

# HARCOURT NEWS THE CORE



Edition 136 – June 2026

Produced by: Harcourt Progress Association Inc

Online: [harcourtprogress.org.au/news](http://harcourtprogress.org.au/news) or [harcourt.vic.au/news](http://harcourt.vic.au/news)

## Postcards pops into Harcourt



**T**he Channel 9 Lifestyle series, *Postcards*, called into Harcourt on June 4. In a flying visit, presenter Sammy J managed to capture interviews with Simon Frost at The Little Red Apple, Annette Larsen at The Produce Store and Andrew Mierisch at the Victorian Miniature Railway.

The visit of the popular show was at short notice, so VMR sent out an urgent call to the Harcourt community on the morning of the visit to come and ride the rails. Despite the wet weather, there were enough people happy to participate and two trains were able to run: one diesel and one steam. VMR

President, Andrew Mierisch (top right) was at the helm of the train which took Sammy J and the film crew around the tracks. It's always a delight to see how a miniature train ride makes young and old smile, and in this instance the magic worked on the visiting media star. The Harcourt Lions also turned out in support and set up their barbecue despite the wet weather. During the morning Sammy was treated with products from the Little Red Apple and was able to pause and share a coffee with Annette.

*Postcards* is in its 28th season and can be seen on Sundays at 5.30 pm on channel 9 and on 9Life which airs a repeat of the current show a week later.



## Editor's message –

Dear readers

The team at *The Core* has decided it is necessary to continue with publishing **every two months** for the foreseeable future.

We continue to be supported by our loyal contributors, and our team of distributors who meet and fold *The Core*. Our distributors gather at the Community House, and it's a social time to catch up, chat and share our own news while *The Core* is printed. Thank you also to those who work in the background to produce *The Core* – our proofreaders and our designer, Bernie Schultz.

Our community continues to re-group and heal after the January fires. There are many who have been assisted via the efforts of the Harcourt Progress Association, the Shire and government agencies. Readers will see that the community is moving to the next stage of recovery with the formation of a new organisation to take on the continuing renewal so necessary for us. Thank you to those who have been willing to put their personal lives aside to aid in the rebuilding of our community.

It was a pleasant surprise to receive some personal stories for this edition. These add that special touch to a community paper – thank you to those contributors. We encourage readers to contact us and to contribute to *The Core* – after all, this is your local paper.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *The Core*.

Robyn Miller

0467 670 271

[robymiller657@gmail.com](mailto:robymiller657@gmail.com)

## COMMUNITY DIARY

**Each Friday:** Community Lunch, 12 noon to 1.30 pm Community House, Station Street Harcourt. See page 17 for other services and Community House activities.

**Monday June 8:** 7.00 pm, Open Community Recovery Meeting, Harcourt Leisure Centre. See back page for details.

**Saturday June 13:** 5.30 pm Faraday Community Gathering see page 24

**Sunday June 14:** 2 – 4 pm First meeting of Community Choir, details see page 4.

**Sunday June 14:** Working bee and community lunch. For further information and registration for the working bee, please visit La Larr Ba Gauwa social media pages.

**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 17

**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](mailto:pastor@gracecastlemaine.org.au)

**Harcourt Bowls Club:** see page 18 and the website: [www.harcourtbowlingclub.com.au](http://www.harcourtbowlingclub.com.au)

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

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

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

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

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

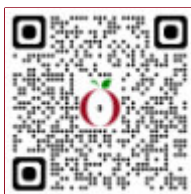
**Uniting Church:** Sundays at 9.00 am in the Uniting Church, Buckley Street, Harcourt. The service is followed by morning tea. All welcome. Donations of food and other household needs for St Vinnies can be left at the Church door on Sunday mornings 9.00–10.00 am or contact Jan on 5474 2226, to arrange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

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

**Victorian Miniature Railway:** Open 10 to 5 every Sunday in winter. Old Calder Highway C794 just north of Barkers Creek Bridge in Harcourt.

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Use this QR code to read  
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## 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.



# HPA Chairman's Message



Parliament House, where representatives from the Cranbourne Mosque and the Masjid Youth and Community Hub presented a most generous donation to our HPA Bushfire Relief Fund; and

The HPA Board Members extend their greetings to readers of *The Core*.

I am pleased to present an update on a range of issues, which I feel, are very important to our wider community.

## **The proposed new Community Bushfire Recovery Association (CBRA)**

The Thinking Group was tasked to initiate the longer term recovery process. The move to the next stage will be steered via the **Community Bushfire Recovery Association** which needs to be formed promptly and fully enabled to diligently work with the Mount Alexander Shire Recovery Committee and the associated government agencies and charitable organisations. The CBRA will be the conduit as our district proceeds with requests for, and implementation of well-considered bushfire recovery programs, works and activities.

I would strongly encourage the proposed new CBRA to be highly visionary and to focus the Shire Committee in achieving all that Barkers Creek, Harcourt, Harcourt North, Ravenswood, Sutton Grange and Walmer residents would seek:

- i. to enable our district to not just recover, but also to ensure that it is focused on achieving a vibrant future for each of our agricultural, horticultural, tourism, arts and other unique businesses which provide for and support our residents; and
- ii. to ensure practical and timely management of our lands (both public and private) to maximise protection against any future fire events.

## **Open Community Meeting 8 June, 7 pm Leisure Centre**

It is critical that we have a really good community attendance at the Open Community Meeting regarding the proposed establishment of the new Community Bushfire Recovery Association. The Open Meeting, to be held at the Leisure Centre on 8 June 2026 at 7.00 pm, will be presented with recommendations from the 'Community Thinking Group' as to the structure, role and operation of the proposed new Community Bushfire Recovery Association. Community support for this new organisation as it is established and for its ongoing success is vital.

## **Continuing Support to our Community via Lions Clubs**

I am delighted to share that HPA is continuing to receive much appreciated support to assist our community in the recovery phase. Lions International together with the Castlemaine Lions Club has most generously provided funding for 19 new heavy-duty building tarps. These will be available on-loan for a six-month period to help impacted residents provide protection to the contents in homes, sheds and property damaged during the fires, thus offering temporary protection cover while repairs or rebuilding take place.

1. Application forms for the loan tarps are available at the Harcourt Post Office during business hours. (Thank you to Leigh at our Post Office for her support.)
2. Completed applications are then to be lodged with the Harcourt Progress Association (HPA) at PO Box 135 Harcourt.
3. HPA will process the application and then forward it on to SES Castlemaine.
4. SES Castlemaine will then make direct contact with the applicant to specifically arrange for the delivery or collection and then later, return of the loan tarp.
5. Applications for extensions of the loan period are to be lodged with SES Castlemaine.

Once residents no longer require the tarps, they are to be returned to the Castlemaine SES. The SES will then continue to manage the tarps to ensure they remain available for loan to others in need and for future disaster events.

On behalf of our district residents, we are indeed grateful for this most generous initiative and thank both the Lions Club and the SES for their ongoing commitment to supporting local communities during times of hardship and recovery.

## **Community Contributions**

I have also been privileged to represent our HPA recently:

- a. when, at the invitation of The Hon Maree Edwards and the parliamentary representatives of the Cranbourne area, I attended

- b. at a fundraising afternoon event – The Peter Sheahan Walk Up Show at the Bendigo Club, where funds raised at the afternoon entertainment function and a raffle activity were generously contributed to our HPA Bushfire Relief Fund.

## **Update on HPA's Bushfire Appeal Funding Assistance Programs**

**Phase One:** The distribution of the gift cards has now concluded.

**Phase Two:** An allocation to those persons who lost their permanent residence in the fire is still in progress.

**Phase Three:** At our monthly meeting in May, the board determined to proceed with a third phase of funding, which will be implemented as an allocation to support the business community within the 'foot print' of the 9 January fire in Harcourt and surrounding districts of Walmer, Ravenswood South, Harcourt North and Sutton Grange. Please see page 4 for details.

## **Updated Financial Report on the Distribution of HPA Bushfire Appeal Funds**

Our treasurer distributed a comprehensive update report on the Distribution of Bushfire Appeal Funds to all community members attending the Public Meeting held at the Leisure Centre on 20 April 2026.

A further update report on the funding distribution is on page 27 of this edition of *The Core* and is also available on the HPA's website.

## **Fencing Skills Workshop**

Harcourt Progress Association received a significant grant from the Magistrate's Court Fund to buy fencing materials for the fire-affected community of the Harcourt Valley and surrounding areas, as a result of the January bushfires and their subsequent loss of local fencing on farmland. Significant re-fencing works were carried out by volunteers from BlazeAid during their attendance in the area.

## **Moving forward**

Harcourt Progress Association, with the generous assistance of Harcourt resident, Jarrod Coote, sponsored a Fencing Skills Workshop. The basic farm fencing skills workshop was held

*Continued page 4 ....*

## HPA Chairman's Message

Continued from page 3.

in North Harcourt for eleven hardy students who came out in the wind and rain on Sunday 17 May to learn how to put posts in the ground and strain up a fence. Harcourt Progress Association has also acquired two complete kits of fencing tools for community use and for loan from our Tool Library, at no cost to local community members.

**If community members are interested in attending a fencing skills workshop at a later date, accessing some free fencing materials (limited supply) or, using the library of fencing tools – please contact Jarrod Coote on 0438 069 849 or [hillsideacres9@gmail.com](mailto:hillsideacres9@gmail.com)**

### Proposed Tool Library for Harcourt

At its May meeting the Harcourt Progress Association Board, determined to take up a lease of the former Scout Hall in Eagles Road, Harcourt in order to commence the operation of a Tool Library. A wide range of tools and small equipment most generously donated to our Association will be made available for district residents to borrow and use for undertaking chores such as garden recovery and a variety of other recovery/repair/construction tasks. The loan program is focussed on tasks which would require the use of particular or specialised tools that people would prefer not to have to purchase themselves.

### Update on the Harcourt Valley Community House

#### HVCH Standing Committee:

The HPA Board is delighted to announce that a Standing Committee has now been formed to oversee the management of our Harcourt Valley Community House.

#### HVCH Funding Assistance:

- i. Our HPA Board would also like to sincerely thank Boomtown Winery & Bistro for their fundraising efforts immediately after the fire and their very generous donation to HVCH to enable us to employ a manager in a fixed term position to ensure our Community House is an integral part of the recovery of our community.
- ii. Our HPA Board has also been successful in obtaining several grants to assist in some works around the Community House,

including replenishment of the garden area damaged by fire and making improvements to the outdoor area to be safe for children attending activities at the centre.

### A Special Thank You!

On behalf of our community, I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the HPA Board Members who have enthusiastically contributed many hours of volunteering and support service in implementing our bushfire recovery and assistance programs.

*Ivan Gilbert  
Chairperson, HPA Inc.*

### HPA is pleased to announce its next phase of funding.

#### Phase 3: Business Recovery Grants

Opens on Monday 1 June 2026

Phase 3 provides \$1,500 per business to support those businesses which were in the footprint of the fire, and lost the capacity to earn an income. These funds are transferred directly to nominated bank accounts; no cash payments are available.

#### Eligibility Criteria

**Income:** Must be the PRIMARY source of your Income

**Lost Tools of Trade or Business Premises:** a minimum loss of \$10,000

**Registered Business:** Must have an ABN

**Exclusions:** This funding does not cover hobby farmers or stock in trade

#### How to Apply:

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis and will close on Friday 31 July 2026

#### Online:

Please go online to [www.harcourtprogress.org.au](http://www.harcourtprogress.org.au) and follow the instructions to apply for Phase 3 funding.

#### Paper Applications:

Available at the Harcourt Post Office

Complete all required information

Sign the document and have it witnessed by an authorised person

Email to [secretaryhpa3453@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryhpa3453@gmail.com) or drop off at the Harcourt Post Office in the envelope provided.

## Harcourt Valley Community House Standing Committee

The new HVCH Standing Committee held its first meeting on 18 May. The seven members are Ingrid Button, Alison Curtis, Katie Finlay, Mandy Foyster, Rena Geroe, Helen Spaulding and Jeanette Teague, all of whom already have roles in the Community House, such as playgroup, community pantry, community lunches, the garden/grounds, finance and/or knowledge of the Neighbourhood House sector.

Although it is under the legal auspice of the Harcourt Progress Association the Community House Standing Committee will determine strategic directions, and make autonomous decisions about how the Community House is run, including financial decisions.

The Committee would like to thank Boomtown Winery and Bistro for their extraordinary gift of \$89,352 from their fundraising efforts on 11 January, two days after the fire. This donation was in recognition of the vital role the Community House will play in recovery over the months and years to come.

The Committee plans to spend some of the Boomtown funds to employ a manager for six months, which will make HVCH more accessible for the whole community. We will have the capacity to offer more programs and services. After a period promotion, interviews and recruitment we expect to announce an appointment soon.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to put the case for recurrent funding from the government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP).

### Community Choir - Expressions of Interest

We are starting a community choir and invite community members to be involved in this free activity.

Lead by Beth Waldon-Anstice, a former music teacher with many years of involvement in musical theatre, the community choir will be held on Sundays from 2 - 4 pm. The first session is proposed for Sunday 14 June at the Community House, 23 Station St, Harcourt.

If you would like to be involved, please email Alison Curtis on [alison.curtis52@gmail.com](mailto:alison.curtis52@gmail.com) or phone her on 0419 597 765.

Cheers for now,

*Jeanette*



# Harcourt Heritage Centre

## Parliamentary Enquiry visits Harcourt

The Environment and Planning Committee of the Victorian Parliament sat in the Harcourt Leisure Centre on Thursday April 30.

The Committee, headed by Ryan Batchelor MLC, has been tasked by the parliament to enquire into the summer bushfires of 2026. The Committee's report is to be delivered on July 28. The terms of reference of the Committee are:

- ▶ to consider community preparedness,
- ▶ the cause and circumstances of the bushfires,
- ▶ funding, equipment and staffing of the CFA,
- ▶ the performance of critical services during and after the fires,
- ▶ the impact of the fires,
- ▶ the effectiveness of recovery efforts and, importantly,
- ▶ lessons from and implementation of recommendations from previous enquiries, reports and Royal Commissions.

The enquiry originated in the Legislative Council, which, as 'a house of review', must always listen carefully to the public before voting on any particular issue.

The first to give evidence at Harcourt was Mount Alexander Shire CEO Darren Fuzzard, who told the enquiry that the January 9 Ravenswood South/Harcourt bushfire had affected 228 properties, razed seventy-four dwellings, impacted sixteen businesses, burnt eighty per cent of Liyanyanuk and displaced 908 people. The 'leave early' warning was a success. On behalf of the community, Mr. Fuzzard expressed gratitude to the volunteers and staff of the Country Fire Authority, Forest Fire Management and Victoria Police. He commended the efforts of Harcourt residents who immediately commenced relief efforts from a base at the premises of VMR.

Harcourt CFA Captain Andrew Wilson and two group officers of the CFA then outlined the difficulties experienced by firefighters faced with a swiftly moving, unpredictable fire in difficult terrain. Those difficulties included the failure of Harcourt's reticulated water supply, the challenge posed by the inability to obtain water (as the channel system is now piped and farm dams were dry) and ineffective communications.

Other speakers included Rachel

Vanstone, Ivan Gilbert (HPA), Trevor Peeler (Coolstore), Rodney Carter (Dja Dja Wurrung), Cam Walker and James McLennan. Professor McLennan provided an insight from academic research into the link between house fires and fatalities, stressing that the improved messaging had proven to be effective as shown by the reduced fatalities.

Under the sympathetic chairmanship of Ryan Batchelor, an open-mic session followed with numerous speakers. This was in a format rather different to the usual parliamentary enquiry. Normally, the committee accepts evidence from witnesses, and the parliamentarians ask them questions and there is a back and forth. This was an opportunity for the Committee to just hear from members of the community. The transcript of each person's submission will be printed in Hansard and made available when the Committee's report is tabled on July 28.

The Harcourt Heritage Centre has the transcripts of several previous Parliamentary Enquiries concerning Harcourt. The transcripts, which have been extracted from Hansard, provide a snapshot of society as it was. Of course, there have been numerous deputations, submissions and petitions from time to time, about water supply, railway, and other matters affecting the Harcourt community, but the topic today is the Parliamentary Enquiries that are on record in the proceedings of the Victorian and Australian Parliaments.

There have been just three previous parliamentary enquiries of concern to Harcourt. The first, in 1867, investigated allegations of corrupt practices in the payment of workers employed on the construction of the Barkers Creek Reservoir. This makes interesting reading, as the parliamentarians even heard from the milkman who went from tent to tent at the workmen's campsite. Some thirty people were interviewed or named in the enquiry. There was much in the questions and answers that revealed the working conditions in what was considered a 'wild and remote' worksite. The result of the enquiry was the exoneration of Edward O'Keefe, the contractor.

In March 1915 there was a Royal Commission into the production, packing, marketing, distribution, preservation, cold storage, wholesale

pricing and retailing of fruit under the wartime conditions of the time. The Commissioners sat in the ANA Hall Harcourt. The published transcript details 579 question and answers given when seven of Harcourt's leading orchardists met with the parliamentarians. This is a rich resource for anyone interested in the history of the fruit industry in Harcourt.

In July 1941, a Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Apple and Pear Acquisition Scheme met with fifteen district orchardists, to enquire into the orchardists' views of the measures taken to alleviate the plight of growers affected by wartime restrictions that, regrettably, coincided with a glut of fruit. In reading the Committee's report, you can almost hear the tone of voice, desperate and frustrated, of the fruit growers' answers. There was an enormous surplus of apples, but there was also a difficult government administrative scheme of compensating growers for wartime loss of markets. The Canberra-based Committee published twenty-nine recommendations which, when implemented, did much to relieve the situation of Harcourt's beleaguered fruit growers.

Parliamentary enquiries provide a structured way for the public to contribute to policy discussions on matters which require serious consideration. Such enquiries ensure that government decisions are informed by evidence, expert advice and community perspectives. When the Committee's report is published on July 28, we will gain a deeper insight into the traumatic events of 9 January 2026.

*George Milford*

### 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](mailto:news@harcourt.vic.au)

## Parliamentary Inquiry into the Harcourt Bushfire of January 9 – a personal response by Terry Willis

The Inquiry into the 2026 summer fires across Victoria came to Harcourt on April 30. It was a triggering day for many of us. What struck me was the lack of acknowledgement at the loss of biodiversity and old growth trees from the fire and the clean-up.

I spoke in the open mike section and chose to highlight that nature's community houses were lost as well.

"My name is Terry Willis. I'm a fire-affected resident of Harcourt North and also the President of Harcourt Valley Landcare. Today I'll be speaking on behalf of my family – my wife, Bron, and our two boys, Sonny and Kit.

I'd like to take this opportunity to honour the life of a tree lost on our property – a very, very old Grey Box scar tree. Most of its crown had been lost over time, but its hollow limbs still reached for the stars high above us.

Our family was the last of many, many families that thought of this tree as precious – families both human and animal.

And then the fire happened. The CFA came at least five times to douse water on the smouldering stump over a period of two weeks after that first terrible day. Its root system stretched deep into the earth. The burnt base of the tree's outer layer is all that remains, reaching like a blackened twisting claw out of the charcoal, in a haunting tribute to its former glory.

This was a tree that had witnessed over 400 years on Dja Dja Wurrung country.

A tree so wide at its base that our family of four could not hug it together.

A tree so loved that every new person to visit us would be proudly shown the scar tree.

A tree that survived an attempted ring barking, who knows how many years ago.

A tree that life centred around providing a community house in the

landscape.

A tree that sheltered possums, phascogales, Krefftt's gliders, bees, antechinus, cockatoos and galahs from the harsh conditions outside.

A tree that was a nursery for these creatures to raise their young.

A tree that nourished and provided food.

A tree that held soil together on the slopes of Leanganook.

A tree that gave life and hope.

Who knows how many more years it could have lived for? We don't know.

This tree was one of many old habitat trees that were lost in the Harcourt Fire. It's a tragedy. You can't rebuild this tree – it's lost forever. No amount of nesting boxes will replace the homes it once provided.

It feels like an injustice that this has happened and fills us with deep remorse and grief."

*This statement reduced the entire gathering at the Harcourt Leisure Centre to tears.*



## Harcourt Valley Landcare Activities and Plans

### Harcourt Wren Gardens Project

The Harcourt Wren Gardens project will officially launch on National Tree Planting Day, July 26 at Barkers Creek in Harcourt. Harcourt Valley Landcare and Castlemaine Institute's Wilderhoods program have teamed up to establish the 'Harcourt Wren Gardens' project. The project has come about as a result of the bushfire in Harcourt.

Citizen scientists across fire affected areas will be asked to map where wrens are now, with the aim of re-establishing suitable plants to create habitat and to create habitat pathways for wrens and other small birds.



For more details, keep up to date on the Harcourt Valley Website and Facebook.

### National Tree Planting Day July 26 – 10.00 am – 12.30 pm with lunch provided

Everyone is invited to celebrate National Tree Planting Day in Harcourt. Connecting Country is organising the day with our Landcare group. The planting site is beside Barkers Creek, west of the CFA, Pony Club and swimming pool.

The day will feature a planting session of 330 – 600 plants and will also feature children's activities.

Keep an eye out for the flyer and notifications through Connecting Country and Harcourt Valley Landcare sites, Facebook etc.

### Nesting boxes

Almost immediately after the January 9 fire, Harcourt Valley Landcare began to receive offers of nesting boxes. Through the generous response of the organisations listed below, the following boxes were received and have been distributed to members and other Harcourt residents to replace lost tree hollows:

- ▶ Woodend Men's Shed: 50 (pictured top right)



- ▶ Bendigo Men's Shed: 21 (pictured left)
- ▶ Wildhouses via Connecting Country: 34
- ▶ In addition, we 21 Phascogale nesting boxes ready for distribution

If you would like a phascogale nesting box see:

[www.harcourtvalleylandcare.org](http://www.harcourtvalleylandcare.org) and use the Contact button on the home page.



# Harcourt CFA Brigade Business

Harcourt Fire Brigade is still busy with callouts, training, meetings, post-fire season reviews, ongoing post-fire matters, planning, etc. The heavy workload and time commitments are ably dealt with by our captain, Andrew, and secretary, Lynda, supported by our Brigade Management Team and members. It is all expected to continue through winter and into the next fire season.

## Fire Safety

There are usually more house fires across Victoria in winter. We are all aware that Harcourt and surrounding district do not need to lose any more houses or structures. So, we all need to take steps to reduce risk.

The first step is to make sure you have a fire plan. Ask yourself when you last reviewed it? Ask also: "Does it

cover winter as well as the traditional summer plan?"

It is a good idea to look at individual rooms, in particular, the kitchen, garage and bedrooms, which are the main areas where house fires start.

CFA statistics make it clear that cooking, heating, charging devices such as phones and tablets, e-bikes, e-scooters and lithium-ion battery tools have all caused fires. Electric blankets, smoking, candles and oil scent burners are also identified causes.

## Torchlight Procession

The Brigade was invited to both the Maldon and Bendigo Easter Torchlight Processions this year. As they were on the same night, Harcourt Tanker one went to Bendigo and Harcourt Tanker 2 to Maldon.

## Spring Community Engagement Planning

We are planning a variety of community engagements for spring. We are working on a special workshop for the White Gum Road residents group, as well as a fire safety presentation for another group encompassing Specimen Gully, Blakeley and Peelers Road areas. A Fire Safety Essentials engagement event is planned for all residents in the brigade area.

Details of these will be in the next edition of The Core.

We will also be participating again in the CFA Chief Officer's Get Fire Ready campaign in October.

## Turnouts

In the last two months, turnouts have mostly been small, and included unregistered as well as registered burn-off alarms, motor vehicle accidents and small fires.

Stay safe and stay warm this winter once the cold weather arrives.

*Tyrone Rice*

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*Linda Newton Artist*

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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

Hope this finds you well. Cold weather has arrived. I was out around the sheep on my motorbike this morning. My hands were aching with the cold.

Some volunteers are coming tomorrow to assist with some local fencing. BlazeAid have packed up for a well-deserved break but our volunteers roll on. Some of the fencing in the hilly country is just too hard on your own. There is still some of the donated fencing material on site so I suggest you contact HPA if you need that.

The last of the donated hay has now gone so that brings that chapter to a close. It was great to have the right tractor to unload the trucks and to support our local farmers.

The last couple of weeks have been very busy at Council.

Sorting out the applicants for our CEO job and interviewing has been very interesting. There are still a few more steps to go, but I can assure you all, we have some fantastic applicants and I am confident we will make a great appointment. Watch this space.

Many of you will be aware that Council has deferred the decision on the planning permit for the redevelopment of the Camp Reserve. At the Council meeting an amendment got up that would have seen the oval length reduced by about 15m. Not a great outcome when the oval is used for AFL. Of course we want the very best facilities for our sporting clubs. We expect more debate ahead to resolve this one.

Makes you really appreciate what we have at the Harcourt Leisure Centre.

A special shout out to all our volunteers who keep our sporting clubs and facilities going.

In closing I would just mention that I attended a couple of meetings of locals in relation to the Harcourt and Surrounds Recovery Group. A big thankyou is due to everyone involved and in particular our Thinking Group.

Many of us have been under the pump so thanks to those wonderful people trying to head us in the right direction. Best regards

Tony  
AG Cordy  
0439 742 434



## Harcourt District Lions Club Lions Club in Action

A lot has been happening in Harcourt and with the Lions Club since the devastating fires on Friday 9 January 2026.

Members have been helping with recovery around the town, including ongoing work at VMR overseeing the construction of a shelter for the BBQ area for the use of local community groups for fundraising. In addition, plant vouchers are being organised with Rodilesa for replacement of home gardens lost during the fires (thank you, Diane.) A good job is being done by all.

Surrounding clubs have been very kind in sending donations, for which we are very grateful and which will be used around the town in the coming months as the need arises.

Harcourt Lions have purchased a cool room for use at the VMR BBQ, and it is available for hire for local community events. We have managed to replace most of the Lions' possessions lost in the fires: two BBQs and BBQ equipment needed for catering, a trailer and two marquees and gazebos but, of course, memorabilia cannot be replaced.

On Wednesday 25 March, a Lions group visited from Sydney with a wagon load of new and used clothes for the Distribution Centre in Castlemaine for those who lost everything in the fires. They also organised the purchase of microwaves, sandwich makers, rice steamers etc from local suppliers, which was very generous, and I would think much appreciated by those who received them.

Our members, President Mark Mitchell and Des, Raymond, Loretta, Deb and Leigh, Mark and Dianne attended the centre to welcome the group with their very generous gifts. Also present to receive our visitors was (see photo below) our District Governor, Samantha Wu from Melbourne (right) with Harcourt Lions members Mark Taylor (left) and Des Dooley (centre).

Visiting from Melbourne was past District Governor, Frankie Tang.



*These patchwork quilts, delivered to the Harcourt Lions to be distributed in the community, came from the Hamlyn Heights Lions Club and were delivered Stuart and Nuccia McLean. Some of the quilts were made by Nuccia, others were made by the Hamlyn Heights Sewing Centre. They are very pretty and well-made and I believe there are some quilts still available to those who need them.*

*Pictured left to right: Stuart and Nuccia McLean, Sue and Diane Dooley*

Other visiting Lions club members were:

- ▶ From Sydney: Mohan Nanayakkara, District Governor
- ▶ Lions Club of Bondi: Ron Gattone and Ged McLaughlin District
- ▶ Members of Kings Langley Lions Club, Sydney and Norfolk Island, District.

On 18 May, a group of nine Lions from Park Orchards, Melbourne attended our club meeting with the offer of money to be donated to the Harcourt area. We are in discussions with them regarding suggestions as to what would be appropriate for our community. We are overwhelmed at the generosity of fellow clubs and individuals.

Our next meeting will be held on the third Monday, 15 June at 6.30 pm for a shared meal followed by discussion at 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm.

Loretta Rice



*Members Des and Buzz helping build the new barbecue area at VMR. Andrew Mierisch of VMR was able to obtain the roof of this building free from Robot Trading, builders in Melbourne.*

# Happy times at the Lions Den



It has been a busy and enjoyable couple of months at The Den, with our football and netball teams travelling to Lexton and Navarre, while also welcoming Dunolly, Avoca, Carisbrook and Trentham to Harcourt for home games.

The beautiful autumn weather saw the supporters out in force cheering our teams on.

Our annual Ladies' Day took on a new theme this year with a Paint & Sip afternoon, and what a success it was. More than eighty ladies joined us for a wonderful afternoon of creativity, laughter and community spirit.

The fun continued with our Family Games Night – Minute to Win It. Members of all ages got involved, with the younger participants taking the competition very seriously! In the end,

however, it was a team of seasoned veterans who stacked up the points and claimed the winning prize.

Harcourt pride was on full display at the HFNC Community Day. It was a fantastic celebration of the people who make our club so special. It was wonderful to welcome representatives from our emergency services, community groups, local legends and the many volunteers whose dedication and hard work help our club thrive.

The King's Birthday long weekend brings a league-wide bye, before we return to action at home against Newstead on Saturday 13 June.

Looking ahead, our Annual Ball – one of the highlights of the club's social calendar – will be held on Saturday 27 June. This formal event will feature a two-course sit-down meal and entertainment, promising a memorable evening for all. Tickets can be purchased at the club or via our Facebook page.

To stay up to date with everything happening at the club, follow us on Facebook (Harcourt Football Netball Club) or Instagram (@harcourt\_fnc). You can also contact us via email at [harcourtfnc@outlook.com](mailto:harcourtfnc@outlook.com)

We look forward to seeing you around the club throughout the season.

*Di Selwood*



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## Harcourt Carpet Bowls 70 years and counting

The Harcourt Carpet Bowls Association recently held its Annual General Meeting. There was some doubt about the Association being able to continue, however, those attending agreed there was sufficient interest and the members voted to continue for another year.

Since commencing the 2026 season, attendance each night has been around 16 members, which means we are able to form four teams of four. With winter illness and grey nomads' holidays we certainly need more players to keep our numbers up and the four teams operational.

The four teams are named RSL, Maine Four, New Breed and Rebels.

**If you are looking for a social gathering to meet others and have some fun at a reasonable cost, why not try Carpet Bowls?**

We have plenty of room, mats and bowls to form more teams, and it would be great if this could happen as many bowlers are in the older age group and the club needs younger players to continue in the future. No previous experience necessary as the game is easy to learn and play. We have now been playing carpet bowls for around 70 years in Harcourt.

Carpet Bowls is played on Wednesday night from 7.15 pm until 9.00 pm; we meet at the Harcourt District Leisure Centre (heaters on cooler nights during winter) and the cost is \$5.00 adult and \$2.50 U17 yearly registration, and \$5.00 adult each night and \$2.50 U17. Families are most welcome as well as individual players. Children can play from 8 years old. Fees are to pay for hall hire and insurance, and our end-of-year wind up.

### **Harcourt Carpet Bowls supports Legacy**

Our club has supported the Castlemaine Legacy Group with a tournament in August each year for many years now with money raised going to their funds. This night is a good opportunity to try out playing bowls, have some light hearted fun and banter, and help the Legacy Group. Look for advertising; the tournament is usually held during Legacy Week and everyone is most welcome – the more the merrier and we can raise more for the Legacy Group.

**For further information, contact President, John – 5474 2226 or Secretary, Loretta – 0411 193 661.**

## 1200 Vacant Buildings in Mount Alexander Shire

### *Stigma around homelessness*

The housing crisis is hitting our community hard, and the stigma around homelessness is being seen by homeless community members and services as a barrier to integrated ways of addressing it. Morag (pseudonym) shares her story to try and improve community understanding of, and empathy for, the plight of being homeless/unhoused.

Over ten years ago I left my husband and suddenly, I found myself a single parent, thrown into the battle ground of Mount Alexander's gruelling, dog-eat-dog rental market. I pick up whatever work I can, mostly only casual and part-time – nothing ongoing or stable.

In that time my daughter and I have moved home at least ten times. We have couch-surfed at friends' homes regularly for months on end.

I always say that all it takes is a series of unfortunate events. I never for one second of my life, imagined that I would be in this situation. Not in a million years – it was simply something that never, ever crossed my mind.

People don't know who we are.

There is a very real blanket view of what type of people become homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless and there is always an undercurrent of people thinking that you must have done something wrong, or that you are somehow to blame for your situation. But how many pay cheques are you away from not being able to pay your mortgage or rent? How many circumstances need to tilt out of your favour for you to find yourself without a home? Anything can happen to anyone but no one is listening to us.

Often, I wake up in terror at 3 am, knowing that we must be out of our current rental in ten days, and I still haven't managed to secure the next one. The real housing crisis is about sleeping on friends' couches with your child because there just aren't enough rentals and of the five affordable rental properties on the market, there will be more than 100 people at each viewing. You can't establish a community around you because you are always moving, always packing and unpacking boxes filled with your life.

It's incredibly fatiguing, stressful and humiliating, and has a huge impact on your mental health – it just wears you down. Everyone should have a home; it is a basic human right. Housing should not be about wealth. There should be more social housing and caps on rental prices, and get rid of negative gearing.

The housing stress is impacting our community. We're not looking out for each other well enough. People are suffering and yet it's easy to fix.

Dhelkaya Health's Housing Senior



Clinician Courtney Stephens, My Home Network's Kaz Neilson and Homelessness Project Officer Jo McMahon from Mount Alexander Shire Council, are working together with a diverse range of organisations to address homelessness and reduce the stigma around it.

Courtney Stephens says: "Currently we have 38 rough sleepers and 80 homeless families in our Shire, and they are just the ones we know about. We need a large increase in transitional housing and crisis accommodation within the Shire, plus additional services to provide wrap around supports for our most vulnerable. As Morag says, 'homelessness can happen to anyone.'"

Jo McMahon says: "The Mount Alexander community care for each other and want to provide help and support, especially in times of crisis, such as the recent bushfires. But I think homelessness makes people uncomfortable. As Morag says 'it is possible for anyone to become homeless.' That includes mums and dads, young people, single older women, our co-workers, friends and family.

"This community needs to turn towards, not away from issues that challenge us. We need to see ourselves in the people we may be treating as outsiders, and ensure they are welcome, included and visible."

Kaz Neilson explains the interconnected drivers of the housing crisis: "They are inequity, a lack of social housing, wages and pensions not rising with inflation, mismatch of housing supply and need, and tax and financial mechanisms that compound inequity; family violence and mental health."

My Home Network advocate for addressing these drivers and are working on local community-led solutions, including appealing to owners of vacant dwellings to release them as affordable rentals. We have 1,200 vacant dwellings in our Shire, releasing some of them would ease some of the rental stress.

For more information on the My Home Network contact

[cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au](mailto:cneilson@castlemainehealth.org.au)  
My Home Network is auspiced by Dhelkaya Health and made up of passionate community members, locals with lived experience of the housing crisis and representatives from local housing initiatives, community and government organisations.

*From a press release*



# Chatting with Harcourt CWA

Hello there, everyone

As usual it has been another busy (and fun!) couple of months for the Harcourt CWA but, as always, we try to ensure that there is still plenty of time left for our social get togethers!

## Visit to Sutton Grange CWA Branch

We joined Sutton Grange CWA Branch for their annual Association Day and our enjoyment of a great day was made even better by a 'Kay's Fashion Parade'.

## Five Thursdays in the Month

Whenever there are five Thursdays in a month, we always schedule an extra Thursday social outing. In late April, that extra Thursday gave us a double dose of wonderful community highlights in Bendigo.

## Lunch at Peppergreen Farm

Our lunch stop was at Peppergreen Farm for a lovely luncheon together. Have you been there yet? If not, pop it on your bucket list for a visit soon - it is a truly wonderful place!

Located on two hectares of land near the heart of Bendigo, Peppergreen Farm is a WISE social enterprise. This historically significant patch of land has been beautifully cultivated into a hub for organic fresh produce that is used in the onsite café/restaurant and sold to some eateries in Bendigo. More than just a great spot to visit, Peppergreen Farm is a fantastic community-based destination that offers quality service, good nourishing food, all while providing sustainable training and employment for people with disabilities.



## An Inspiring Tour of Sunshine Bendigo

The other major highlight of our trip was an extensive tour of the wonderful Sunshine Bendigo facility in East Bendigo. Team leader Amy walked us through all of their incredible operations and we got to see their dedicated volunteers hard at work, and we asked plenty of questions. It gave us an invaluable insight into what a vital resource this organisation is.

Started nearly ten years ago by the present CEO, Glenda Serpell, Sunshine Bendigo is a community-based volunteer group that provides practical support to families experiencing challenging times. They collect, sort and redistribute essential new and pre-loved baby goods and nursery equipment for children from newborn up to six years of age. Families are referred via professional maternal, child health and social agencies due to hardships arising from situations like family violence, health issues, homelessness, emergency care, or natural disasters such as the recent Harcourt bushfire, where many local families received clothing and goods.

## Harcourt CWA's 2026 Association Day

We were incredibly privileged to have Glenda as our very special Guest Speaker at our recent annual Association Day. Beautiful handmade new quilts, teddies, toys, clothing and winter woollies were all on display. Glenda emphasised that their core mission is to treat everyone equally and respectfully, ensuring families receive the kind of high-quality items we would all be proud to give to our own children and grandkids.

True to form, the Harcourt CWA and



the wider Harcourt community showed just how caring and generous they are. Attendees brought along a vast array of goods to donate, and we were thrilled to present Glenda with a cheque for \$1,000 (and a couple of carloads of donated clothes, toys, teddies, rugs etc) to support Sunshine Bendigo's excellent work.

## How You Can Help

Both of these organisations do incredible work for our region. If you would like to visit, donate or get involved, here are all the details you need:

Peppergreen Farm is at 40 Thunder Street, North Bendigo from Monday to Friday, 9 am to 3 pm and from 9 am to 2 pm on Saturdays. They can be contacted on: [info@peppergreenfarm.com.au](mailto:info@peppergreenfarm.com.au) or (03) 5445 9888.



Sunshine Bendigo is at 6 Nolan Street, East Bendigo, open Tuesday to Thursday from 10 am to 3 pm. They can be contacted on [sunshinebendigo1@gmail.com](mailto:sunshinebendigo1@gmail.com) or telephone 0448 356 714 and donations of nursery items, baby goods and clothing from newborn to size 6 are gratefully accepted, provided they are in excellent condition.

## Sad News

John Carter, partner of Lynette (one of our long time Harcourt CWA members) passed away very recently. John was a very good friend of Harcourt CWA, and he looked after us well whenever we held our Christmas breakup luncheons at the Mt Alexander Golf Club. Our thoughts are with Lynne and the family at this sad time. Vale, John.

## Contact details

If you'd like to join us or find out more about Harcourt CWA, feel free to pop in on the first Thursday each month at the Harcourt Leisure Centre at 1 pm for a 1.30 pm start or give our secretary Helen a call on 0448 510 996. See you next month.

Beverley Orgill (for Harcourt CWA Branch)



# Harcourt Uniting Church

What is a church? Is it the building where people meet on Sunday to sing

hymns, listen to the minister preach a sermon and share in fellowship. Well it can be – but it’s a lot more than that.

The Uniting Church has an agency known as Uniting. It is “a contemporary expression of the Uniting Church commitment to social justice and community care ... it creates real change in people’s lives”.

In the April edition of the Uniting Church *Crosslight* magazine, Marina Williams wrote about the lack of affordable housing throughout our communities. The rental market “has deteriorated to the point where families are living in cars, workers are unable to secure rentals near their jobs and agencies are facing confrontational levels of demand”.

The Executive Director of Housing and Property at Uniting Vic Tas, Kristie Looney, is passionate about providing affordable housing in Regional Victoria

and spoke with Marina.

The St Andrews and Axedale Uniting Church congregations in Bendigo are a great example of what can be done to address this housing crisis. They have shown what can be achieved when partnerships are formed. A local donor gave \$500,000 to start the project, the congregations donated the land on a long-term lease, funding came from Homes Victoria and Uniting Vic Tas, with operational support provided by Housing Australia Future Fund.

The result is three architecturally designed buildings, with 73 apartments close to the centre of Bendigo. The complex was officially opened recently, and tenants have moved in.

Kristie made the comment,

“The congregation backed it, the council backed it and the community backed it.”

At Harcourt we continue to enjoy worship each Sunday at 9 am and have enjoyed welcoming some new members to our congregation. All are welcome to join us any Sunday and enjoy a chat over morning tea after the service. Our split system heating is most appreciated now that as winter has arrived. After church you’ll have time to enjoy a ride at the Victorian Miniature Railway here in Harcourt, with great views of Harcourt township as you travel around the tracks and then enjoy a sausage at the community-run BBQ.

**A bloke walks into a timber yard and says: “I want to buy some 2x4s”. The salesman replies: “You mean 4x2s”. The bloke thinks for a while then says: “Let me go and check”. He comes back later: “Yeah they’re 4x2s”. The salesman asks: “How long do you want them?” “Oh, I don’t know, let me go and check”. Back he comes later in the day: “We need them for a long time – we’re building a house.”**

Jan Jenkin



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

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

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/harcourtvalleylandcaregroup?igsh=NjA3a3E3czU1bHo2>

## Trails open at La Larr Ba Gauwa Mountain Bike Park

While the Committee of Management (the committee) was able to reopen the La Larr Ba Gauwa campground, including the much loved Oak Forest on Applefest weekend, we are now happy to advise that all of the southern trails Wanyarra (trail 1), Baramul (trail 6), Gart gart (trail 7), Gurri (10) and Mir (trail 8) are now open.

Other works have now been completed including the completion of the hazardous tree work around fire affected trails, a full assessment of the impacted trails and work can start to commence on the cleaning and repair of much of the Northern trails including Girra (trail 2), Wilkerr (trail 3), Murnong (trail 4), Werpil (trail 5), Milipa (trail 9) and Milakuk (trail 11).

The committee has been overwhelmed with the support and donations from locals and the broader MTB community. The committee has also been working in partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to secure funding to enable the engagement of a MTB trail building company to repair some of the more heavily impacted trails such as Girra (trail 2). We are hopeful of a positive announcement in the coming weeks.

### More to be done – can you help?

To kick off the recovery works, the committee will be holding a working bee and BBQ lunch on Sunday 14 June. Everyone is welcome! It would be great to see lots of local faces joining us for the start of the recovery efforts.

**For further information and registration for the working bee, please visit La Larr Ba Gauwa social media pages.pp**



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# Starthrower Women's Wellbeing Experience

The long-awaited Tuesday 28th had suddenly arrived...and I was nervous. What had I let myself say 'yes' to this time?

A ladies' retreat by the sea had sounded simply amazing when the Rotary Club of Castlemaine invited me. But as the day drew nearer, the nerves crept in. I was being hosted by a complete stranger and had no idea what the next four days would hold. I was well and truly outside my comfort zone.

By Sunday night, I had almost called to cancel. Thank goodness I didn't.

The journey began by train – an easy trip with one change at either Footscray Station or Southern Cross Station. Arriving at South Geelong Station, I was greeted with the biggest smile, a warm hug, and the kindest welcome anyone could wish for.

On the scenic drive to Point Lonsdale – or 'Lonnie' as the locals call it – I instantly felt at ease.

Over afternoon tea, we met our fellow hosts and the other wonderful guests from Gellibrand and Harcourt. Soon after, we were whisked away to our homes for the next three nights, where we were thoroughly spoilt—a word that truly sums up the entire retreat.

Dinner that first night was beautiful,



shared not only with the four guests but also with six members of the incredible 'Starthrower' group.

Wednesday began with Larrie (the chief organiser) leading a short life coaching session – positive, uplifting, and well received

by all. This was followed by a 'slow stitching' class, which was completely out of my comfort zone, but I thoroughly enjoyed learning a new skill.

Lunch was once again amazing with more opportunities to meet new people while soaking in the stunning weather and views from a deck in Point Lonsdale. A walk along the beach and pier helped clear my mind before we headed off to chair yoga.

Wow...I never imagined chair yoga could challenge my body the way it did! It certainly pushed me, and yes, I'll be looking into something similar now I'm home.

Of course, the day ended with yet another delicious dinner, lovingly prepared by the Starthrowers.

Thursday brought a ferry trip across the heads to Sorrento. After a quick café lunch, we each chose our own pace: a brisk walk for some, a gentle wander for others or simply sitting and soaking in the breathtaking sea views.

My personal highlight came that afternoon: a full-body massage (once again provided by a Starthrower). My body and soul both appreciated every moment of that hour of relaxation. This was followed by another peaceful beach walk and time to simply sit and enjoy the ocean.

That evening, the Rotary Club of Ocean Grove hosted us for dinner at the local



bowling club; an evening filled with friendship, fellowship and plenty of laughter.

Friday morning brought a farewell morning tea with all hosts and guests. It was hard to say goodbye – we had become firm friends in such a short time.

Listening to everyone's stories reminded me that we all carry our own challenges. We all navigate grief and loss in different ways, and there is no right or wrong way to heal.

I would recommend this retreat to anyone who simply needs to breathe. Too often, we wait too long to pause, to breathe deeply, and to give ourselves the care we truly need.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Starthrowers of Point Lonsdale, Queenscliff and Ocean Grove, the Rotary Clubs of Castlemaine, Bendigo and Ocean Grove, and the many local businesses which support this wonderful initiative.

Last but not least, my host. She is the most amazing woman, who was as nervous as me, but we are now friends for life.

Any fire-impacted women interested in future wellbeing experiences are encouraged to check out details on the Rotary Castlemaine webpage: [rotarycastlemaine.org.au/Stories/bushfire-support](http://rotarycastlemaine.org.au/Stories/bushfire-support)

Ruth Hay

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# Reflection and thanks

It is now nearly 4 months since the fire noisily raged down the hill behind my house in Harcourt and took most of the trinkets of my past life away. There has been much personal introspection and navel gazing, a few tears, many clumsy attempts at stoicism and happily finding out who are true friends.

I have tried to see it as a cathartic experience of transitioning from one phase of my life to another, a few times I wander into silence as I gaze inward wondering what now, when will it end? But there is no time machine, there is no way to take the embers and dust blowing in the wind to glue our past lives and community back together to exactly what it was.

I have watched as some hit out and look for someone to blame, I have seen people show positive facets of their selves which were once hidden to all but closest family and friends, many others finding bravery even through their own sadness.

I have seen how a good community works, so many generous volunteers taking a step forward to offer a smile and their energy to help others. I have been humbled by their words and deeds, it has been a true litmus test of the wonderful humanity that surrounds us, fully visible at times like this.

I have seen how you didn't need to lose anything material to be affected, some who lost everything seem on the face of it able to face this catastrophe, while others who had a home to return to wander around shell shocked, sadly some with misguided guilt. I now understand how just being a local or having friends, neighbours or family affected causes ripples in our emotions just as much, if not more than someone like me, for we are all built differently, there are no rules to this.

There have been a few who have thrown out judgemental words, spewing out ivory tower wisdom, who should maybe walk in others' shoes before they clumsily and all too quickly connect opinions in their heads to their vocal cords.

I have seen how government has stepped forward with generosity that you would not find anywhere else on this planet. I've never had great affection for authority but the assistance, both financial and otherwise people like me have been given has been not only extremely helpful but also therapeutic.

The not for profit organisations like The Harcourt Progress Group and

Anglicare, that have been silently hovering around me like butterflies, ready to gently step in using soft words to assist when asked, their hearts always ready when I needed to talk, I cannot fault them.

The CFA from all over the State who after days of fire fighting dropped by in the preceding weeks to visit me in my small camper on my blackened land by the crumpled roof and smouldering ashes of my life. Some brought me food and water, others gave me kind words and shared the odd dark joke or cold amber liquid - what can I say, great people, amazing volunteers.

The recovery centres and the people who volunteered in them, cooking and serving food, handing out all kinds of donated clothes and goods with a smile, making sure we had the small bits of life to help us make a start in our own re-boot. To those who donated, turning up with boot loads of things to help others. To the organisations who sat at tables offering assistance and advice.

The VMR (the miniature railway in Harcourt), I have no doubt if they hadn't stopped the fire just uphill from their station the centre of Harcourt would not be as it is now, so many others would have lost their homes too. A big thank you to them and others too who helped save their neighbours' homes.

There have been businesses who have given material comfort, Snooze, Pillow Talk, Coliban Water, Woolworths, the Reece Plumbing Charity, Kosmac & Clemens, a young man at The Good Guys who helped me, other places who gave me things without being asked, too many to name. I have heard some cynically say it is a tax write-off without seeing the generous and gentle spirit in which they dealt with me and others, your harsh words are not welcomed by me as all did not want publicity, they just wanted to help their community.

As I stumble on the genuine decency of those helping in the first stages of rebuilding, Blaze Aid who step in to help fix fences, Disaster Relief Australia who came to my land to clean up fallen trees, Forge Solutions who demolished the embers of my home with kind words and questions, there are more organisations, again too many to list, I also thank you, you have made this so much easier than it could have been.

From inside my personal maelstrom I feel compelled to publicly thank everyone for helping, individuals, businesses, not for profits and

governments of all levels, also my beautiful friends and neighbours, you know who you are. I have chosen to do this publicly and believe and hope I speak for some affected, foolishly hoping my words give comfort, and possibly help put comprehension to others' feelings.

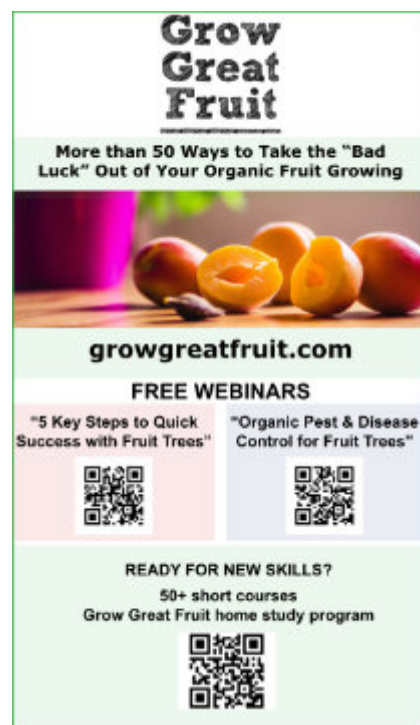
I have come to the conclusion this sadly does not completely end; I will adjust to it as I move on at my own pace to get my life back in some semblance of order. This is going to be a long winding road for me and others. What was once for me 1 step forward and 2 steps back is now 2 steps onwards and 1 back, the hill will become less steep as I plod up it, your help has given me the energy to carry on.

Writing this has been part of my journey, I am sure there are many others who want to show their appreciation too, we will get through this but hopefully we will become not only more thoughtful, but an even more compassionate place in this world of conflict and disasters. Sadly we will not be the last to live through times like this.

Please if you need help seek it, if you need someone to talk to ask, it is there for the us all, you are not alone. I say this out of experience, the first words are always the hardest to say, accepting help is sometimes giving, sharing your burden with other welcoming broad shoulders is good for us all.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

*David Jeffries*



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**Phee Broadway Theatre  
Barker Street, Castlemaine**

*Event by Castlemaine VIEW Club. All proceeds go to The Smith Family Learning for Life Program, supporting the education of Australian students experiencing disadvantage*



**Book Online**

[www.trybooking.com/DMEYR](http://www.trybooking.com/DMEYR)

### Two "Locals" films feature the Harcourt Fires

#### Michael's Story

Is a reflective look through the lens of someone who has just lost their home and extensive business assets in the wake of the January 9 Harcourt-Ravenswood bushfire, but remarkably, turned his despair into resolve to selflessly fight for his community's recovery. See Michael's raw and insightful look into his world eight days after the bushfire. Shot and edited by Lisa Mills, directed by Josh Poole.

**Harcourt Fires**, by local writer and photographer Katherine Seppings, has been selected for the LOCALS program at this year's Castlemaine Documentary Festival.



On 9 January 2026, as the Fogarty's Gap Road fire approached, Katherine evacuated from the Harcourt township to North Harcourt, experiencing the fire twice. In her documentary she has captured the terror and devastation on the day, and the following weeks of recovery and renewal.

Katherine has extensive knowledge of bushfires. She contributed to *The Complete Bushfire Safety Book*, written by her mother, Joan Webster OAM. She has organised local Community Fireguards and has documented the aftermath of major bushfires in Victoria since Ash Wednesday, 1983.

[events.humanitix.com/locals-2026-after-party-at-theatre-royal](http://events.humanitix.com/locals-2026-after-party-at-theatre-royal)  
[cdocff.com.au/](http://cdocff.com.au/)

# Harcourt Valley Primary School

## Term 2 Events



Principal Andrew Blake and HVPS Leaders Liv, Raf and Zoe (pictured) represented the school at Harcourt's Anzac day service.

**1 May:** Grades 3-6 Cross Country

**7 May:** Mothers' Day Breakfast

**12 May:** Grade 6 Visit to Parliament House

**20 May:** Open Day

**22 May:** Goldfields Division Cross Country



These two superstars came first in their divisions of the 2026 inter school cross country.

(Insert photos of cross country runners)

**18 May – 22 May:** Education Week:

Principal Andrew Blake said, "We have had a very busy Education Week and it was terrific to see a lot of new families visiting our school on Wednesday during our Open Morning. The theme this year was, 'Showcasing our school', and our very responsible Student Council members presented a wonderful snapshot of what is great about our school at yesterday's assembly".

**29 May:** Grades 3 and 4 Excursion to Castlemaine Market Building

**3 June:** Grade 5/6 Reconciliation Walk

**11 June:** School Photos

**26 June:** Last day of term

# Gift of Painting to the Harcourt Community

Inspired to show his support after the January 9 fire, Melbourne artist Greg Jorgensen has painted three works entitled Hope 1, Hope 2 and Hope 3, all depicting phases of regeneration.

Greg and his wife Anne gave Hope 1 to the Harcourt community on Friday 8 May at a community lunch. Jeanette Teague and John Baldock (left of frame) received the work, and expressed gratitude on behalf of the community. The painting can be seen in the community house multipurpose room.

Greg has put the other two paintings up for an online auction through CASPA in Castlemaine, above Stonemans Bookshop. Proceeds will be donated to the HPA Bushfire Relief Fund.

Those interested can visit the auction site [www.facebook.com/events/988372127012246](http://www.facebook.com/events/988372127012246)

## About Greg Jorgensen the Artist

Greg Jorgensen has travelled extensively throughout Australia and the world. The Australian landscape inspires him to paint escarpments, rivers, chasms, floodplain, deserts, mountains, waterfalls, forests and gorges - natural shapes that endow landscapes with deep meaning.

A student of the Lance McNeill School of Realism, he learned classic modes of painting. At the Australian Guild of Realist Artists, he became



familiar with many ways of approaching subjects and techniques. As a secondary school art teacher he has helped others develop their artistic potential. He has run painting schools and conducted workshops for the Victorian Calligraphic Society and the Australian Wildlife Artist Society. He has worked for years as a book illustrator; received awards in various art competitions, and managed his own art gallery.

**Thank you Greg and Anne for your beautiful gift, and for showing your support for the Harcourt community in its recovery.**

## 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.

### Printing & IT Services at HVCH

We are now offering printing, scanning and email services at HVCH during opening hours.

#### Printing Fees

A4 black & white @ 10c per page,  
colour @ 20c per page  
A3 black & white @ 30c per page,  
colour @ 60c per page

#### Lamination

Lamination is available at an extra 20c for A4 or 50c for A3 documents.

#### Scanning and Email

Scan and email for 10c per page, negotiable for large (multi-page) documents.

#### Public Access to Computers

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 VINEYARD

- Visit Bendigo's Most Awarded Winery
- ▶ Weddings, events and functions
- ▶ 2021 Brides Choice Awards winner

Open Sunday 12-4 pm or by appointment only  
Bookings please call Marie on 0431 996 515  
Harcourt Valley Vineyards  
3339 Harmony Way, Harcourt, Vic 3453  
P: 03 5474 2223



# HARCOURT VALLEY COMMUNITY HOUSE

23 Station Street, Harcourt (old station)



## Opening hours

**Wednesdays 12-3pm (school terms)**  
**Fridays 10am-3pm**

Drop in to access below services or have a cuppa and chat.

## Lunch

Fri 12-1.30pm. \$5 donation appreciated.  
Volunteers needed, scan the code



## Pantry

Fri 10am-3pm. Grocery items available.

## Playgroup

Wed 10am-12 (school terms).

## Library

Puzzles and books.  
Free to borrow.

## Tech Support

Fri 10am-12.

## Free blankets

Blankets and quilts free for all.

## Room Hire

Room/building hire available, inc kitchen & wifi.

## Office services

Printing/scanning/laminating/emailing (prices on request) and computer access (free).

## Recycling

Can and bottle recycling bins for 10c eligible items.

## Anglicare Victoria

Representatives onsite Fri 12-2pm.

**Drop in,  
we'd love to  
see you!**

Info current  
June 2026

**Email: [harcourtvalleych@gmail.com](mailto:harcourtvalleych@gmail.com) Phone: 0438 579 987**  
**Facebook: [HarcourtValleyCommunityHouse](https://www.facebook.com/HarcourtValleyCommunityHouse)**



# Harcourt Bowling Club

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

President Gary Maddern presented the Annual Board Report to members at the Harcourt Bowling Club AGM on Sunday 17 May. On presenting the Annual Report he noted the reports from committees, pointing out the ongoing need for further voluntary participation from members in the running of the club. The opening of the season 70th celebrations and the impact of the fires on the whole community in January were also noted.

Treasurer Rod Harris spoke to the Audited Financial Statements noting the financial viability of the Club and extended thanks to auditor George Milford for his sound advice.

Retiring board members, Carl Roberts and Ron Douglas, were thanked for their service. For the six vacant board positions, there were six nominations, therefore all were declared elected.

At the subsequent meeting of the new board the executive appointments were elected:

- ▶ President: Gary Maddern
- ▶ Vice Presidents: Heather Braid and Brian Leech
- ▶ Treasurer: Rod Harris
- ▶ Secretary: Diane Marsh
- ▶ Other members: Kay Francis, Chris McAuliffe, Kaye Grant (co-opted); and newly appointed: Alan Taylor and Michael Saward.

(See photo below – Heather Braid & Chris McAuliffe absent)

Following the meeting, members enjoyed a light lunch.

### Social Bowls at Harcourt

During the coming months Harcourt

Bowling Club will be offering social bowls each Monday and Saturday afternoon, weather permitting.

**Monday afternoon jackpot pairs** - single entry or nominated pairs. 12.30 for 1.00 pm start.

**Saturday afternoon pairs** – single entry or nominated pairs. 12.30 for 1.00 pm start.

**Names must be in at the club before 12noon on both days for a 12.30 – 1.00 pm start.**

Come and enjoy a relaxed afternoon of social bowls – all welcome.

### Friday Fortnightly Meals

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.

## Results of Championships

### Ladies' Championship Pairs Final

The Harcourt Ladies' Champion Pairs final was held in April with Mary-Anne Doyle and Fran Corstorphan competing against Kathy Harding and Diane Marsh. The gallery was treated to a great game of precision bowling. Diane Marsh and Kathy Harding held their nerves to become the Champions. Well done, it was a great game, ladies! (see attached photos)

### Ladies' 100-Up Final

This was also played in April between Fran Corstorphan and Jude Ewing, the winner being Jude with runner-up Fran.



Winners, Ladies Championship Pairs, Diane Marsh and Kathy Harding.



Ladies' 100-Up winner Fran Corstorphan with runner-up Jude Ewing.

### Rice Triples Tournament

The Rice 2 bowl Triples Tournament provided an enjoyable end to the bowling season at Harcourt on Saturday 18 April. A perfect sunny autumn day, the green running well, and the sound of happy bowlers keen for a win were a recipe for a successful day and season end. This annual event is held in memory of long-time members Ben and Amy Rice who many of the current members have bowled with. Bowlers competed over 3 games of 12 ends, breaking halfway for the usual delicious afternoon tea.

After the 36 ends, there were two 3 game winners. The winners of the day on 54 points were Brett Jenkinson, Libby Harris and Rod Harris. Runners-up on 50 points were the team of Gary Maddern, Brian Leech and Cheryl Maddern (see photo next page).

### End of Season Presentations

The tournament was followed by the end of season presentations. President





Rice Triples Tournament winners Rod Harris and Libby Harris Absent: Brett Jenkinson

Gary Maddern thanked the organisers of the day and acknowledged the contributions of all members who have volunteered throughout the season and contributed to the success of the Harcourt Bowling Club.

The effect the recent fires had on the community and the strength and resilience of the club were noted. Also highlighted was the valued camaraderie of the bowling community.

Presentations made to the Winners from 2025-2026 season were:

**LADIES**

**Singles Champion** winner Wendy Chaplin; runner-up Diane Marsh; **Champion Pairs** winners Diane Marsh & Kathy Harding; runners-up Mary-Anne Doyle & Fran Corstorphan; **Drawn Pairs** winners Carrol Frost & Fran Corstorphan; runners-up Vinka Maltby & Jean

Pogue; **100-Up** winner Jude Ewing; runner-up Fran Corstorphan

**MEN'S**

**Singles Champion** winner Rod Harris; runner-up Mark Swain; **Champion Pairs** winners John Kays & Carl Roberts; runners-up Gary Maddern & Steve Douglas; **Gough Drawn Pairs** winners Les Harding & Alan Taylor; runners-up Barry Marsh & Ray Dejong; **100-Up** not contested this season.

**MIXED**

**Grant Pairs** winners Ian McMillan & Jean Pogue; runners-up Steve Douglas & Chris Anderson; **Rice Triples** winners Brett Jenkinson, Rod Harris, Libby Harris; runners-up Gary Maddern, Brian Leech, Cheryl Maddern.

The day was made complete with a delicious Indian meal.

# My Mum



*Yen's Mum Lian; a kind and gentle soul, loved by young and old alike.*

My Mum was born in Indonesia on an island called Riau; she had two brothers and a sister. About the year 1939 my mother's parents decided to go to China. It was my grandfather's dream to go back to China to live.

My grandparents with four children headed to Singapore to catch a ship to China. As told by my mother, my grandfather was not quite accepted by my grandmother's parents. They were a very wealthy family running an estate with two hundred workers.

When they arrived in Singapore, China was at war with Japan. They stayed in Singapore for two weeks thinking it would be a short war. As the war dragged on my grandfather decided that they should go to Malaysia, then known as Malaya, and continue with their journey to China when the war was over.

My grandparents ended up in a small fishing village called Pontian. There was no sign of the war ending and my grandfather opened up a tailor shop. Things went well for a while until the Japanese started their invasion of Malaya.

Mum was only thirteen years old when Japan invaded Malaya. My youngest uncle, her brother, was born in Malaysia and was only six months old at that time.

Stories of atrocities by the Japanese had many Malaysians running into hiding. As the Japanese were closing in on the fishing village, my grandparents took the whole family into the jungle to hide. They kept going deeper and deeper into the jungle to hide in the hills.

Upon reaching the highest peak they were met by about twenty people from three families. An elderly lady greeted my grandmother and politely asked my grandmother to take her family away because the elderly lady was

worried that my youngest uncle who was only six months old might cry during the night and attract the Japanese soldiers.

In despair my grandmother led the family downhill and hid in the jungle where they hoped the Japanese would not find them. It was a miracle that my youngest uncle did not make a sound during the night in the jungle. The next morning my grandparents took the family back up to the top of the hill, where they could continue to go deeper and further from the Japanese. To their disbelief the families they met yesterday had been all slaughtered. None survived.

My mum and family lived in the jungle for a while until the war was over. When they returned to the fishing village, everything they owned had been looted by people who had chosen to stay. My grandfather might have lost all their material possessions but they were lucky to be alive.

My mum lived to tell this story to her five children, and lived a long and happy life. She passed away from complication of a broken hip in 2010.

**The author of this story is Yen Kong, a long-time resident of Harcourt.**



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Barkers Creek



# Are your **young workers** prepared to face **in-your-face** customers?

If you're an employer, their safety is your responsibility.  
Get the tools to support your young workers.  
Ask yourself: would *you* work for you?

 **WorkSafe Young Workers**



Reducing workplace harm.





### Programs and Services

#### Creative Arts Therapy

Creative Arts Therapy is a holistic approach that uses creative expression to support healing, growth, and wellbeing. Through art making, individuals explore emotions, resolve inner challenges, and build self-awareness, strengthening the connection between mind and body.

At Dhelkaya Health, the program focuses on visual art forms such as painting, drawing, and sculpture. Sessions are tailored to each person, with therapists providing a safe and supportive space for expression.

Open to all ages in the Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges Shire experiencing mental health challenges.

Individual and group sessions are available. Referrals via GP, specialist, or self-referral. This is a free service.

More information: Call 5479 1000

#### New Outpatient Prehabilitation Clinic

Are you experiencing symptoms of hip or knee arthritis? Or are you currently waiting for hip or knee surgery? Prehabilitation (also known as 'prehab') helps your body prepare for surgery, and can even prevent the need for an operation. Call us to find out how prehab can help you.

More information: Call 5471 3568

#### Get Active

##### Maldon historic cemetery walk

Discover the stories of Maldon's past on this free guided walk through its historic cemetery. Set at the foot of Mount Moorul (Rock of Ages) and established in 1861, the cemetery holds over 7,500 burials.

Date: Thursday 28 May

Time: 10:30 am

More information: Call 5479 1000

### Save the date

#### Memorial Service

Dhelkaya Health invites you to its annual Memorial Service of Reflections and Memories.

This non-religious service will be held at the Auditorium at Dhelkaya Health's Castlemaine campus on Tuesday 19 May. Arrive at 6:30 pm for a 7:00 pm start.

The service runs for 30 minutes, followed by light refreshments. All are welcome to remember and give thanks for the lives of patients, residents and clients who passed away between 1 December 2024 and 30 November 2025.

More information:

Call 5471 3542 or email

pastoralcare@castlemainehealth.org.au

## A message for Harcourt from Maree Edwards MP

As the cooler months settle across Harcourt, and our region and autumn gives way to winter, we are once again reminded why so many people cherish living here. Recovery following the summer bushfires continues to be a key focus. While the fires left a lasting impact on many families, they also revealed the very best of our community. My sincere thanks go to everyone who has played a part in the recovery effort.

The State Government has committed a further \$37 million to long-term bushfire recovery across Victoria, bringing total recovery support to more than \$420 million. Recovery is about more than rebuilding infrastructure – it is about helping people, strengthening communities and supporting the road ahead.

Cost-of-living pressures remain a reality for many households, measures to help ease pressure on household budgets include:

- ▶ free public transport for under 18s
- ▶ free weekend travel for seniors, carers and people with disability
- ▶ Smile Squad dental care
- ▶ Glasses for Kids
- ▶ Affordable School Uniform Program
- ▶ Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, and
- ▶ Active Kids vouchers.
- ▶ Public transport fares are also half-price across Victoria until 1 January 2027, while
- ▶ eligible households can now access a 20% refund on vehicle registration costs

Students considering a career in healthcare may wish to explore undergraduate nursing and midwifery scholarships and the newly established Free TAFE Diploma of Nursing in Castlemaine at Dhelkaya Health.

We'll also see an additional daily return bus service between Castlemaine and Harcourt, improving local transport connections and making it easier to move around our region.

To learn more about cost-of-living support and assistance available, visit: [www.budget.vic.gov.au/helping-cost-living](http://www.budget.vic.gov.au/helping-cost-living)

As always, my office is here to assist with any state government matter. Please don't hesitate to get in touch by calling 03 5410 2444, or by clicking the "Get in Touch" button on my website: [www.mareeedwards.com.au](http://www.mareeedwards.com.au)

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

**I hold Listening Posts regularly across the electorate.**

For an appointment, please contact my office.



**Maree Edwards MP** 16 Lockwood Road, Kangaroo Flat VIC 3555  
State Member for Bendigo West [maree.edwards@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:maree.edwards@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
03 5410 2444 [mareeedwards.com.au](http://mareeedwards.com.au)  
**Your Trusted Local Voice**





# LOVE YOUR CREEK

NORTH HARCOURT SEDGWICK LANDCARE

North Harcourt Sedgwick Landcare Group are excited to have begun our latest landscape restoration project at the Sedgwick Bushland Reserve, focussing on practical creek restoration.

### You are invited...

Please join us for our first information session, where you can hear more about the project and take a tour of the site, led by local ecologist and project lead Dave Bryant.

- Hear about planned weed control, habitat restoration and revegetation
- Gain insight on how aspects might be applied at your own property
- Have the chance to ask questions
- Take a relaxed guided walk around the site, following the talk
- Enjoy a provided afternoon tea

2pm, Sunday 14 June, Sedgwick Hall.

RSVP is appreciated but not vital (email below)

#### Other upcoming sessions:

- 26 July – Planting day 1 – help us get 500 plants in the ground
- Aug (date TBC) – Planting day 2 - help us get 500 plants in the ground
- Nov (date TBC) – Love Your Creek update & education session

Stay informed: follow us on facebook, or email us to go on the mailing list.



nhselandcare@gmail.com



North Harcourt & Sedgwick Landcare Community Forum



Reservoir Levels	6 June 2026	4 Dec 2025
Upper Coliban	48%	66%
Lauriston	41%	84%
Malmsbury	24%	30%
Lake Eppalock	29%	na

Data sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology and Coliban Water websites.

No improvement in levels has been recorded. Our last report showed levels of 55% on April 5. Lake Eppalock is a shared system between Coliban and Murray Goulburn. Water from this reservoir is moved to other storages, north and as far south as Ballarat.

\* **Barkers Creek Reservoir levels are unavailable. This reservoir is being treated as a temporary storage and enables water to be shifted through the Coliban system**

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# Grace Church

This is a statement of belief by Grace Church

The most significant event on the Christian calendar lately, is the day of Pentecost, the day upon which the modern church was born.

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

In fact, those present spoke in the languages of about fifteen countries dotted around the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa, languages that were previously unknown to them. This was an unprecedented sign to those gathered in Jerusalem at this time that God had poured out His Holy Spirit.

The flames or tongues of fire that settled on each of the believers represented the fulfillment of a prophecy John the Baptist had given regarding Jesus when Jesus was baptised in water by full immersion by John. John said

“I baptise with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am – so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

What is the purpose of this baptism, or immersion, in the Holy Spirit? Jesus explained it this way ....

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Let it be.

Ps Roger Thurecht, Grace Church  
(meets at 30 Buckley Street – all welcome)

## 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

## Winter in the fruit garden

Welcome to winter! Like us, you've probably finished harvesting from your trees, unless you have any late apples or pears still to pick. The fruit trees are well on the way to going dormant. It's a beautiful time of year to be in the garden, and there's plenty to do. There's lots going on this month with trees available to order, and a brand new Pruning and Espalier Masterclass coming up—you'll find the links at the end of the article.

### **Assess burnt fruit trees**

For everyone with fruit trees that were burnt in the fire, we're coming up to the point where you can decide what to do with each tree. By now, there's been enough time to assess how each tree has responded after the fire. Trees that have died will obviously need to be removed, and trees that haven't shown healthy recovery growth are probably in the same category.

If your tree has put on good new growth, the next question is where that growth is happening. If most of the regrowth is high up in the tree, it may be difficult to prune it back into a useful shape. But if there's healthy growth lower down, the tree may still be recoverable. Badly burnt trees that have recovered strongly will probably benefit from hard pruning to remove damaged wood and help re-establish a productive, manageable shape. If you'd like advice about specific trees, please get in touch.

### **Tip #1: It's time to order new fruit trees**

Our first tip this month is to think about whether you want to plant any new fruit trees this winter. We'll be having four open days this year at our on-farm Carr's Fruit Tree Nursery, from 2 to 5 July, from 10 am to 4 pm each day. It's the only time of year you can visit the farm to buy a fruit tree, and we love it when locals drop in! To be sure of getting what you want, we recommend that you pre-order your trees through our online shop: [openfoodnetwork.org.au/carrs-fruit-tree-nursery/shop/](https://openfoodnetwork.org.au/carrs-fruit-tree-nursery/shop/). Then we'll have them ready for you to pick up at one of the open days. We have a lovely new range of citrus trees this year, grown on rootstocks to suit this climate.

Being Harcourt's only fruit tree nursery, we feel a responsibility to save

heritage apple varieties that are going out of fashion. You can help make sure these beautiful and interesting old heirloom varieties don't get completely lost by growing one in your garden! The best way to maintain our apple heritage is by growing, eating, sharing, talking about, and loving as many different varieties as possible. However, it can be nerve-racking to give valuable garden space to a variety you've never heard of. To solve this problem, we've created a range of multigraft apple trees that combine Pink Lady and more exotic varieties like Spartan, Rome Beauty, and Stayman's Winesap on the same tree. It's a low-risk way to try out a new variety in your garden and add to your biodiversity.

### **Tip #2: Winter is a good time for garden planning**

If you are thinking about planting new trees, you need to decide (a) where to put them, and (b) what varieties you want to plant. One of the benefits of living here in Harcourt is that most people have enough space for a decent-sized garden, with lots of room for fruit trees. But even if you have a large garden, it might make sense to keep your fruit trees together in one area of the garden, rather than spreading them out. Having a designated orchard area in the garden makes it possible to net the trees under a single structure, rather than having to create a separate structure for each tree. It can also be easier to set up a simple but effective irrigation system if all the trees with similar needs are in one place.

If you'd rather have your fruit trees scattered throughout your garden that can work too! It's quite easy to protect a single fruit tree from fruit fly and birds with a simple hoop structure that is easy to construct from star pickets and polypipe. Similarly, it's not that hard to irrigate individual trees that are scattered around your garden—it just might take multiple pipes and offshoots to reach them all.

### **Tip #3: It's time to start pruning any fruit trees that have lost their leaves**

As soon as your fruit trees have lost their leaves it's the time to start your winter pruning. Pruning trees while they're dormant makes it much easier

to see the structure of the tree to help with your pruning decisions. Pruning at this time will also encourage a nice strong growth response in your tree.

### **And lastly...**

Winter is a good time to reflect on other ways of generally improving the health of your garden. Try to add more diversity each year—different varieties of fruit trees, different understorey plants around and near your fruit trees (e.g. herbs, vegetables or shrubs—or even just weeds!), and even different microbes in your soil.

Believe it or not, biodiversity is one of your best defences against the risks you face from pests and diseases, and even the weather! Wondering how that works? Well, the more varieties of fruit trees you have, the more likely you are to harvest at least something every year. A particularly wet spring, for example, may lead to disease in the stone fruit, but the apples and pears will thrive.

Having a diverse collection of plants in your garden (especially flowering plants, and yes—even weeds) provides good habitat to attract lots of beneficial insects that will do at least half your work of cleaning up any pests. There's also a lot of science emerging about the incredible impact that multiple plants growing in the same soil can have on each other. It's kind of an extension of the old idea of companion planting, but we now know that plants communicate with each other underground, they swap nutrients and microbes, and they help to make each other healthier.

**Hugh and Katie Finlay have been organic orchardists for more than 20 years, and offer a free weekly newsletter called *Weekly Fruit Tips* - sign up here: [growgreatfruit.com/wft-subscribe](https://growgreatfruit.com/wft-subscribe)**

**They are running an online Pruning and Espalier Master Class on 11 June, see: [growgreatfruit.com/product/pruning-masterclass-registration-june-2026](https://growgreatfruit.com/product/pruning-masterclass-registration-june-2026)**

**Carr's Fruit Tree Nursery is open for orders until June 30 at: [openfoodnetwork.org.au/carrs-fruit-tree-nursery/shop](https://openfoodnetwork.org.au/carrs-fruit-tree-nursery/shop).**

# Council news

## Coping with the smell of smoke

As cooler weather returns, fireplaces and planned burns mean more smoke in the air. For those affected by recent fires, this can trigger anxiety or memories of danger. This is a normal trauma response.

If you're finding it difficult, you're not alone. Support is available.

Visit [mountalexander.vic.gov.au/bushfire-health-and-wellbeing](http://mountalexander.vic.gov.au/bushfire-health-and-wellbeing) for a list of local and national support services.

## Waste levy waiver extended

The Victorian Government has extended the waste levy waiver and Gate Fee Rebate Program to 30 June 2026. Fire affected residents can dispose of damaged household materials at Council transfer stations free of charge until then (ID required). Commercial quantities are not accepted.

Contractors should use approved landfill sites. For more information, contact Council on 5471 1700.

Working together for a healthy, connected shire  
[mountalexander.vic.gov.au](http://mountalexander.vic.gov.au) (03) 5471 1700



## FARADAY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION invites you to A Mid-Year Community Gathering

We had a great event last year around a roaring bonfire, so we thought you might like to do it again ... to warm ourselves before the winter blues set in.

**DUNSTANS FLAT  
SATURDAY JUNE 13th at 5.30 pm**

Come along to catch up with neighbours and friends.

Barbeque facilities will be available for you to cook up a storm (hopefully the weather doesn't do the same!).

BYO Food, drinks, chairs and warm clothing.

For further information  
call Chris Brooke on 0428 192 335

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## Lisa Chesters MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BENDIGO

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[lisachesters.org](http://lisachesters.org)

Authorized by Lisa Chesters, A.P.  
16 Myers St, Bendigo

Labor

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.

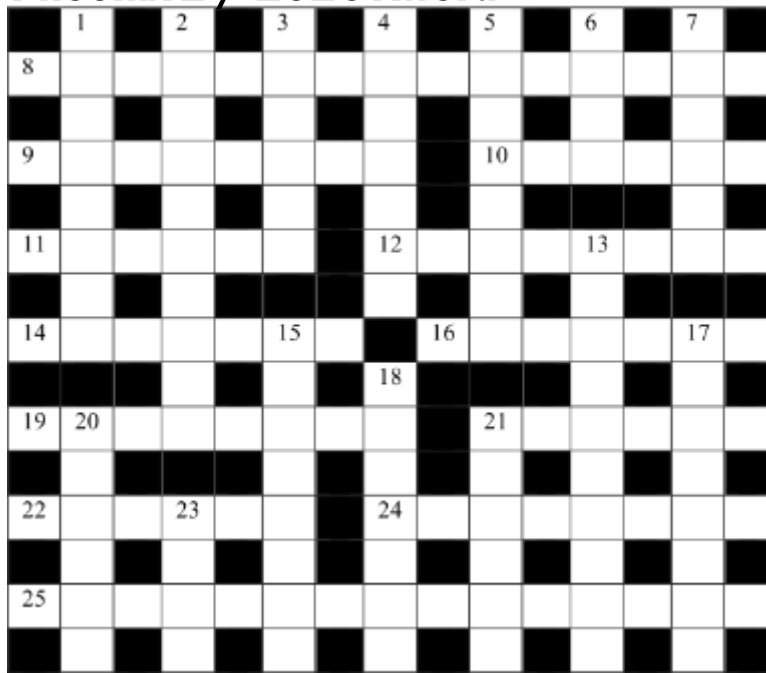
With over 100 local volunteer presenters with a passion for radio, our programs are varied and diverse with over 70 shows across the program grid, transmitting 24 hours a day and streaming online via [mainfm.net](http://mainfm.net)

# 94.9 main FM

LISTEN LOCAL

# Phoenix 2 / 2026 Xword

©McW May '22, recycled Feb '26



**Down:**

1. I'm for taking inapt god on board! [8]
2. He looks like Death warmed up, crude as avo smashed on toast in a Brunswick Cafe. [10]
3. Stink of social climbing. [6]
4. Do a rowdy moratorium in the laundry... [7]
5. If it looks like a riot at 4, what must the police lines be? [8]
6. Widow's contribution can be a thing.
7. Beats the tripe out of Manchester currency? [6]
13. As union rep., I invent foe in the daily grind... [4-2-4]
15. Some problems won't crop up if you've engaged a JP to fix them... [8]
17. We could elect Sir Toby, with his gauntlet, to care for these birds. [8]
18. Incorporates lithium and puts the mockers on very basic physical structures. [7]
20. Drier add-on to a bill, etc.? [6]
21. Teach some top polliés to become rorters. [6]
23. I'm fit enough not to, so... promise I won't, Irene! [4]

**Across:**

8. Proposal that I be banker as contender for Platonic prize? [5,10]
9. Obvious that retro father is one. [8]
10. Stole ending in first 3 of 24. [6]
11. Put money into it? Nah! Shed it! [6]
12. State of Scots dam after spring-clean? [8]
14. Beached with a substantive backup? [7]
16. Strange—could even be grace... [3,4]
19. A test case put paid to this in favour of different media. [8]
21. The iciest ones are far north—or south! [6]
22. Mess left by dog or cat? [6]
24. Actually, after last 3 of 10, bloody loud, etc... [2,6]
25. How "back" works? [15]

# Phoenix 1 / 2026 Xword Solution

© McW recycled '26



**Down:**

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

**Across:**

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

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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 repairers 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



castlemainerepaircafe.wordpress.com

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



### April Solution

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

## 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](mailto:news@harcourt.vic.au)

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

Harcourt Progress Association Inc.  
 23 Station Street,  
 (PO Box 135)  
 Harcourt Vic. 3453  
 ABN: 22 887 254 268



**Harcourt Progress Association Inc.  
 Bushfire Donations & Distribution Report – 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2026**

**RECEIPTS**

Go-Fund-Me ( <i>Balance after fees = 2.2% + 30c per transaction</i> )		\$396,471.74
HPA Bushfire Appeal account		\$354,514.03
Interest earned (from Bushfire Appeal account)		\$1,300.30
<i>Gift Card Donations (to HPA for distribution)</i>		
Rotary	\$13,000.00	
Community donations	\$10,139.00	
Sussan	\$6,000.00	
GIVIT (Woolworths)	\$4,600.00	
GIVIT (Bunnings)	\$1,850.00	
Bendigo Bank (Castlemaine)	\$1,000.00	
Complex Façade (donation of Coles vouchers)	\$1,000.00	\$37,589.00
Boomtown fundraiser gifted to Harcourt Valley Community House		\$89,352.00
<i>Funds to enhance capacity of HVCH to support community recovery activities, including the employment of a Manager</i>		
Community Enterprise Foundation (CEF) grant		\$22,617.22
<i>Funds to employ the Interim Harcourt Relief Coordinator</i>		
Grant to purchase fencing materials		\$200,000.00
<i>Funds made available to purchase fencing materials applied by Blazeaid.</i>		
Total Tools Vouchers (recently acquired)		\$20,000.00
<i>To be applied to Phase 3 support funding, soon to be announced</i>		
<b>Total Income to support Bushfire recovery</b>		<b>\$1,121,844.29</b>

**DISTRIBUTIONS**

**Go-Fund-Me Funds**

Phase 1 - Gift cards (Community donations)	\$30,010.00	
Phase 1 - Gift cards (HPA funded)	\$70,446.00	\$100,456.00
Phase 2: \$2,000 distributed to eligible households that lost their Principal Place of Residence (PPR)		\$94,000.00
<b>Sub-total amount of funds spent from Go-Fund-Me Donations</b>		<b>\$194,456.00</b>

**HPA Bushfire Funds (HPA Bendigo Bank account)**

Admin costs (Includes FB boost, bank fees, record keeping aids)	\$969.36	
Volunteer Recognition (thank-you events and acknowledgement)	\$2,479.59	
OH&S (activities or items to ensure safety of volunteers)	\$948.40	
Indirect support to fire affected people e.g. truck hire, fuel for deliveries of furniture or whitegoods, tag & test.	\$4,939.25	
Community Support e.g. Applefest free rides for Harcourt & district children, fencing course, purchase of fencing tools for loan to the community.	\$3,758.19	\$13,094.79
Funds from grant to hire Interim Relief Coordinator are fully expended		\$22,617.22
Funds from fencing grant are fully expended		\$200,000.00
<b>Total returned to the community up to 26th May</b>		<b>\$430,168.01</b>

# COMMUNITY LED RECOVERY FOR HARCOURT & DISTRICTS

Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient future.



Local people. Local ideas. Local future.

The January 2026 fires impacted our community in many different ways.

Some people are rebuilding, while others continue to face significant challenges. Together we can support recovery and shape a more resilient future for Harcourt & Districts.



Some people are rebuilding.



Some are still recovering.



Some want to help shape what comes next.

## DRIVE THE RECOVERY OF HARCOURT & DISTRICTS: A COMMUNITY-LED PROPOSAL



A community-led initiative to enable us to lead and drive our own recovery.



Bringing together local groups, agencies and residents to work collaboratively.



Inclusive and open to everyone. Your voice matters.



For this to succeed, we need you, AND your friends and neighbours to get involved.



CAN'T MAKE IT IN PERSON? Livestream and recording details will be available and emailed out.



COMMUNITY MEETING



MONDAY 8 JUNE 2026

7PM

(DOORS OPEN 6:30PM)



HARCOURT LEISURE CENTRE  
BINGHAMS ROAD,  
HARCOURT 3453



Harcourt Lions Club BBQ

6PM-7PM



Be there. Have your say. Help shape our future!

Supported by:



### GET INVOLVED

- Share ideas
- Support recovery
- Join working groups
- Stay informed
- Help with projects

Your voice matters.

Let's build our future together.



### REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

Stay connected. Join a working group. Help shape our community's future.



SCAN ME!

[bit.ly/harcourt-recovery](https://bit.ly/harcourt-recovery)

### STAY INFORMED

For updates, resources and local recovery information, visit the Mount Alexander Shire Bushfire Recovery Hub.



[shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-hub](https://shape.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/bushfire-recovery-hub)



[harcourtrecovery@cch.org.au](mailto:harcourtrecovery@cch.org.au)



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