men were treated to a delicious meal served by the lady bowlers, as is the tradition for this event. The winners on the night were Les Harding and Alan Taylor with runners up Barry Marsh and Ray Dejong (see photo above).



Ladies' Drawn Pairs

The Ladies' Drawn Pairs was held on the evening of Thursday March 19 in



beautiful autumnal weather. After the 3 games, results were so close it had to go to a count back on percentage. Winners on the night were Carrol Frost and Fran Corstorphan with runners up Vinka Maltby and Jean Pogue. As is the tradition for these events, the ladies were treated to a delicious lamb roast dinner cooked and served by the male bowlers. An enjoyable night was had by all. (see attached photos).

Grant Pairs Tournament

On Saturday March 14, the Grant Mixed Pairs tournament was held in memory of Freda and Charlie Grant, foundation members of the Club. This popular tournament sponsored by John and Kaye Grant had to be played in split rounds to accommodate the numbers registered. Teams played 3 games of 8 ends with 3 bowls each.

There were only two 3 game winners on the day. With just 2 points in front the winners on the day were Ian McMillan and Jean Pogue (see photo below). Runners up were Steve Douglas and Chris Anderson. The day ended with the usual sumptuous afternoon tea.



Farewell to Moira Straw

Popular member of the Harcourt Bowling Club for many years, Moira Straw, was given a warm send on March 14 as she moves north to be closer to family. Moira and her late husband Ralph had a long association with Harcourt, both being significant contributors to the growth of the



district and to the success of the Bowling Club over many years. Moira is held in high esteem by her many friends at the Club and will be greatly missed. (See attached group photo)

Ladies' Championship Pairs Final

The Harcourt Ladies Pairs Final between Mary-Anne Doyle and Fran Corstorphan versus Kathy Harding and Diane Marsh was to be held at the end of March. Results will be published in the next edition of *The Core*.

What's on in April/May

- ▶ **Final of the Ladies' & Men's 100 Up** (date to be confirmed)
- ▶ **Rice Memorial Triples Tournament** Will be held on Saturday April 18
- ▶ **End of Season Presentation Dinner** Will be held following the Rice Triples on 18 April
- ▶ **Annual General Meeting** Will be held on /Sunday 18 May at 11.00am

Firewood collection opened from Wednesday, 1 April

The firewood collection season, which was delayed for a month in the Murray Goldfields District, has now opened. Firewood can be collected for personal use in this district, which includes the Mount Alexander Shire area.

Residents can collect free firewood from 1 April until 30 June 2025, although individual sites may close earlier if supplies run out. Collection is limited to up to two cubic metres per person per day and a maximum of 16 cubic metres per household per financial year. Area restrictions apply to the Gunbower State Forest.

For full information and updates, and maps of collection areas, see: www.ffm.vic.gov.au/firewood

Find out more about collecting firewood by calling 136 186. Suspected illegal firewood collection can be reported to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

From a Press Release: Bushfire Forest Services



Weather & Water

Coliban considers water restrictions

Given that the total rainfall for 2025 as measured at our property in Reservoir Road was 473.5 mm, which was the lowest since 2019, I am not surprised that Coliban Water has issued a warning about probable water restrictions, and a plea to follow water-saving rules, especially given the region's population increase.

We received good rainfall in March (113 mm), which was a huge relief after the trauma of the fire on January 9 and the hot dry summer, but read on, we need more rain in autumn and winter to stave off water restrictions from July this year.

The combined water storages of the Coliban system were at 55% as at 5 April, down from 57% as at 12 March. Good falls of rain in March were not enough to make a difference to the intake of water at the storages.

Coliban Water Managing Director, Damian Wells, said, "The lack of ground moisture in the region's catchments meant that the rain soaked into the ground and started to fill farm dams, but did not deliver enough run-off to shift storage levels in a meaningful way."

He continued, "Dry conditions have placed continued pressure on the water supply across our whole region, compounded by reduced inflows after

more than two years of below average rainfall, a hot summer that increased demand to record levels, and longer-term changes to climate patterns," he said.

"We are currently preparing the community for water restrictions if our position does not improve over winter and spring."

Water restrictions were last in force in the Coliban Water region in 2011.

Mr Wells added that Coliban Water's urban customers are also being urged to follow the state's Permanent Water Saving Rules and act now to conserve water.

"The 2026/27 rural season, which opens for our rural customers in July, is likely to open with a reduced allocation."

Details of Victoria's Permanent Water Saving Rules and other strategies to help people be more water conscious are set out on the Coliban Water website. <https://coliban.com.au/permanent-water-saving-rules-0>

*Some information taken from a Press Release from Coliban Water.
Robyn Miller*

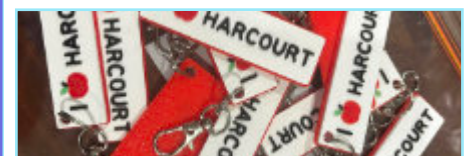


Gestures

The district community has generated extraordinary gestures of support in the bushfire recovery. Innumerable artists and craftspeople, producers and distributors have come up with innovative, creative and generous ways to raise money and awareness, as well as to promote goodwill and belonging.

These are a few of those gestures. We would love to hear of more for the next *Core*, please send brief descriptions to news@harcourt.vic.au

- ▶ Ingrid Button created felt apples: Red for locals, yellow for people who live outside the Harcourt community but who support us.
- ▶ Stef Houston produces key rings, magnets, bag tags with Harcourt apple insignia and themes.
- ▶ Bonnie Mannix produces apple earrings and badges
- ▶ Harcourt Valley Winery has bottled special Harcourt Valley Cabernet Shiraz, available from the General Produce Store and other regional outlets.





Lymphoedema Clinic

Lymphoedema is a condition where fluid builds up in body tissues, causing swelling, most often in the arms or legs. Early recognition and good management help people maintain mobility and comfort. Common signs include swelling, heaviness, tightness, reduced movement and recurring infections.

Dhelkaya Health's Lymphoedema Clinic provides specialised assessment, education and support for anyone at risk of, or living with, lymphoedema. We offer a two-year monitoring program for people recovering from breast surgery to help reduce the chance of developing the condition. For those with leg swelling, we guide you through the right care options and teach practical strategies to manage symptoms.

Our team is here to help. Send referrals to intake@castlemainehealth.org.au or you can self-refer on 5471 3575.

Information sessions

My Aged Care & Support at Home

Dhelkaya Health is running a series of information sessions to help locals better understand the My Aged Care process and the supports available through the Support at Home service (formerly Home Care Packages). The Newstead Rural Transaction Centre and the Maldon Men's Shed are kindly hosting the sessions in their community spaces. Our Community Health Nurse and our Support at Home Care Partner will lead the free sessions, covering key topics to help people navigate aged care services with confidence.

- **Newstead Rural Transaction Centre:**
Thurs 26 March, 11:00 am
- **Maldon Men's Shed:**
Wed 15 April, 11:00 am

For further information please call 5479 1000 or email Melodie at mcameron@castlemainehealth.org.au

Get Active

Chewton historic walk

Glenn Braybrook, Marion Landy and Elaine Appleton will lead a Chewton walk setting off from the historic Bonnet Flat Reef Cemetery on Mount Street, before looping back toward the Main Road and continuing up to Jesser's, Ottery's and Wikki Schrecks Grocery Shop.

Parking is available at the Chewton Fire Station.

Bring a hat and water bottle.

When: Thursday 30 April 2026

Meet: Chewton Fire Station, Mount Street

Time: 10:30 - 11:30 am

Cost: Free

RSVP: None required - just turn up

Guide: Glenn, Marion & Elaine

More information: Call 5479 1000.

Supporting recovery and quality of life for cancer survivors and carers

Dhelkaya Health is inviting people who have experienced cancer to discover the support available through its Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship Service. This comprehensive program is run in alignment with Cancer Council Victoria's Managing Cancer & Cancer Wellness programs. It helps people rebuild strength, restore wellbeing and adjust to life pre, during and post cancer treatment. The service also offers personalised support for families

and carers.

Located at the Castlemaine campus (with some services and appointments available at Maldon), Dhelkaya Health's Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship Service provides essential support to those who live in the shires of Mount Alexander, Macedon Ranges and Central Goldfields, with referrals from other regions considered.

"Our service recognises that every cancer journey is unique," said Cancer Program Lead, Adrian Caelli.

"We work with people holistically, addressing physical, emotional, social and practical challenges so they can rebuild confidence, strength and quality of life during and after treatment."

The service's multidisciplinary team includes a broad range of specialists, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, exercise physiologists, speech pathologists, social workers, podiatrists,

continence nurses and dietitians.

Key features of the service include:

- ▶ personalised care plans developed collaboratively with each participant based on individual goals and needs
- ▶ support for physical wellbeing, including fatigue management, exercise planning, nutrition, sleep and pain management
- ▶ emotional and social wellbeing support encompassing strategies for managing anxiety, depression, relationships and confidence
- ▶ help navigating practical issues, such as employment, transport and financial concerns
- ▶ one-to-one therapy sessions, group programs, education and referral pathways into other supportive services as needed.

For more information or to connect with the Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship Service, contact Dhelkaya Health's Intake Office on 5471 3575, email intake@castlemainehealth.org.au or head to our website at dhelkayahealth.org.au



Some of Dhelkaya Health's Cancer Rehabilitation & Survivorship team

Diploma of Nursing at Tafe Castlemaine



On 27 March Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards announced that registrations are open for the Diploma of Nursing at Bendigo TAFE's new Health and Learning Hub in Castlemaine. The course is available through Victoria's free TAFE program.

The Learning Hub features state-of-the-art ward simulation labs and clinical training environments, supporting up to 60 students at a time. It opened last year with a \$4 million investment from the Allan Labor Government.

The hub, a partnership between Bendigo TAFE and local health service Dhelkaya Health, gives students access to hands-on training close to home, placements, and pathways into local jobs.

Around 90,300 additional workers in the age care economy are needed over the next three years. The free diploma course will ensure communities have access to the skilled nurses and health professionals they rely on.

Since 2019, more than 229,200 students have benefited from Free TAFE, saving a total of \$777 million in tuition fees – about \$3,000 per person, Ms Edwards said.

A quarter of participants have come from regional Victoria, with the Diploma of Nursing consistently one of the most popular courses.

Ms Edwards emphasised that Labor is protecting Free TAFE, by introducing the Free TAFE Guarantee into Parliament that will ensure a minimum of 70 per cent of all vocational education and training funding will be allocated to TAFE. She continued: "It's fantastic to see this opportunity delivered in Castlemaine, giving locals the chance to train for in-demand nursing careers without having to leave their community."

From a Press Release

Grace Church

This is a statement of belief by Grace Church

Good Samaritans

One of the most famous stories Jesus told is the parable of the Good Samaritan...

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Today I want to laud the work of Samaritans Purse, the Christian Disaster Relief Agency. The Samaritans Purse volunteers have been toiling in the Harcourt Valley these last three weeks, coming to the aid of bush fire victims; sifting ash, removing debris, clearing fence lines, and offering comfort. The volunteers are hardworking, forever cheerful, helpful and kind. They demonstrate God's love for a hurting community, in practical ways, daily.

On behalf of the residents of the Harcourt Valley I would like to thank them for visiting our town. We are counting our blessings, as the old song says, one by one.

Ps Roger Thurecht

ADVERTISEMENT

Lisa Chesters MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BENDIGO

5443 9055
lisachesters.org

Authorized by Lisa Chesters, ALP
16 Myers St, Bendigo

Labor

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,

Thank heavens for an early autumn break! The return of some green to Harcourt has been soothing for the soul, and it's heartening to see some growth on some of the burnt trees. Like so many in the town, we're grieving the loss of so many trees in the town and district, in the bush and on our beautiful mountain.

Many of the fruit trees that were burnt in the fire have shown good growth, especially since the big soak that marked the start of the autumn break a few weeks ago. If a tree hasn't shown any new growth by now it's pretty obvious it's not going to recover, and you can safely remove it. For the trees that are showing fresh growth, it's still too early to prune. At this stage it's better to keep up the water, and give them some love with soil food like compost, worm castings, seaweed (e.g., Seasol), fish (e.g., Charlie Carp), or manures. There will be some tough decisions to make regarding pruning burnt trees in winter, so we'll be talking more about this in coming months.

If you have specific questions about caring for burnt fruit trees, please get in touch (see our contact details at the end of the article) and we'll be happy to help if we can.

The trees are just starting to change colour and it looks like we'll be in for a stunning display this year. We're busily pruning apricots at our place because we like to get them done while the trees still have leaves on them. We'll be holding a pruning workshop in May with Castlemaine Community House, so if you'd like to learn (or practise) pruning, please see the booking links at the end of this article.

Did you get a chance to taste all the different types of apples at this year's Applefest? The loss of the Harcourt Coolstore made organising the apple display a little more challenging than usual, but once again, Harcourt growers did us proud and the Fruit Growers tent was able to present a fabulous display of varieties, mostly grown here in Harcourt.

Thanks to Brent from Redlands Orchards for generously donating apples for the display and for our royalty to hand out to this year's huge crowd. Most of Redlands fruit is grown for the export market, so the Applefest is a rare opportunity for locals and visitors to taste some of these world-class apples that are

being developed right here in Harcourt. Also a huge shout-out to Gavin and Carole Lang, Simon and Vicki from the Little Red Apple, Mark Woods, Hasan from Harcourt Apples, Michael Henry, Andrea, Clare, and the wonderful crew at the Orchard Keepers (that's the orchard on our place) for contributing many varieties to the display.

We've (mostly) dodged the fruit fly bullet this season, but that's no reason to be complacent, they'll be back! The most important thing you can do to help prevent fruit fly from spreading is to educate yourself about how to manage this pest in your home garden. The biggest risk is unmanaged and feral fruit trees. If fruit flies are allowed to get established in fruit trees in backyards, on roadsides, or in the bush (or the mountain bike park, in Harcourt's case) - that's when the pressure can really start to build up.

If you've got a fruit tree please keep monitoring your traps and fruit right until the end of the season. Follow all the hygiene recommendations, which are mainly about cleaning up ALL your fallen fruit as soon as it falls (this stops the fruit fly larvae from getting into the soil to finish their lifecycle). This one simple thing can make a big difference to how hard the community will be hit next season. You can help to make a big difference to whether we can all keep growing fruit into the future—backyard growers and orchardists alike. If you have a fruit tree you can't look after, please think about getting rid of it this winter and replacing it with a beautiful ornamental!

So, to this month's tips. Now is the time to put away your nets if you used them on your fruit trees over summer. Nets get damaged and wear out much faster if they're left out in the weather all year. Early autumn is the perfect time for this job because they slip off more easily while the tree still has leaves, so don't wait too long to get the job done. Of course if your tree still has fruit, then leave the nets in place for now, because the birds will take advantage of the free feed if you take them off early.

If you've used drape netting (as opposed to having put up some sort of frame to hold the net off the tree) a handy tip is to use a long stick to push the nets off the tree, being careful not to damage the ends of the limbs if possible. Disentangle any twigs, branches, leaves, or rotten fruit before you pack them away.

If you can pack and store them so they're rat-proof, you'll thank yourself next summer when you go to put them out again. If the net has any holes (from persistent kangaroos, for example), your future self will thank you very much if you repair the nets now, before you put them away. This is usually a simple matter of sewing the holes up with UV-stable nylon thread, or tying the edges together with cable ties or even hayband (baling twine).

On another note, if you're noticing some of your fruit trees flowering (despite the fact that it's not spring and we'll soon be descending into winter) don't panic. It's not uncommon for fruit trees to have a last ditch attempt to produce some fruit. It might be an indication of a sick or stressed tree, but it is also common in perfectly healthy trees - it's just the genetic drive to reproduce. The flowers or tiny fruit that form will most likely just drop off as the weather cools down.

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 Farming Co-op. Head to growgreatfruit.com to sign up for their free Weekly Fruit Tips newsletter or ask questions about your burnt fruit trees. Register for the pruning workshop: <https://events.humanitix.com/harvest-ready-pruning-principles-and-practice>



© Diana Domonkos

Council news



Edgy Veg Awards are back!

The Edgy Veg Awards are a month-long celebration where vegetables take centre stage and local hospitality gets creative.

They champion seasonal produce, support local venues and shine a spotlight on the growers who make great food possible.

How to get involved:

1. Join the Edgy Veg Trail.
2. Score the meals.
3. Go into the draw to win prizes.

Support your local venues and farms far and wide by eating your way across the Edgy Veg Trail.

Learn more at edgyvegawards.com.au.

Peggy needs volunteer drivers

We're looking for friendly volunteers to help keep our community connected by getting behind the wheel of Peggy, our community wellbeing bus.

If you love meeting people and making a real difference, this is a wonderful way to give back.

Sign up at mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Peggy.

What's on at your local library

Do you want new computer skills? Learn to play Mahjong? Or keep the kids occupied over Easter?

Goldfields Libraries have you covered with their autumn program.


See what's on at ncgrl.vic.gov.au/events.


Working together for a healthy, connected shire

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



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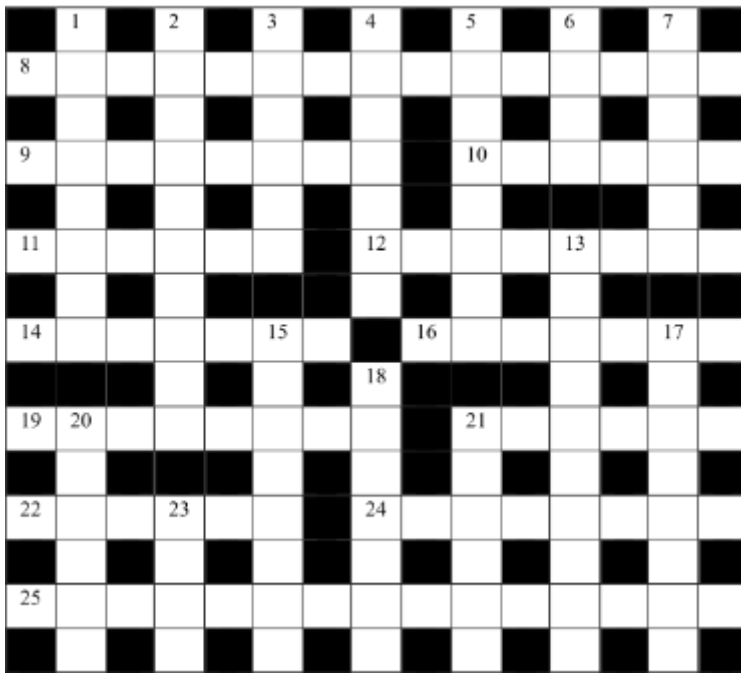
mainFM is an award winning radio station based in Castlemaine, broadcasting music, community news, talks and specialist programs and events throughout a large area of Central Victoria, serving our community.

With over 100 local volunteer presenters with a passion for radio, our programs are varied and diverse with over 70 shows across the program grid, transmitting 24 hours a day and streaming online via mainfm.net

94.9 main FM
LISTEN LOCAL

Phoenix 1 / 2026 Xword

© McW recycled '26



Across:

8. CEO's deputy sent out some damn nice condoms! [6-2-7]
9. For boiling ketchup? [8]
10. How ketchup might be roughly put in 9, or a salad? [6]
11. Bedizens Ron's commercial. [6]
12. What legends leave? [8]
14. Further money up-front for hidden persuaders? [7]
16. Bet the Klan in to introduce a more general coverage of anti-black curtailments... [7]
19. A non-vegan festival? [8]
21. Short modifier before making it work? [6]
22. Exigent Chaldean? [6]
24. Shout it out in favour of demarcation? [8]
25. Disaster's slings and arrows show signs of being under the pump. [8,7]

Down:

1. How she requested it maddened him! [8]
2. Vindicated for taking it as read and now secure in belief? [3,7]
3. Appropriate commercials circle a man who makes all necessary allowances. [6]
4. Alien New Yorker failed to follow any line coherently, charged about meaninglessly... [7]
5. If Magellan didn't gulp taro, he might've got home. [8]
6. Take away as read they don't fly back in Adelaide. [4]
7. It's a mystery for Anne to add it on, but attaching the end makes it a fait accompli. [6]
13. What the gravy is doing is hiding the fact that bacteria are multiplying. [2 solutions, please] [10]
15. Reason to visit ace oral medico. [8]
17. Because I'm entitled to as a GP, I bill all EEG costs to Medicare. [8]
18. "Lower the flaps. Yours Truly," in ceremonial parade of third and two firsts. [3-4]
20. In the midst of a staff raid on the tearoom biscuits, the boss came in and made them... go a bit quiet. [6]
21. In favour of healthy, muscular addition to the wallet. [6]
23. Consumes Devonshire dainties rearranged on the plate. [4]

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



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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ABN: 63708909386

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For placement of advertising please contact *The Core* via email at: advertising@harcourt.vic.au

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A full colour version of *Harcourt News/The Core* is available on the Harcourt Progress Association website and readers can receive a free copy by subscription at: harcourtprogress.org.au/news/sub *The Core* is also available at the Harcourt Community website at: harcourt.vic.au/news

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Advertising rates			
Business Card Size (55x90mm) pre-paid for:		Larger ads invoiced monthly	
3 months	\$50	1/6 page	\$40
6 months	\$80	1/4 page	\$60
12 months	\$110	1/3 page	\$70
		1/2 page	\$80
		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



THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 10AM TO 1PM
Castlemaine Community House
 30 Templeton St
 For information phone Chris 5470 5508
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 Cafe.

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


 Castlemaine Repair Cafe

2026
 Apr 26
 May 31
 June 28
 July 26
 Aug 30
 Sep 27
 Oct 25
 Nov 29

castlemainerepaircafe.wordpress.com



February Solution

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

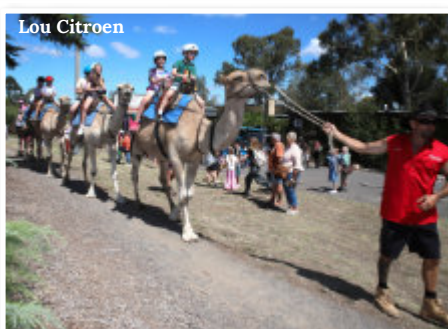
Fill the grid so every row, column and 3x3 frame contains every number from 1 to 9.

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

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



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