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Where Community Matters

93RD EDITION FEBRUARY 2, 2024

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GEM KIDS SPACE

PAGES 18-19

AUSSIE ICON AT RISK OF EXTINCTION?

REPORTED FIGURES AREN'T ADDING UP AS SNOWY MOUNTAIN BRUMBIES DISAPPEAR FAST

THE Australian Brumby is a precious part of Australia's heritage. They took our soldiers to war, they were used to open the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, they hold pride and place on our money and stamps. These horses helped to build this country.

At least 3,000 Wild Heritage Horses are acknowledged as being sustainable and are officially

protected by the 2018 Heritage Brumby Bill. However, there is widespread concern that incorrect numbers are being used on which to base upcoming culling practices. Because, if correct, it may leave remaining numbers well below that figure.

"Our Snowy Mountains Brumbies are an important part of our Australian History. Their genes are

a rare mix not found anywhere else in the world," explains passionate Brumby supporter and activist, Di Hardley who has rescued 16 Brumbies herself.

Right now, passionate Brumby supporters from all over Australia have joined forces to facilitate an Independent Scientific Wild Horse Recount in the NSW Snowy Mountains, in a bid to protect and

preserve the future of our Heritage Wild Horses.

"Our biggest concern is the discrepancy over the numbers," says passionate brumby supporter and activist, Di Hardley.

"National Parks do a yearly Brumby count using software from the University of St Andrews. Unfortunately, the variant is enormous, with their count

being 12,000 to 22,000 — that's a difference of 10,000! This figure appears to be highly inflated because that number of horses equates to around 18 horses per square kilometre which, if correct, would mean horses would be visible everywhere and there would be very little grass left."

■ CONTINUES PAGE 3



WHEN THE INDEX HITS 3 COVER UP FROM UV



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Chester set to contest 2025 election

FEDERAL Member for Gippsland Darren Chester has been pre-selected unopposed as The Nationals candidate for the next election, due to be held in 2025.

The experienced MP says he has 'unfinished business' and is looking forward to the challenge of getting a fairer deal for all regional communities, particularly Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley.

"I entered public life to make a difference 15 years ago, and I'm proud of everything my team and I have achieved in partnership with local communities but there's always unfinished business," Mr Chester said.

"I believe in delivering a safer, stronger, better and fairer regional Australia, where everyone can get ahead.

"This year, I will be using my experience in government and opposition to focus on delivering policies, programs and services that improve the lives of people who choose to live outside our capital cities.

"Regional Australia grows world-class food and fibre, and we also grow great kids. We need to keep investing in regional education for our youth to achieve their full potential as tradespeople, running their own business or farm, or undertaking tertiary studies.

"We also need to invest in the liveability of country communities, with better health, childcare and aged care, to attract and retain skilled workers."

Mr Chester said the next election would be critical for the region as it was being neglected by city-focused



Pictured: Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester has been confirmed as The Nationals candidate for the next election, expected to be held in 2025.

state and federal Labor leaders.

"We need a fairer share of Federal Government investment in the critical infrastructure such as roads, rail and telecommunication services, which will continue to make our region a better place to live, work and visit," Mr Chester.

"We have a long list of projects that were fully funded by the previous government which will be completed in the next 12 months but there's no pipeline of new funding from the Albanese Government for the next infrastructure improvements we will need.

"It requires commitment, passion and determination to get results in politics and I still have the energy to keep putting locals first and simply get stuff done across Gippsland.

"My pledge to Gippslanders is that I will keep finding more positive ways to deliver action on the ground, and ensure the needs of regional communities are heard at the highest level of decision-making in our nation throughout 2024 and beyond.

"Long-term and sustainable jobs are fundamental to regional development and growth. We need to keep adding

value and creating new opportunities in our traditional industries across regional Australia, while also supporting investment in emerging industries.

"As a father of four children, providing pathways for young Australians to secure their own futures outside our capital cities is my highest priority.

"Small town Australia needs big voices in Federal Parliament and I'm optimistic, positive and full of hope that I can continue to work in partnership with our communities, and improve the lives of more Gippslanders."

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THERMAL IMAGING TECHNOLOGY USED IN BRUMBY MANAGEMENT

FROM FRONT PAGE

IN June 2023, overseen by a leading biostatistician, 72 people went into the northern end of the Kosciusko National Park, where 85 per cent of the wild horses are.

“We went in on horseback and on foot to document the number of Brumbies, and we covered morning and afternoon shifts on both a Saturday and Sunday. From this, we came up with a total count of 537!”

“And even if we triple that figure, in case we missed certain areas of the Park, that’s still only around 1,600 horses — not even close to the required 3,000 that must remain protected and definitely not in the ballpark of the 12,000 to 22,000 that the Government’s data suggests!”

“Interestingly, the method the Government used to count was the same system that was deemed ‘flawed’ in court, when previously used to count kangaroo populations in 2021. Equally intriguing is the fact the maps of the aeroplane path from when they did the count are not available; nor is the imagery or videos to confirm the count.”

Unfortunately, data regarding exactly how many horses were visible is not being released. Typically, you need to see a minimum of 60-80 clusters of horses in order to do any modelling, but if you’re only seeing 10 clusters, for example, that’s nowhere near enough clusters to undertake modelling. The Snowy Mountain Brumby Sustainability Management

Group (SMBSMG also known as ‘Brumbies Forever on Facebook), which is a group formed by Di, actually offered to pay to send an independent person up in a helicopter, to cover the same distance and area that National Parks do themselves, and the only variance was that we were going to video the sightings; it’s called ‘Mark and Recapture.’ Unfortunately, the Government declined the offer.”

“And so, our mission became to get an independent count done, which is entirely undertaken by an external company so that the evidence produced is irrefutable. This proposed count will produce a mosaic image of the entire survey area. It will show where every single horse is seen across the entire survey area. And it will be visible and accessible to anyone and everyone.”

“We found a company from South Australia called AirborneLogic, who can do the recount for \$75,000 [which has since been successfully crowd-funded]. They’ll use the latest thermal imaging technology, which is the software used for Mark and Recapture counting all over the world.”

“Our concern is that if there are actually 3,000 or less Brumbies in the National Park, as we suspect there may be, then any that are slaughtered in the next round of aerial shootings will put these precious and protected horses at risk of extinction.”

“We need to have the recount



done, and we need it done fast as the next round of aerial shooting is scheduled for February.”

“These beautiful creatures deserve respect for the role they’ve played in our history, heritage and culture. Our aim is to get the count done, get data analysis and report done, have it peer reviewed, and then shared in the

public arena so the Government can then adopt a better method of counting. And this applies not just for horses but for other animals too, such as kangaroos, koalas; it’s all developing technology that can help the Government become more accurate and accountable.”

At the time of writing, the NSW Government has released

information around park closures that span seven months between 4 April and 4 October for aerial shooting operations that include horses, deer, pigs and other feral animals.

To learn more, including how you can support the preservation and protection of the Snowy Brumbies visit www.brumbiesforever.org

Eighteen new citizens officially call Australia home

EAST Gippsland’s newest citizens have been officially welcomed at an Australia Day citizenship ceremony held in Bairnsdale on Friday, January 26.

The 18 conferees from Britain, Philippines, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, Malta and India formally pledged their commitment to Australia in

front of a large crowd of more than 60 family and friends at St Mary’s Parish Centre.

East Gippsland Shire Council Deputy Mayor Cr Jane Greacen OAM said citizenship ceremonies are special occasions for all involved.

“It is a momentous occasion for families and friends, as well as the conferees, who have chosen

Australia as the place they want to call home,” Cr Greacen said.

“Becoming a citizen shows your commitment to Australia, its people, our shared values, and our future together, and it is also about Australia’s commitment to you,” Cr Greacen said.

“Our new citizens come from diverse backgrounds and ages. Some have been

part of East Gippsland or elsewhere in Australia for a long time, while others have recently moved to our wonderful country.

Council holds three citizenship ceremonies each year. Attending a citizenship ceremony is the final step in the journey to become an Australian citizen. Conferees received a certificate, citizenship coin, and a gift

from Council in the form of a native plant. The ceremony fulfils the requirements under Australian citizenship law.

The ceremony was live-streamed so family and friends from across the world could watch the special occasion. The ceremony can be viewed on Council’s YouTube channel, [youtube.com/EastGippsTV](https://www.youtube.com/EastGippsTV)



Sumeer Thakar of Bairnsdale with his family Melanie Boyes and Xavier and Zaiden Thakar following the ceremony at St Mary’s Parish Hall in Bairnsdale.

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WHAT Hire A Hubby can do, is help you with a wide range of property maintenance jobs. Some may be odd jobs, while others could fall into regular home maintenance, or projects and upgrades. Let's take a look at the property maintenance jobs Hire A Hubby can assist you with:

Indoor Jobs

- Repairing doors or windows that don't open or lock properly. This also includes fixing and replacing broken locks.
- Fixing and replacing window and door seals
- Hanging televisions, pictures and mirrors
- Cabinetry door and bench top replacement
- Fixing and replacing hinges and handles
- Installing grab rails
- Fixing holes in walls, and plaster and cornice installation
- Re-grouting tiles
- Installing pet doors
- Changing light-bulbs
- Building and installing indoor entertainment units, cabinets, and shelves
- Building flat-pack furniture
- Painting and patch and repairs to walls
- Repairing or replacing flooring, skirting boards, architraves, and cornice.

Outdoor Jobs

- Cleaning and mending gutters and down pipes
- Concreting

- Fly screen replacement
- Building carports, fences, pergolas or entertainment decking areas
- Installing and fixing handrails, balustrades and stairs
- High-pressure cleaning and removal of oil, dirt and grime
- Oiling and resealing of decks and outdoor wooden furniture
- Building outdoor cubby houses, sheds, and covers for wheelie bins and pool filters
- Fixing a damaged roof or replacing tiles
- Outdoor maintenance including landscaping, and repairing paths and stairs
- Painting exterior walls and fences
- Graffiti removal, repair, and repainting.

The jobs we don't do

- Gardening (I would not let a carpenter or builder near my roses)
- Lawn mowing
- Removalist work
- Hazardous waste removal (Asbestos)
- Rubbish removal (except if it's part of the job)
- Foundation work.

Obscure jobs our Hubbies have undertaken

Replacing window sash cords and spiral balances: Sash windows make a lovely decorative feature whilst providing a functional



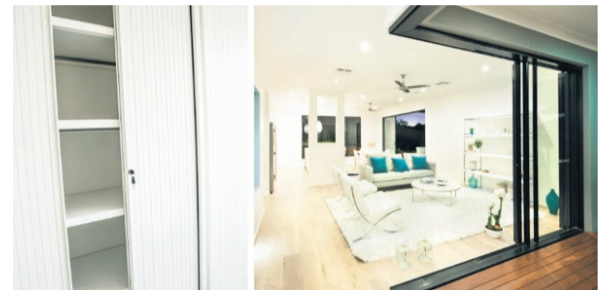
addition to any home. You'll find sash windows throughout Australia. Like with anything, over time faults may develop. Common faults with sash windows can lay with the cords and spiral balances. Speak to Wayne at Hire A Hubby Bairnsdale/Lakes Entrance to assist in replacing these parts before spending out on a Sash Window specialist.

Replacing worn rollers on sliding doors, wardrobe doors, balcony doors and Bi-fold doors

Over time, and usually due to age, rollers for all types of sliding doors can wear thin. If you are experiencing problems with your doors, why not get Hire A Hubby to look at them for you.

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create from scratch or with a makeover takes imagination, invention and forward-thinking. Wayne and the team are experts in this field and can help you with your kitchen or bathroom

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Take charge of your diabetes with DESMOND

EAST Gippslanders living with type 2 diabetes will soon be able to take advantage of a fresh approach to managing their condition.

DESMOND (Diabetes Education and Self-Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed) is an evidence-based education program designed to support people living with type 2 diabetes by helping them learn practical skills for managing the chronic illness.

Delivered by Gippsland Lakes Complete Health professionals and specially trained DESMOND educators, Melissa and Amanda, the education sessions use group facilitation to show participants how to make the most of their self-management with more knowledge and understanding of their diabetes.

Using a client-focused approach, participants and their carers will gain a greater understanding of the causes of type 2 diabetes, the importance of medication, food, exercise, and how the body processes food for energy.

The session ends with each participant creating their own



GLCH's two specially trained DESMOND educators, Amanda and Melissa, will present a series of diabetes education sessions starting on 20 February.

action plan to help them plan and manage their diabetes.

The DESMOND program, which started in the United Kingdom in 2006, has previously been available in Melbourne but not in East Gippsland — until now.

As part of GLCH's aim to respond to the community's health needs, GLCH has partnered with Diabetes Victoria to train existing health care professionals who can then deliver the program locally.

Melissa and Amanda, two GLCH health professionals who have worked in the diabetes field collectively for more than 25 years, have been

trained to deliver DESMOND workshops locally and are now working towards their formal accreditation.

Once achieved, they will be the only accredited DESMOND educators east of Warragul.

Melissa and Amanda will present four six-hour face-to-face sessions in 2024 in partnership with the National Diabetes Subsidy Scheme (NDSS), starting on 20 February.

To find out more about DESMOND or to book a session, contact or GLCH on 5155 8300, visit the National Diabetes Services Scheme website or call 1800 637 700.

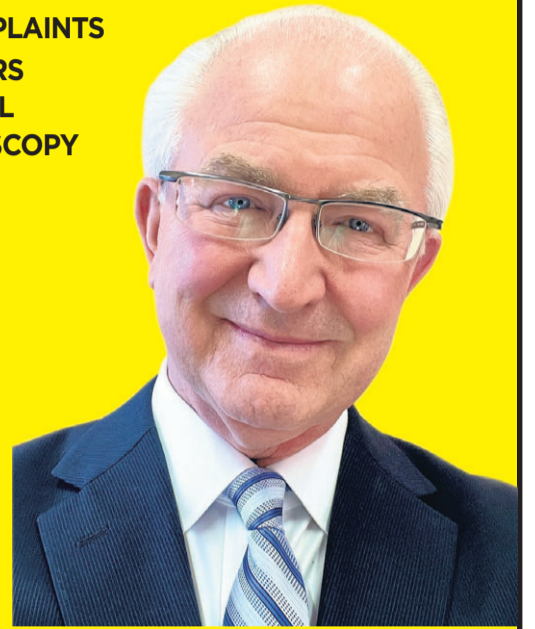
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MOWERS RACE FOR CFA FUNDING



Pictures by
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By Shannan

THE roots of Australia's first-ever mower race can be traced back to a quaint country pub in Harrierville, Victoria, where in 1988, fuelled by camaraderie and a few drinks, five men decided to embark on a daring race across the area's picturesque hills.

With their unmodified Briggs and Stratton engines billowing smoke, they tackled the challenging terrain, navigating steep slopes and circling a designated gum tree before hurtling downhill in what locals affectionately referred to as "Angel Gear," slang for neutral, in a mad dash for the finish line.

Reflecting on the event, Brian Ross, a six-time president of the Australian Ride-On Lawn Mower Racing Association (AROLMRA), fondly recalls how half the town's population, including 100 residents, 300 sheep, and 150



Pictures by
SmithCreative.com.au

dogs, gathered to witness the spectacle. AROLMRA, a non-profit organisation, not only caters to racing enthusiasts but also extends its support to local community causes like the Johnsonville CFA through fundraising endeavours.

At the recent AROLMRA event held in aid of the Johnsonville CFA Fundraiser, a variety of

mower classes were on display, accommodating both Standard Mowers and specific engine capacities. In a display of skill and determination, Chase Carpenter clinched 1st place in the Standard Mowers category, while Teddy McIntyre and Jack Gristi jointly secured 1st place in the Junior Class. Further showcasing their

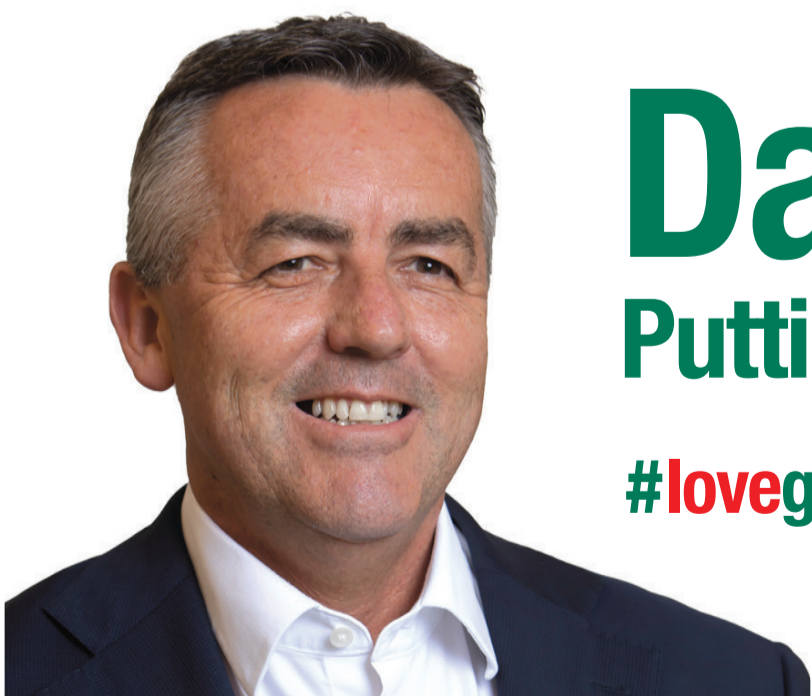
pro prowess, Paul Davison triumphed in the C class, Jack Nichols dominated the B class, and Ash Mackay emerged victorious in the A class.

The event not only celebrated the thrill of lawn mower racing but also highlighted the community's unwavering support for vital causes like the Johnsonville CFA.

Darren Chester

Putting Locals First

#lovegippsland



THE NATIONALS for Gippsland

Authorised by Darren Chester, The National Party of Australia, Level 13, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne.

www.darrenchester.com.au

Victorians urged to take care as temperatures soar

THE Allan Labor Government is reminding Victorians to take care of themselves and others as the hottest day in a year approaches, set to blanket most of the state.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today warned Victorians to look after their health, and that of their loved ones, with temperatures this weekend expected to hit the 40-degree mark in many parts of the state.

Most of Victoria will see the summer's first heatwave conditions on Sunday, with Melbourne to hit 34 degrees — its hottest day since last February, while Mildura will see 44 degrees, Wodonga will reach 40 degrees, Horsham 39 degrees and Bairnsdale can expect 36 degrees.

Extreme heat kills more people than natural disasters — and after multiple years of cooler, wetter La Niña conditions, Victorians are reminded of the simple steps they can take to survive the heat:

- Drink plenty of water, stay cool by seeking out air-conditioned buildings
- Plan ahead and schedule activities to the coolest part of the day
- If heading outdoors, seek shade when possible, wear a hat and sunscreen and avoid exercising in the heat
- Check in on others most at risk in the heat.

People who are vulnerable to extreme heat include the elderly, babies and infants, pregnant women, people

with acute or chronic health problems and people who are socially isolated. These conditions can lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke, trigger heart attacks or stroke, or worsen existing conditions such as kidney or lung disease.

Children and pets are particularly vulnerable to heat if left in enclosed areas like parked cars, where temperatures can more than double within minutes, and which are often 20 to 30 degrees hotter than outside — a deadly combination for children, whose body temperatures rise much faster than adults.

Leaving the windows of a parked car down has little effect on reducing the temperature, with tests showing that when windows are left open 10 centimetres, the temperature will only reduce by five degrees.

In the event of an extreme heat period, the Department of Health will always provide information and advice to ensure Victorians know how to stay well during the heat and ways to keep cool. If you or someone you know is showing signs of heat exhaustion, heatstroke, or other health emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

For non-life-threatening emergencies people can contact the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, visit a Priority Primary Care Centre, call NURSE-ON-CALL or visit a GP doctor or local pharmacist for advice.

Potholes galore need a funding boost

THE deplorable state of East Gippsland's roads will be back on the agenda when State Parliament resumes in February.

Gippsland East Nationals MP, Tim Bull, said it was alarming the number of road warning and traffic hazard signs that had been situated on our roadsides for an extended period of time, without repairs being done.

"What is also alarming is that just prior to Christmas a number of potholes were filled, but with Christmas traffic and without the permanent fix that was required, they are now, in many cases, just as bad as they originally were, if not worse."

"I met with Roads Minister Melissa Horne, pre-Christmas with Federal member, Darren Chester, and we outlined the dire need for significant investment.

"It is not a problem unique to East Gippsland, and those who have travelled around the state will notice a similar circumstance in other areas," he said.

Mr Bull said the deterioration of the roads was the worst he could remember.

"The underlying problem is this Government has cut roads funding by 40 per cent over the past two years and the end result can only be one thing — worse roads.

"This Government fines motorists for not having roadworthy cars, but it is not providing car worthy roads.

"Because of the massive cost overruns on city projects, this Government has slashed our roads maintenance funding in the country, so we suffer from Labor not being able to manage money or major projects."

Mr Bull said the only way to rectify the problem was a massive increase in roads funding in this year's May Budget, however, with the State facing a \$175 billion debt due to Labor's mismanagement, he was concerned the investment required would not be made but would continue to take up the cause.

advice - ask Emma



Emma Woodcock
Counsellor

Q: My husband is asking for a trial separation. He tells me he loves me but that I am too insecure and that it is driving him crazy putting up with it. I worry a lot, I know, but I didn't realise it had become so difficult that it's unbearable for him to live with! I don't know what to do about it. Can you point me in the right direction?

A: Thank you for writing in. To me, I can see that your husband's request for a trial separation has brought about feelings of confusion and distress for you. Let's break this down into three key areas to navigate this challenging situation:

1. Understanding the Situation:

- **Acknowledge Your Feelings:** Begin by acknowledging and validating your own feelings. It's okay to feel confused, hurt, or overwhelmed by your husband's request. Work with a therapist or journal to process some of the complex mix of emotions you may be feeling right now.
- **Reflect on Insecurity:** Take some time for self-reflection. Your husband mentions your insecurity as a source of difficulty. Consider whether there are specific patterns of behaviour or thought that contribute to these feelings.

Remember, **your insecurity is not identity**. What exactly do I mean by this? That your feelings of insecurity don't define who you are. Insecurity may be a temporary state or a challenge to overcome, but it doesn't encompass your entire identity. People are complex beings with various layers and aspects to their personalities, so overcoming insecurities is often a part of personal growth and development, not their identity.

Put it this way, insecurity comes from a place where we lack confidence or assurance, often stemming from self-doubt or a sense of inadequacy. It's a feeling of uncertainty about ourselves or

our abilities. On the other hand, identity refers to the characteristics and qualities that make an individual unique. It includes aspects such as personal values, beliefs, experiences, and self-perception. It's a complex concept as these can change and develop over time.

Insecurity is a common human experience that can impact many areas of our lives. Recognising its presence is the first step towards understanding and overcoming. Here are 5 questions designed to help you get started on your reflection.

Your answers can provide valuable insight to help you take proactive steps toward building a stronger sense of self.

1. **Do You Constantly Seek Validation?** One key indicator of insecurity is a perpetual need for validation from others. Reflect on whether you often seek reassurance and approval to feel accepted and worthy.
2. **Are You a Perfectionist?** Perfectionism can be a sign of insecurity, as individuals fear failure and strive for an unattainable standard of perfection. Ask yourself if you set extremely high standards and struggle with the fear of not meeting them.
3. **Do You Engage in Negative Self-Talk?** Insecurity often manifests through negative self-talk. Consider whether you find yourself excessively self-critical, focusing on perceived shortcomings in your abilities, appearance, or achievements.
4. **Are You Prone to Comparison?** Constantly comparing yourself to others and feeling inferior or envious may indicate underlying insecurity. Reflect on whether you frequently measure your worth against the achievements and attributes of those around you. This includes social media too. Reflect on whether your use of social media is impacting your self-esteem.
5. **Are You Defensive in the Face of Criticism?** Insecurity often triggers defensive reactions to criticism or perceived threats. Reflect on whether you tend to react

Separation

Understanding the situation



INGImage Stock

defensively, feeling the need to protect yourself from what may be perceived as attacks on your self-worth.

Remember, our identity is dynamic and can evolve. It is not a fixed or static concept but rather a fluid and ongoing process influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. By unravelling these layers, you gain insight into your authentic self and can work towards building a more resilient mindset.

You truly are so much more than your insecurities. Don't let the negativity be the loudest thing you hear. It's possible to break free from the chains of self-doubt and worry.

2. Communication:

- **Open Dialogue with Your Husband:** Initiate an open and honest conversation with your husband. Express your willingness to understand his perspective and share your feelings. Ask for specific examples of how your insecurity has affected him, as this can provide valuable insights.
- **Seek Clarification:** Seek clarification on aspects of your behaviour that may be contributing to the strain in your relationship. Understanding specific concerns will help in developing a more targeted and effective approach.

3. Moving Forward:

- **Rebuilding Trust:** If trust has been affected, focus on rebuilding it. This process requires time, effort, and a commitment from both partners to create a healthier foundation for the relationship.
- **Shared Goals and Values:**

Revisit and discuss your shared goals and values as a couple. Understanding the common ground can help strengthen the connection and provide a sense of purpose within the relationship.

- **Patience and Persistence:** The process of addressing insecurities and rebuilding a relationship takes time. Be patient with yourself and with the relationship, and stay committed to the journey of growth and healing.
- **Regular Check-ins:** Establish a routine for regular check-ins with your husband to discuss progress, and concerns, and celebrate successes. This ongoing communication can contribute to a more resilient and connected relationship.
- **This is a long and transformative journey** you are about to embark on, regardless of the outcome. I'd like to encourage you to consider support with a counsellor or psychologist. Remember, seeking professional guidance is an important step, and it's a sign of strength to proactively address self-awareness as well as challenges within a relationship.

Hope that helps, Emma.
'Ask Emma' is for informational purposes only, and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your GP, mental-health professional, or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have. By submitting a question, you are agreeing to let The Great Eastern Mail use it and we may edit it for length and/or clarity. You can find Emma on Instagram @emmawoodcockcounsellor and Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/emmawoodcockcounselling








Emma Woodcock is a Registered Counsellor working with adolescents and adults with a broad range of difficulties, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, stress, self-esteem difficulties, amongst many others. With experience in several evidence-based therapy modalities, Emma utilises skills from CBT, ACT, DBT, motivational interviewing, polyvagal therapy and more. Emma offers a practical approach to therapy, helping clients develop a personal 'toolkit' of strategies and skills, so that they feel empowered to deal with life's challenges everyday.

Notice of Praecepte/ Public Notice

Ashley Keith Gow© of Lakes Entrance, Victoria, is not a voluntary transactor in commerce, and is the irrefutable Holder in Due Course of my properties and all associated copyright protected Trade Names since unrebutted lawful Reconveyance to the Land and Soil jurisdiction of Terra Australis also known as the Commonwealth of Australia Public Recording Number RPP44 63900 05100 17487 48603, Proclamation Date 5th January 2024 . Thus severing usufruct subjugation ties with the occupying corporate government of Australia in its entirety. Immediately cease and desist any further infringement upon these copyright protected financial instruments and cease and desist misaddressing Ashley Keith Gow© in fraudulent debased Dog-Latin, GLOSSA.

HOT AND COLD IN EAST GIPPSLAND

What is being said on the socials

-  Well Done to Lakes Entrance Woolworths, the click and collect bay is so much better.
-  Don't do more than 40 in the 40 zone. They are there for a reason. Think of the little ones.
-  Thanks to the staff at the Bairnsdale tip, these people are always willing to help with a smile on their faces!
-  Thank you to the kind lady that handed my phone in to Woolworths, I was so happy to get it back!
-  To the man with no patience at the APCO in Bairnsdale, we are all there for a reason, it's not your own personal petrol station!
-  Thank you to all the teachers returning to school, we do appreciate all that you do for our kids and the hard work you have ahead of you!
-  Disgusted in the amount of rubbish which people think is OK to leave wherever they like. We all live in the community, let's keep it clean!

Contact us via our Facebook page to submit your hot or not in 30 words or less

Council bids a fond farewell to CEO

EAST Gippsland Shire Council bid farewell to Chief Executive Officer Anthony Basford and wished him success at a meeting of all staff on his final day, Tuesday, January 16.

Mr Basford started as CEO at East Gippsland Shire Council in November 2018 on a four-year term and was reappointed for a five-year term in May of last year.

Mr Basford led the organisation through structural changes, the Black Summer Bushfires, the Covid-19 response and multiple floods, and

delivered the largest capital program in the shire's history. He said that it had been a privilege and honour to lead an organisation of great people and noted that he was proud of what Council had achieved despite difficult and challenging times.

Mayor Cr Tom Crook expressed gratitude for Mr Basford's exemplary leadership during challenging times, including the pandemic, bushfires and other natural disasters, and for the solid organisational foundations he leaves for Council.

"Council acknowledges

Anthony's dedication and contributions to East Gippsland, ensuring a smooth transition to a new leadership era. The organisation's resilience and depth, coupled with community support, guarantee the continued delivery of exceptional services," Cr Crook said.

Mr Basford thanked the resilient communities of East Gippsland for the honour of serving as CEO. While Council described the CEO's departure is a loss for the shire, it said it remains well-positioned for the future.

In the interim, Fiona

Weigall, General Manager Assets and Environment was appointed Acting CEO from Wednesday, January 17 for up to 28 days. Council will convene on Tuesday, February 6 to determine arrangements for the remainder of the recruitment period. The CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee will assist as an advisory committee in mapping out steps and dates for the recruitment process.

Council wished Mr Basford success in his new role at City of Greater Geelong as Executive Director City Life.

Conran fish cleaning facility proposed

THE push is on for fish cleaning facilities to be installed at Cape Conran after a less than ideal situation occurred over the Christmas holiday period.

Gippsland East Nationals MP, Tim Bull, said the lack of cleaning facilities resulted in many anglers cleaning their fish on the finger jetty, which at times becomes quite congested with people retrieving and launching boats.

"What we need is a dedicated facility and I have written to the Victorian Fisheries Authority to seek that outcome. The initial

response has given me some optimism.

"There was also the issue of fish and gummy shark carcasses being washed up on the rocks near the jetty, which was unsightly and odorous, so the installation of the cleaning facilities can also carry the message to take the waste away for disposal.

"The facility at Cape Conran is much improved for the boating and fishing fraternity and this addition will remove some of the congestion on the new jetty and improve the cleanliness of the area."



Cape Conran fish carcasses.

BOARDWALK UPDATE

Mr Bull said he was still battling the Government on obtaining a completion date for the East Cape boardwalk.

"I was given a guarantee late last year that it would be finished by Christmas, but

then the Government advised in November there had been a further hold up and it would be finished a 'wee bit into the new year'.

"However, by mid-January it remains unopened and having been up there, it is clear there is still a fair bit of work to do.

"I have contacted Parks Victoria to seek an updated completion date as clearly it is not finished 'a wee bit into the new year'.

"The problem is, this will be about the fifth date I have been given, but it is important to keep the pressure on," he said.

VICTORIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

START COLLECTING ELIGIBLE DRINK CONTAINERS FOR A 10c REFUND

What can I return?

Most aluminium, glass, plastic and liquid paperboard (carton) drink containers between 150mL and 3 litres are eligible, including bottle lids.



Check for the 10c mark

It is often located near the barcode.



Don't crush your cans

And leave all container labels intact.



It's a change that's good for your pocket, and even better for our environment. Now that's a lot of change.



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Volunteers help grow green wonders

If you're both a gardener and social butterfly, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health invites you to don your hat and gloves and spread your wings.

GLCH is calling on community members with a little spare time to help deliver the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program to local schools and early learning centres.

Pioneered by celebrity chef Stephanie Alexander, the program brings pleasurable food education to children during their learning years, giving them healthy eating experiences and showing them how exciting growing their own food can be.

And more volunteers are needed to help out, especially in the Bairnsdale area – all you need is an hour a week to assist with gardening and food preparation and take an active role in supporting food education.

One of the program's local volunteers, Trish, says she gets a real kick out of maintaining the food garden at GLCH's Children's Centre, seeing the

raised beds thrive with a little TLC and helping the kids pick and taste their favourite fruit and vegetables ranging from strawberries and tomatoes to snow peas and beans.

Even if you don't have much experience at the business end of a trowel or garden fork, it's never too late to learn or volunteer to be a part of something larger than yourself.



Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program volunteer Trish and GLCH's healthy eating facilitator Andrea love getting together to nurture school gardens and renew their friendship each week.

Volunteering has been found to improve self-esteem, happiness and satisfaction with life.

Being a community volunteer creates even more opportunities for social interaction, and evidence suggests that supporting others is an especially beneficial form of social connection.

GLCH's healthy

eating facilitator, Andrea Kleehammer, says getting involved in the SAKG program is both easy and enjoyable for anyone who loves gardening and making food, or anyone keen to try.

"Our volunteers have a great time getting together, planting herbs and vegetables and showing the kids how to turn what they grow into delicious and healthy meals and snacks," she said.

"As a volunteer, the work you'll do in the kitchen garden is a beautiful time for connecting with nature and knowing you are giving to the community."

If you're considering getting the year off to a positive start with something that's good

for your community and the environment, contact GLCH's health promotion team on 5155 8370 to learn more. GLCH is a child safe organisation and all volunteers require a Working with Children Check. You can also find your nearest school and register as a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program volunteer by visiting the SAKG website.

Valentine's Day

Roses | Flowers | Homewares | Wine | Skincare
Plants & more at Dahlsens Garden Centre!

Dahlsens
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of
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Community meeting with Inspector-General Tony Pearce

Community meetings with Inspector-General Tony Pearce

The independent Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian Fire Season identified a range of opportunities for improvement to how Victoria prepares, responds, and recovers from emergencies.

Community members are invited to catch up with Inspector-General for Emergency Management Tony Pearce to hear and share information about how recommendations from the Inquiry are being implemented.

Bruthen

Monday 5 February – 11.00am to 1.00pm

Bruthen Mechanics Hall

Bonang

Tuesday 6 February 11.30am-1.30pm

Bonang Hall

Orbost

Tuesday 6 February - 5.30pm to 7.30pm

Orbost Library

Mallacoota

Wednesday 7 February – 5.00pm to 7.00pm

Mallacoota Community Precinct – Community Clubrooms

Swifts Creek

Thursday 8 February - 5.30pm to 7.30pm

Swifts Creek Community Centre

Cobungra

Friday 9 February – 11am to 1.00pm

Cobungra CFA shed

Dinner Plain

Friday 9 February – 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Big Muster Distilling Company, Dinner Plain

For information and registration go to igem.vic.gov.au

or call (03) 8684 7900

Discover

Riverside Swan Reach: A New Lifestyle Awaits

Is your current home feeling too large for you now that your children have embarked on their own lives? Is too much of your precious leisure time consumed by household chores, gardening and maintenance?

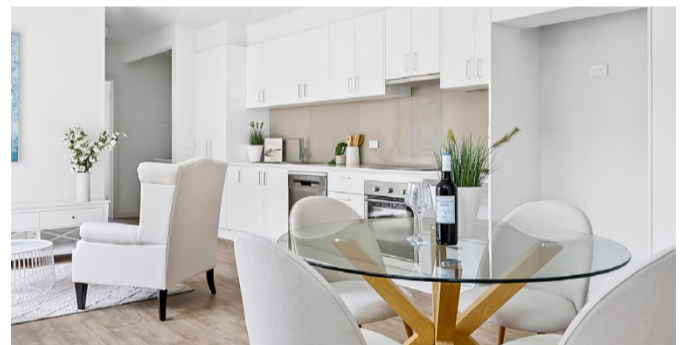
If you're dreaming of a simpler lifestyle, one that unlocks the equity in your home with the freedom to lead life on your own terms – then look no further.

Riverside Swan Reach is an idyllic residential enclave offering elegantly designed homes with luxurious amenities and minimal maintenance.

Embrace the spirit of community living in beautiful East Gippsland, with convenient access to exceptional facilities just a short stroll from your doorstep.

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RIVERSIDE

Hawke-like approach: Challenges for the Federal Government

John Dahlsen



THE test for Albanese with the help of a smart treasurer and some very good ministers is to take a Hawke-like approach to the challenges by negotiating a pack by all parties so helping social cohesion and not dividing the community. This means being open and transparent with the community about where the problems are and the difficulties in fixing them not engaging in spin and short-term political tactics:

- Physical Infrastructure expenditure is out of control increasing Government debt to the disadvantage of Social Infrastructure where there are some dangerous adverse trends.
- Government expenditure to GDP and the per capita figures are trending badly some call a per capita recession.
- Investment income is falling as is our productivity, standard of living and discretionary income available.
- Immigration is putting a stress on both physical and social infrastructure.
- Social cohesion is deteriorating.
- Inflation is making it difficult to grow the economy for more to share.
- Overregulating e.g., IR reform is driving down productivity. You can see the danger of sector bargaining with the DP World dispute where the circumstances of each of the three players is dramatically different. This is not helped by same job, same pay and the Union Delegates an unnecessary intrusion on many of our companies including the privately owner family companies.
- The use of bracket creep to fund benefits for lower income earners is not helping those without income and dampens aspirations of the providers. This divides the providers and the aspirers from those seeking entitlements. Some would say it is the age of entitlement.
- Our tax structure is misallocating our resources, and the wrong levers are being pulled.

So, the situation is extremely complex with severe limitations on actions because of the danger of further inflating the economy.

Physical Infrastructure

Significant cost blowouts as a percentage of cost threatening the initial feasibility.

Profiteering by Consultants and Suppliers carry excess demand and so causing excess demand for Labour and materials so causing supply difficulties for the rest of the construction industry.

NDIS / Aged Care

NDIS legislative objectives and client expectations will blow the federal budget apart a problem caused by both Labour and the coalition.

Aged Care combined with an aging population under capacity with insufficient staff and beds requiring massive expenditure of

capital and operating expenditure, but staff are simply not available and not for profits are closing down because of the poor economics.

Defence

Defence as a percentage of GDP is currently at 1.9 per cent. This is low but other countries are low such as Canada at 1.2 per cent, France at 1.9 per cent, Germany at 1.4 per cent, New Zealand at 1.2 per cent and the UK 1.2 per cent but there is a strong argument that given Australia is so huge and exposed on its entire coastline relevant to by comparison with other nations way too low leaving the country vulnerable to foreign invasion with its low population density.

Interest

With Australia dependent on foreign capital borrowings and borrowings are escalating and at the same time captive to international interest rates, meaning that interest is going to become a significant part of annual expenditure.

Banking

Treasury failing to influence APRA to change weightings so that the banks as a percentage lending, lend more to business being the driver of activity. APRA is obsessed with the strength of the banks. Social Cohesion

The tensions in our community and the intergenerational conflict are threatening our social cohesion; one of the reasons for the success of our country. Where specifically is this distress?

- Cost of living.
- Use of bracket creep.
- The Voice debates.
- The tension between the unions and business on IR Reform.
- The housing crisis.
- Expectations of some for more entitlements and the resentment by some taxpayers who are funding this.
- Immigration levels.
- The underfunding of schools and hospitals.
- The aged care and NDIS crisis.
- The debate about whether tax should be paid by Labour Capital or the Consumers.

The Government Bind

The more Government taxes to cover expenditure this dampens the aspirations of labour and corporates.

As Government expenditure increases it has an inflationary affect.

The more GDP declines without productivity gains causes our standard of living to fall.

How do you grow the economy measured by GDP by productivity improvements without freeing up the market and reducing regulatory intrusions in the economy.

The tension is between union, corporate, political and people power and whether union power is out of proportion to a number of its members.

With some good unions there are others such as the CMFU which controls construction which causes huge inflation where Australian and particularly in Victorian where the cost of production is way too high. This is causing significant construction

inflation. The CMFU unlike other unions is only interested in the welfare of its own members whereas other unions consider productivity in exchange for employment improvements.

The RBA – Inflation the interest rate levers.

The interest rate lever is a macro, blunt, cruel, unfair, and discriminatory lever. It affects some of the population and there is little relationship between the so-called crime (inflation) and its punishment. This is a farce and a pretence by the RBA that it is best equipped to deal with inflation when in fact Governments are better able to influence inflation.

There are serious issues because some should be punished, and others are scot-free fuelling inflation and immune to the effect of the interest rate lever. This is discriminatory and not acceptable.

The Government owns and should acknowledge it can influence inflation and deflation and not use the excuse of what is happening worldwide. But it is not in their political interest to do so. It is in the hands of Government to curtail expenditure and not further tax where the tax only inflates the cost of goods and services. Taxes in one way or another nearly always lead to price increases as businesses need to make a profit and a satisfactory return to survive.

While taxes help to balance the budget, tax is only a short-term solution as it rapidly inflates the cost of goods and services.

The alternative of incurring more debt has an inflationary affect as interest becomes a greater proportion of ongoing expenditure.

The taxes which inflate the cost of goods and services are Company Tax, Payroll Tax, Excise, FBT and GST. On the other hand, Personal Tax influences the amount of disposable income where the lower the exposable income the lower will be the demand but is this fair especially for low-income earners to be so affected.

It is arguable that consumption tax is fairer than a labour tax, but it has a bigger impact on the lower as opposed to the higher income earners. Even though minimum wages could be guaranteed sufficient to cover the increase of the GST plus inflation Labor might regard this as a slippery slope where low-income earners will lose.

Conversely reducing tax deflates the cost of goods and services so helping the poor but more importantly it acts as an incentive to produce more at the same cost or produce the same at lower cost. In other words, the incentive involved helps to grow the pie for the benefit or reducing the cost of living.

- The lower the tax the less tax avoidance which is a non-productive activity. It also means more people can be employed, but less at the ATO and all those in the huge tax industry undertaking non-productive activity.

Competition Policy

Competition policy which is pro-competitive is deflating because it removes competition and new entrants and stops those taken monopoly position increasing margins and so increasing profit but inflating cost to the community.

- There are huge, embedded costs with anti-competitive behaviour which when liberated increases activity and lowers cost.
- This also applies to free international trade. Australia is one of the least subsidised agricultures countries in the world and as a consequence we have become like New Zealand the most efficient. Most countries heavily subsidised agriculture where Australia does not, and this was particularly noted in the dairy sector where foreign countries subsidies is a huge barrier to enter.
- This does not mean that all subsidies are wrong. What it does mean that kickstart subsidies are OK if they get an activity off the ground and the subsidy is either terminated or repaid.

Inflating / Deflating Cost - Productivity

With this inflating and deflating test, it is easier for the public to understand the theory and the logic, so it might help the politicians.

Adopting a policy that permeates a number of activities is attractive and more likely to be accepted by the public because it applies to everyone, and the public can see the underlying theme and benefits.

- The inflate/deflate test also helps remove the tension between the right and left, rich and the poor and hopefully minimises the disruption to society.
- As Government has a huge direct and indirect effect on inflation or deflation the RBA interest purge is less important. This is not to downplay inflation, but the danger is that in driving out inflation you could cause stagnation where declining revenue and increased cost can cause a downward spiral. Stagnation or deflation is extremely difficult to reverse and inevitably causes massive social dislocation.
- You cannot have more for less because this becomes a disease which others will catch. As individuals we want to deliver more for less so that we can advantage others. This is a mirror of the famous statement by President Kennedy. "Do for your country? This has a religious undertone because may religions have the motto "do unto others as you would have them do unto you".
- It is interesting to compare this doctrine with Adam Smith who said there was a distinction between self-interest and selfishness. Selfishness where you do not consider others, but self-interest is you drive your own performance in the interest of others in having providing others want.

Advocacy begins for 2024

JANUARY was a busy month for East Gippsland Shire Council, with a lot of visitors enjoying our region and Council holding some special community events.

Council also chalked up its first advocacy effort for 2024.

Councillors and senior shire staff were in Lakes Entrance in late January for the official opening of Lakes Entrance Fishermen Limited's new Off the Wharf café on Bullock Island.

While opening the new facility, Minister for Skills and TAFE and Regional Development the Hon Gayle Tierney also acknowledged the completion of Council's Old Slipway project in the centre of town, the redevelopment of Bullock Island and new moorings in Metung established by Riviera Nautic.

Following the official opening, Council representatives met with Minister Tierney to discuss a number of priority projects for the region, including:

- Timber Transitions
- training and growth needs
- renewable energy and other growth sector opportunities; and
- investment opportunities in both a cultural arts precinct, and redevelopment of the Paynesville foreshore.

Advocating for East Gippsland's needs is a key role of Council.

You can learn more about Council's advocacy work on our Advocacy page.

Council is planning a community celebration to mark the completion of the Old Slipway project in the coming months.

THE GREAT EASTERN
mail
BAIRNSDALE - PAYNESVILLE - LAKES ENTRANCE - METUNG
Where Community Matters

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or email

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The new roundabout at the Desailly St and Macarthur St intersection roundabout will result in 10 additional carparks.

Council delivers on intersection improvements following community feedback

CONSTRUCTION of a new roundabout will reduce accidents and delays at one of Sale's most used intersections and create more carparking in the central business district.

Following feedback from the community, Wellington Shire Council is installing a roundabout at the intersection of Desailly St and Macarthur St, making busy local streets safer and easier to navigate for

pedestrians and motorists.

The \$555k project will include the replacement of existing drainage, footpaths, pram crossings and kerb and channel, and will result in 10 additional car parks in Macarthur St. The new roundabout will reduce congestion during peak times and improve traffic flow to the Gippsland Centre carpark.

Wellington Shire Council Mayor Ian Bye said Council

had listened to concerns regarding the safety of the intersection and general traffic flow.

"The community spoke, so we're acting. This has been flagged as just one of many busy local intersections across our townships we're working towards improving," he said.

Council has engaged Contula Constructions to complete the roundabout, with works set to begin next week

and conclude in May.

While the works are underway, there will be temporary closures to footpaths, carpark areas and delays to traffic. Detours will be in place.

Council is asking drivers to be considerate of the temporary speed limits in place during the works and thanks residents for their patience during the construction period.

Wellington launches tracks and trails initiative with visitors set to win big

WELLINGTON Shire Council is urging residents to head outdoors and hit the gravel next month as part of a new initiative to get active and explore The Middle of Everywhere's fantastic tracks and trails.

Commencing 1 February 2024, Wellington Tracks & Trails is a two-month long community initiative aimed at gathering insights into how the community utilises existing tracks and trails, identifying popular routes and pinpointing areas in need of accessibility improvements.

The program will also support Council's next Open Space Plan, creating healthy, active and connected communities through improved path networks that link key destinations like parks, gardens, and open spaces.

Visitors will have the chance to win exciting prizes, including a Push 'n' Pedal Cycles voucher worth \$1000! Other prizes include a three-month Aqua Energy Leisure Centre membership and individual pool and gym passes. Enter by simply visiting a participating track or trail throughout February and March 2024, scanning the QR code posted at the entry point and completing a short survey.

Wellington Shire Council Mayor Ian Bye said that the initiative is an important step to evaluate how we use our tracks and trails now and into the future.

"We encourage residents to enjoy the benefits that our open spaces offer by getting outdoors and taking part in this awesome program. With many tracks and trails to choose from in The Middle of Everywhere, this is the perfect time of the year to get outdoors and discover a new part of your local community that you might not know existed" Cr Bye said.



Gippsland Plains Rail Trail in Maffra

The Wellington Tracks & Trails initiative will run from 1 February to 31 March 2024. For more information visit www.wellington.vic.gov.au/tracksandtrails.

Wellington's Tracks and Trails is supported in partnership with the Gippsland Regional Public Health Unit and Vic Health.

Participating tracks and trails include:

- Lake Guthridge and Guyatt Parklands, Sale
- Sale River Heritage and Wetlands Trail
- Flooding Creek Linear Park, Sale
- Gippsland Plains Rail Trail, Stratford -

Cowwarr

- Island Reserve, Maffra
- Cameron Sporting Complex, Maffra
- Bellbird Corner Riverside Reserve, Maffra
- Heyfield Wetlands
- Willow Park Walk, Rosedale
- Yarram Wetlands
- Tarra Trail, Yarram - Alberton
- Tarra Trail - Alberton - Port Albert
- Port Albert Foreshore Walk
- Hobson Road Nature Reserve, Longford
- Lake Victoria Foreshore Walk, Loch Sport

What's Their Future Art Show opening

THE long awaited WTF [What's Their Future] Art Show at the Butter Factory, Bairnsdale, opened on Thurs 25 Jan with a capacity crowd enjoying the art and conversation.

Award winning artists responded with considerable enthusiasm, taking the theme around Climate Change and creating high level works, using a range of mediums. Sculpture, textile, photography and fine arts were embraced, and the works generated considerable discussion amongst those attending.

Roni Corby, a young climate activist previously from Bairnsdale and now studying in Melbourne, opened the exhibition addressing the theme of What's Their Future? She spoke of the increased chances of famine, economic and social breakdown, epidemics and extreme

weather events. She said "These human consequences of the climate crisis will have a catastrophic impact on the way our society operates. I personally find them the most terrifying potentials of climate change".

The artworks are for sale, with a portion of the proceeds going to support East Gippsland Climate Action Network, the community group that initiated the Art Show. Along with the Art works, evidence based information is available to those who may be Climate Crisis converts, or curious, or even cynical. This information outlines those factors which are increasing the temperature of the planet, and the consequences.

The Exhibition is at the Butter Factory, 2 Macleod St, Bairnsdale and runs until April 2nd. Hours will be 10.30am to 3.00pm daily.



Sybilis welcoming guests to the opening of the exhibition. In Ancient Greece the Sybilis told the future and gave warnings, in this case with a message declaring the danger of climate change.



Dawn Stubbs, Gail Noble and Judy Ireland enjoying the opening of the WTF exhibition.



Margaret Gardner, Penny Caruthers and Jenny Sheriff enjoying the opening of the WTF exhibition.

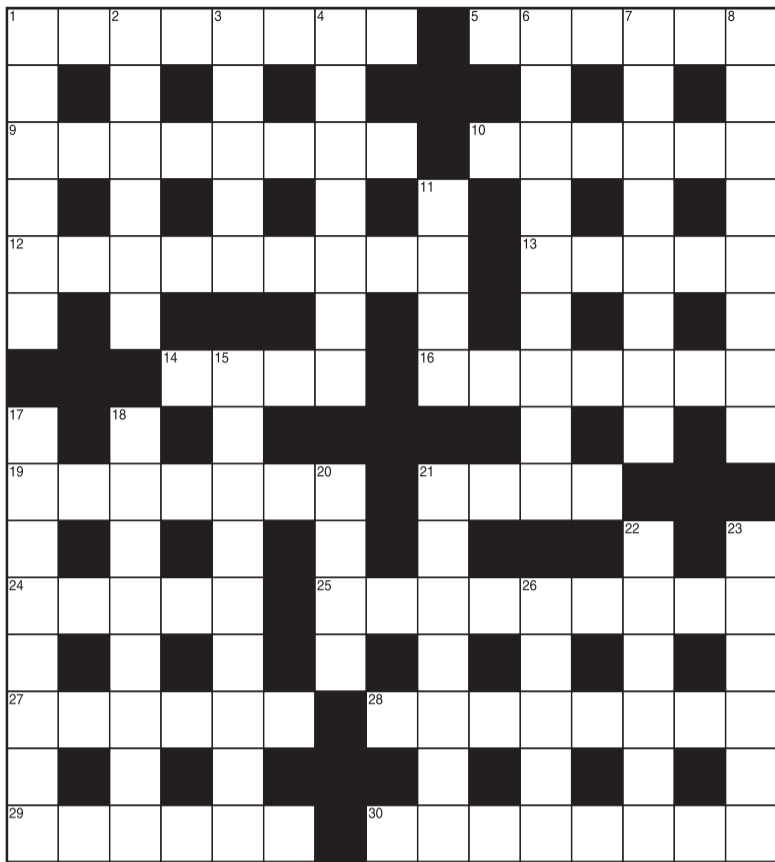


Sean O'Sullivan, Tim O'Donnell and Margaret Summerton enjoying the opening of the WTF exhibition.

crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Pacifies
- 5. Dessert, ... split
- 9. Monogram letters
- 10. Entertained
- 12. Interwar years
- 13. Boo-boo
- 14. Corporals (1,1,2)
- 16. Put into bondage
- 19. Played the fool
- 21. Teddy bears, soft ...
- 24. Elude (capture)
- 25. Pretended (4-5)
- 27. Managed (4,2)
- 28. Step up
- 29. Legendary kingdom, El ...
- 30. Evident



DOWN

- 1. Preens
- 2. Creature
- 3. In existence
- 4. Choux pastries
- 6. Without purpose
- 7. From Vienna or Salzburg
- 8. Senior councillors
- 11. Heredity unit
- 15. Debated
- 17. Howled
- 18. Strainer
- 20. Hummus & guacamole
- 21. Joins forces (5,2)
- 22. Not relaxed, ill ... (2,4)
- 23. Most lazy
- 26. Ethiopia's Addis ...

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9. **sudoku**

DIFFICULTY: ★☆☆☆☆ 3098

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DIFFICULTY: ★★★★★ 3099

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SOLUTIONS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 19

word find - School's Back

S	L	A	P	I	C	N	I	R	P	C	N	I	W	V	S
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M	A	A	C	P	T	T	O	A	N	Z	E	D	E	T	P
W	R	C	S	V	E	A	K	E	O	R	U	S	A	D	L
H	L	E	K	S	L	R	L	T	X	T	T	T	E	C	A
J	S	X	Q	P	M	U	I	U	S	C	I	Y	L	L	Y
F	X	L	U	H	A	A	S	A	C	O	E	A	B	W	G
N	O	S	S	E	L	C	T	E	N	L	S	O	A	Q	R
H	O	M	E	W	O	R	K	E	T	S	A	T	T	R	O
A	O	Q	I	F	G	B	R	X	R	E	A	C	E	E	U
G	C	Y	N	Z	P	Y	J	O	Q	T	F	T	M	K	N
Z	X	W	D	S	E	K	O	B	F	U	U	X	I	C	D
A	S	S	I	G	N	M	E	N	T	S	G	T	T	O	A
S	N	O	I	S	R	U	C	X	E	Q	C	B	W	L	Z

Can you find the following words?

- BACKPACK
- CALCULATOR
- CLASSMATE
- FETE
- REPORTS
- BOOKLIST
- TEACHER
- PLAYGROUND
- TIMETABLE
- LOCKER
- STATIONERY
- STUDENT
- CLASSROOM
- ASSIGNMENT
- RECESS
- LUNCHBOX
- HOMEWORK
- LESSON
- EXCURSIONS
- PRINCIPAL

Study finds the sweet spot for daily step goals

ARE you a step counter, aiming for 10,000 steps per day to stay healthy? Many studies have suggested you don't need to hit that mark to maintain good health and live longer. And now the largest study to date backs up that theory.

The research, published online Aug. 9, 2023, by the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, evaluated 17 high-quality studies from around the world, including a total of almost 227,000 people (ages 18 and older) who wore fitness trackers for a week and were then followed for about seven years.

Taking at least 3,900 steps per day (not quite

two miles) was linked to significantly lower risks of dying from any cause during the study period. A reduction in death specifically from cardiovascular disease appeared with an even smaller number of daily steps — about 2,300.

The data also showed that each 1,000-step increment was associated with a 15 per cent decreased risk of dying, and each 500-step increment was tied to a 7 per cent decrease in death from cardiovascular disease.

This study was observational and can't prove definitively that the number of steps people took lengthened their lives. But the findings underscore two common

health messages: even a little movement makes a difference, and more is better.



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viewpoint

No power, no backup, no store, no food. Business as usual for a remote general store

Julia Bergin
Crikey



WHEN systems fail in a remote general store, the closest fix is 452km away. Until help comes, it's on the store manager to come up with a solution.

Cracks always show in a crisis. The furious weather system that hit the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and intermittently knocked out power and phone service in seven Indigenous communities for four days exposed a series of shortcomings, oversights, and operational vulnerabilities to food supply and security in remote Central Australia.

In the remote Indigenous community of Pukatja, about 452 kilometres southwest of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Mai Wiru food store manager Patrick Vaisima scrambled to play handyman, community liaison officer and emergency service personnel. Backup power failed, fresh food deliveries piled up in mid-30-degree heat, and he was forced to shut up shop, jump in a car and drive to the next community to try to verbally enlist an electrician.

The source of Vaisima's problems? An unserviced and faulty generator reported to head office over two weeks before. This was the third time in a month it had buckled during a power outage, and despite written confirmation from upper management that they would send someone in to "have a look," Vaisima told Crikey and reporting partner Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) he hadn't received any support.

"We managed to get some locals from another community to come in and sort it out for us," he said,

moments before a worker came over to notify him that the generator was out again.

The message from Dennis Bate, head of Mai Wiru Regional Stores Council Aboriginal Corporation (the Aboriginal-controlled and owned company that manages general stores in the APY Lands) was that these not-so-smooth-running operations were a business inevitability in the desert. The only thing within Mai Wiru's control, he said, was who they employed to deal with it — someone "reliable and resilient" with the capacity to "adapt and cope".

But a four-day Crikey/ICTV reporting trip through six Northern Territory and South Australian remote Indigenous communities and an equal number of general stores (both Mai Wiru and Commonwealth company Outback Stores) found a revolving door of staff thrown into vulnerable and culturally sensitive communities without training, support or adequate resources.

There were no Indigenous store managers, few Indigenous employees, a high staff turnover rate (with all managers between one and three months in the job) and big chasms between store managers and community members. The consensus from locals, service providers and Indigenous organisations was that these operational hiccups and rifts were not the product of "difficult" and "hard" day-to-day work, but rather a pattern of top-down mechanical negligence, dedicated but unqualified workers, and a deeply entrenched power imbalance that stemmed from stores being the sole source of food, goods and funds in communities.

On Wednesday, November 15 in Pukatja community, the morning after the



(Image supplied by Julia Bergin/Zennie/Private Media)

first wild electrical storm, Emperor refrigeration and air conditioning technician James Cormack waited outside the Mai Wiru store, pliers in hand, for Vaisima to return from neighbouring Umuwa (20 minutes down the road). The hope was that Vaisima would return with at least a jerry can of diesel and at best a qualified electrician.

Cormack was dispatched to Pukatja from Alice Springs on Tuesday to fix a malfunctioning display freezer, and by virtue of being there he was Vaisima's first port of call when the power went out and the generator did not come on.

Although unable to make the fix himself, Cormack was unsurprised that the machine had buckled: "There's a service logbook on there and all it says is that it was commissioned in 2019. There's no service history after that."

Cormack said it was business as usual for him to go out to a store (both Mai Wiru and Outback Stores) and repair broken equipment not properly cared for. He budgeted the cost of dispatch for a single day of travel, labour and parts to be a "bare minimum" of \$5,000 (travel for the 1000km return trip from Alice Springs to Pukatja community was \$3,500 alone) and said that most of these

fix-it runs were for dirty and unserviced products.

"You fix it. But you also go, 'Why is nothing clean?' It's because they don't get anything serviced," Cormack said.

Despite sit-down meetings between Emperor and company heads pitching detailed service plans, Cormack said there was little appetite for "preventative maintenance".

"When we first started doing Outback Stores, my boss had a meeting with the chairman and my boss said, 'Here's a six-month service schedule, it'll cost you this much every year.' And he was like, 'Nah, I can't see the value in it,'" Cormack said.

"So that just means that every time something breaks down, it's going to cost them more."

Outback Stores CEO Michael Borg told Crikey and ICTV that his company's safety and electrical equipment is tested and tagged every six months by Remote Area Group, while Bate said that Mai Wiru stores do a twice-a-year run on electricals and refrigerators and a once-a-year service for generators. However he added that this doesn't always happen: "With new store managers and what have you, that sometimes gets dropped

by the wayside."

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council CEO Liza Balmer — one of the original partners who set up Mai Wiru and is now independently involved in monitoring food availability, price and nutrition in their stores — said there is huge turnover and a lot of movement for managers. During a one-year pilot program, an NPY Women's Council nutritionist worked with six different store managers across two community stores.

"Store managers notoriously just get up and leave. There's no warning, there's no anything, they're just gone," Balmer said, adding that the moment they do, the priority shifts to finding someone to fill that role "ASAP". As a result, new managers often bypass the necessary "gentle introductions" to both community and store operations.

According to Cormack, any mechanical issues that fall through the cracks are caught by insurance. Bate would not comment on Mai Wiru's policy, but according to the company's 2022 financial report, \$90,924 was spent on general repairs and maintenance and \$420,987 on business insurance (more than four times the previous year). They received \$396,817 back, up from \$342,929 in 2021.

For Outback Stores, Borg said that each shop operates as an independent entity and therefore manages its own insurance. According to its 2022 annual report, \$469,880 was spent on insurance, but the total amounts recouped by the company were not disclosed. Borg told Senate estimates in March this year that 30 communities had stock flown in during the 2022-23 wet season due to bad weather. He did not

provide Crikey and ICTV with the total number of claims made by Outback Stores for damaged equipment in the year 2023: "The number would vary between stores."

Cormack told Crikey and ICTV that both stores lean heavily on insurance, information he is privy to because the insurance companies routinely call him as part of their assessments.

Cost aside, he said the problem with a policy that waits for mechanical issues to arise is that it creates an urgency to repairs.

"If you've got a backup system, at least we don't have to come at a moment's notice to fix something. We can wait a week," Cormack said.

"Most of the time we do go to the drop of the hat. It's like, 'Oh, freezer's down in Kiwirrkurra, which is 700km away. 'Yep, no worries, I'll go and fix it tomorrow.'"

As for communities, they remained on standby until a fix was made. For store managers, the onus was on them to figure out temporary solutions and mitigate any tensions that arose in the community as a result.

"We run around this morning and make sure that we have our backups up and running, otherwise, our next option is to try to send all our food to the closest community. But I don't think that will be an option because we have a fair bit of stock," Vaisima said, adding that even if power was reinstated and he could open the store, his problems don't end there.

"We don't have any network and without network, we're only able to pay cash at the tills. Most people in community, they always rely on the card."

Julia Bergin
Crikey Northern Territory
Correspondent,
Alice Springs



Dental know-how

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There's growing recognition we can't ignore our mouths and expect a healthy body. About 300 diseases and conditions are linked in some way to oral health — triggering some problems and worsening others.

A nationally representative 2017 poll of more than 2,100 people ages 50 to 64 found that more than one-third had dental problems that caused them to miss work or suffer with pain, difficulty eating, or other health problems within the prior two years. About two-thirds had undergone a dental check-up in the past year, but nearly one-quarter

hadn't sought preventive dental care in at least three years.

There's still a myth that we can neglect our oral health and it only affects our mouths. We know that's not the case. There's still a lack of awareness around the importance of oral health far beyond the way we look. Why wait any longer, organise an appointment with your dentist today.

PREP: 10 MINS | COOK: 45 MINS | MAKES: 16



Apple Flapjacks

These flapjacks add a fruity twist to the classic oat bakes with a mixture of fresh and dried apple, and they're a winning snack for school lunches

ingredients

- 175g butter, plus extra for the tin
- 2-3 apples (about 350g), peeled, cored and chopped into small pieces
- 200g golden syrup
- 150g light brown soft sugar
- 300g porridge oats
- 50g dried apples, chopped
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon (optional)

method

1. Heat the oven to 180C/160C. Butter the base of a 20 x 20cm square tin and line with baking paper. Tip the chopped apples into a small saucepan with 2 tsp water and cook over a medium heat for 3-4 mins until the apples are just soft enough to crush, but there's still a little water left in the pan. If needed, add a little more water and cook the apples for slightly longer. Remove from the heat and crush the apples using a potato masher or a fork to break up slightly, then tip into a bowl and set aside.
2. Tip the butter, golden syrup and sugar into the pan and warm through over a low heat until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and set aside.
3. Combine the oats, dried apple and cinnamon, if using, in a large bowl. Tip in the buttery syrup mix and cooked apples, then stir to combine. Tip the flapjack mixture into the prepared tin and press down firmly. Level the surface using a spatula, then bake for 25-30 mins until golden and bubbling at the sides.
4. Leave to cool. Cut into 16 pieces. Will keep in an airtight container for three days.

PREP: 5 MINS | SERVES: 2



Italian Sub

Mozzarella, salami, sundried tomatoes, balsamic and basil in ciabatta are the ultimate lunch combo for both kids and adults!

ingredients

- 2 x 135g ciabatta rolls
- 90g salami slices
- 60g mozzarella, torn
- 2 tbsp torn basil
- 10 sundried tomatoes
- 1 tbsp balsamic glaze

method

1. Halve the ciabatta rolls and butter the bases, if you like. Lay the salami slices, mozzarella, basil and sundried tomatoes on top, and drizzle over the balsamic glaze. Close to the roll and enjoy!

PREP: 5 MINS | COOK: 3 MINS | SERVES: 1



Feta Toast with Minty Beans

This simple veggie toast with minty soybeans, feta and beetroot on rye bread makes an easy desk lunch or after school snack

ingredients

- 3 heaped tbsp frozen soybeans or baby broad beans
- 1 tsp extra virgin rapeseed oil
- 1 tsp cider vinegar
- 1/2 garlic clove, finely grated
- 1 mint sprig, leaves chopped
- 1 slice, rye and wheat dark sourdough bread
- 1 heaped tbsp Greek yogurt
- 15g feta
- 1 ready-cooked beetroot, sliced

method

1. Boil the beans following the pack instructions, about 3 mins, then drain and mix with the oil, vinegar, garlic and mint. Meanwhile, toast the bread.
2. Mix the yogurt with the feta to make a rough paste, then spread half onto the toast. Top with the beetroot slices, then spread on the rest of the feta mix and pile the beans on top.

The Piedmont

THE picturesque region of Italy, bordering France and Switzerland, sits

Ian Hollick
Wine Maker



at the foot of the Alps and is well-known for its sophisticated cuisine and wines

Confused about your Italian Wines? More and more recently we are bombarded with Italian wine offerings. Over the next few editions, I will describe a few regions and styles.

There are four Italian wine classifications: Vino da Tavola (VdT), Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT), Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC), and Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG). Together, the DOC and DOCG levels are called Denominazione d'Origine Protetta (DOP).

The Piedmont — Northwestern Italy

Nebbiolo, a small, thin skinned red grape variety native to the area, and generally high in acid and tannins, is the major grape variety of the region. Its most recognisable styles include the following.

Barolo — DOCG, often described as one of Italy's greatest wines. On the palate is elegant and measured, do not expect muscular, fruity bomb or wines particularly acid, but rather earthy, with tannins that give structure and persistence to a fruit laced with delicious notes of licorice and coffee.

Barbaresco, like its Barolo counterpart, is a highly tannic and acidic wine that needs years of cellaring to reach harmony. Grown in the rolling hills of Piedmont's Langhe area and separated from the Barolo growing zone by the city of Alba, Barbaresco boasts enticing scents of violet, red berry and earthy sensations like leather and underbrush.

Langhe Nebbiolo is one of a number of subsets for specific grape varieties and styles within the Langhe DOC. It is generally considered as a junior version of Barolo and Barbaresco. The wines can still share much of the full-bodied character and structure of its bigger siblings. They also have similar floral aromas and subtle notes of red cherry.

Langhe is the hilly subregion east of the Tanaro river and south of Alba, in the Cuneo province of Piedmont. A Langhe DOC wine may be rosso, bianco or rosato (red, white or rosé), a blend or a varietal with the name of the grape variety on the label. The region has a long history of vinegrowing and many of the wines made here use traditional, well established grape varieties such as Arneis, Vermentino in white and Nebbiolo, Dolcetto and Freisa for reds. The DOC covers a much wider area than most others; Asti Spumante, one of the largest DOCG wines is also grown here, in the eastern Piedmont.

For wines which do not conform to the production criteria (production area, grape varieties or winemaking techniques) for DOCG wines, there is the Langhe DOC which has more relaxed production restrictions, allowing winemakers to experiment with varieties and techniques not sanctioned under other DOCs. Even Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay are grown today.

Santé.



Vineyards in summer season, Langhe hills, Piedmont, north Italy. Picture: INGIMAGE

boating and fishing

East Gippsland Fishing Report

Lakes Entrance

There are some King Fish and whiting about, best spots are Kalimna Jetty and up to Nungurner Jetty. Surf beaches are best for salmon and tailor on pilchards and poppers. Offshore at the Pipeline for snapper, flathead, gummies and some striped marlin.

Lake Tyers

The main lake is fishing well for bream and flathead up around the 93cm mark. Try Mill Point, Fisherman's Landing, the main car park and No.2 Jetty. Garfish are about too. Fish are taking all baits and water temp is around 24°.

Mitchell River

For bream and whiting give The Cut, along Rivermouth Road, around the river mouth, Eagle Point and Eagle Point Bay a go using pipis, worm, soft shell, prawn and plastics.

Tambo River

From the Powerlines to Bennetts Brook, Howletts Flat, Three Gums and down to The Snags, preferred baits being prawns, plastics and worm.

Nicholson

The Two Bridges heading



Marlo

In the lake for luderick, bream, mullet and perch, also try around the islands using local prawn and worm. Incoming tide has salmon and tailor using metal lures. Surf beaches are producing tailor and salmon.

Bemm River

Surf beaches for salmon and tailor with best results on metal lures, pilchards, bream and flathead are in the lake taking soft plastics and local prawn.

Tamboon Inlet

In the river, Pelican Point, Peters Rock and Tamboon South for bream biting on local prawn and shrimp. Salmon and tailor are active over the surf beach chasing pilchards and poppers.

Mallacoota

For bream, flathead and the odd garfish try the Top and Bottom Lakes, the Junction, Bull Ring, Harrison Channel and Captains Point using sand worm. Offshore for a mixed bag.

Omeo High Country

Trout are active in all the rivers, chasing dry flies, spinners and grasshoppers.

down to the Swimming Hole and into Jones Bay for bream using local prawn and plastics for best results.

Metung

Hit the town jetties for bream. For whiting give

Chinamans Creek, Box's Creek and Nungurner Jetty a go with worm and prawn.

Paynesville

Bream are active around the town jetties and around the back of Raymond Island,

on local prawn and plastics. Give Newland's Arm, Carstairs Bank and Bunga Arm a go.

Holland's Landing

Lake Wellington, Seacombe Landing, the Woodpile and

into Medusa Point are best for bream and flathead, chasing prawn, cut pilchards and soft plastics. Blonde Bay and Storm Point are worth a look too.

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community notice - viewpoint

viewpoint

“Time of Change” at East Gippsland Shire Council

EGRRA's ratepayers are concerned that at a very important closing stage of this Council cycle, a new CEO has to be found and appointed and a budget approved for the next four years.

It is Councillors who appoint a CEO and employ that person to manage the administration of the Shire Council operations following an established recruitment process, which has not always been successful in its selections. It will also be the current Councillors that will be asked to approve the budget for the next 12 months and may not be re-elected to oversee it!

The unexpected and sudden departure of the CEO, in Council's final months leading to the 2024 election has added complexities to an administrative body reputed/suggested to be struggling with effective management of Council and controlling ratepayer funds.

EGRRA urges all current Councillors, despite their reported differences, to be actively involved in the recruitment of a competent CEO who is dedicated to the provision of quality local government services from and financial controls on the ratepayers' funds, of East Gippsland. EGRRA also urges that such an appointment be of a limited initial tenure (no more than 18 months), thus allowing the newly elected 2024 Council its own "bedding in" and to examine/

measure the performance of the new CEO!

If this is approach is not achievable then perhaps the State Government's threat to take over the appointment of Local Government CEOs may become a reality.

The following points, regarding the appointment of a new CEO are thought prudent, by EGRRA, to ensure the best incumbent is secured;

- Chosen by current Councillors, but with the Initial appointment term shortened to maximum 18 months, under strict "key performance indicators" (KPIs) and any contract renewal/extension only made if these are attained. It would be unwise to appoint for a longer term as the Councillors of today may not be re-elected.
- The influence of current senior staff/GMs must be ameliorated as they will, no doubt, wish to maintain the current culture, status quo and their level of control.
- Should the appointment of CEO be made from any applicant who is a current senior Shire officer? EGRRA believes NO, as they carry too much "baggage" and are a continuation of a current unacceptable culture EGRRA seeks to terminate! Are we as ratepayers satisfied with current senior officers and the way they have been running the show?
- Must the appointment be from

public service? EGRRA believes that an industry outsider from the corporate world, with better fiscal and project management skills etc. is a prudent option.

- CEOs remuneration must be performance based. A base salary with annual bonus if all KPIs are met to satisfaction of Councillor group. Quarterly publicised review.
- Necessary Due Diligence. Beware of a great report from last employer, we have fallen for that twice. Fully investigate the background and CV independently. Check out claims. Track record must be fully investigated independently.
- EGRRA would ask the questions: what can the candidate bring to EG and should the KPIs be publicised?

With these matters addressed EGRRA hope's a suitably qualified CEO can be recruited who will manage the operations of the Shire with honesty, transparency, and improved grass roots communication, instigating a culture of open community discussion, collaboration and harmony.



East Gippsland Ratepayers and Residents Assoc. INC. | ABN 80960270283
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Social Media: Facebook – East Gippsland Ratepayers and Residents Assoc Inc.

Revised Stage 3 tax cuts to be benefit Gippslanders

THE original tax cuts were announced in the 2019 - 2020 budget by then Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg. Stage 1 being offsets for middle and lower income earners, were to be temporary until the other two stages were in place. Stage 2 went to everyone earning over \$37,000 per annum, and the original plan for their Stage 3 tax cuts would have seen middle and lower income earners receiving nothing. None of these would have produced a tax system that could be called progressive, i.e. the share of income tax paid rising as income rises.

The original Stage 3 cuts would have seen the biggest benefits going to higher income earners, and politicians, most of these being men. They would have unfairly supported the wealthy and as such have been regressive. The current proposal shows \$28 billion less, over 10 years, will go to high income earners than would have been the case with the Morrison Government's plan. The horrors and inequity of this system are now coming to light.

The Stage 3 tax cuts have not been abandoned, as suggested by the some, but modified to reflect the changed financial circumstances. Those on salaries over \$200,000 per annum will still receive a tax cut of around \$4,500 which is three times that received by a worker on the average wage. The new tax cuts will see everyone earning less than \$135,000 better off than they would have been under the Morrison Government plan where they would have received zero.

Many of these low and middle income earners are struggling right now in the current economic climate. This is the group of families and households already paying the price of inflation through increased mortgage interest rates, whether they are homeowners or renters. With the modified Stage 3 tax cuts someone earning \$40,000 will receive \$650, and someone earning \$50,000 will receive \$929. These amounts are not

huge but can make a big difference to someone struggling to pay the rent or put food on the table, and 84 per cent of taxpayers will be better off. Under the Morrison government LNP plan they would have received zero.

Those arms of the media that lobby for, and represent the wealthy, as well as the LNP might be quick to raise the matter of "a broken promise" or say that the current government tells lies and cannot be trusted. This is odd when the previous Prime Minister deliberately withheld crucial information about the Ministerial status from his own Ministers. And as for telling lies just ask the French President, Emmanuel Macron about his experience with the submarine deal. It was never an appropriate promise to start with so thank goodness the current government has seen fit to make changes. The Greens say they have not yet gone far enough when it comes to addressing the question of rising wealth inequality in Australia.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data the median weekly income for a household in Gippsland is \$1110, compared to that in Victoria of \$1759. Quite a large difference. The people of Gippsland are a hard-working lot but not generally big wage earners, and there would be few people earning over \$200,000 per annum as the local politicians do. So, it was very sad to see one of these people opposing the modifications to the tax cuts and slamming the current PM for doing so. One would like to think that our local members are sufficiently in touch with the everyday people of Gippsland to be aware that these are the very people who will benefit most from the changes. Perhaps it is to do with following the party line?? Compounding unfair economic decisions does not make sense. Why give to the rich in a cost-of-living crisis? The modified Morrison plan stands up for "a fair go" and is the right thing to do. We can only hope the wealthy can drop their self-interest and give their support.

— N. K. Bairnsdale

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GEM movie review



Movie Reviewer
Jason Cherry

LIFT
STREAMING NOW ON NETFLIX

LIFT, directed by F. Gary Gray and starring Kevin Hart, takes viewers on a whirlwind heist aboard a transatlantic flight from London to Miami. With a talented cast, a globe-hopping setting, and plenty of comedic potential, the film promises thrills and laughs at 30,000 feet. But does it successfully land, or does it crash and burn? Buckle up, as we dive into a review of Lift, dissecting its strengths, weaknesses, and ultimately, whether it's worth your time.

Plot, Pace, and Premise: The film centres around Darius 'Snake' Jones (Hart), a master thief with a penchant for the flamboyant. Snake, alongside his trusty crew, hatch a daring plan to steal a priceless diamond necklace hidden on the same flight.

As they infiltrate the plane disguised as catering staff, their mission turns into a comical game of cat-and-mouse with Vincent Canton (Ralph Fiennes), a mysterious Interpol agent hot on their tail.

Lift's plot treads familiar heist film territory, but the aircraft setting injects a refreshing twist. The confined space and ever-changing altitude create a sense of constant tension and keep the stakes high. However, the pacing occasionally stumbles, with some comedic interludes feeling forced and disrupting the heist's momentum.

Performances and Chemistry:

Kevin Hart steals the show (pun intended) with his signature brand of high-energy humour. Snake's charisma and quick wit bring a much-needed spark to the film, even when the jokes veer into repetitive territory. Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Vincent Canton offers a cool counterpoint to Hart's exuberance, delivering a nuanced performance as a determined agent with a hidden past.

The supporting cast provides solid contributions, with Jean Reno adding a touch of French charm as a retired thief and Sam Worthington injecting some muscle as Snake's loyal right-hand man. While the interactions between the team are generally entertaining, the film doesn't quite delve deep enough into their back-stories or motivations,



LIFT FAILS TO LAUNCH

leaving their relationships underdeveloped.

Action and Visuals: Lift boasts some slick action sequences, particularly in the film's climactic airport showdown. The use of practical effects and CGI for in-flight stunts lends a sense of realism and danger. However, some action beats feel slightly derivative, lacking the inventiveness or wow factor to truly stand out.

Visually, the film oscillates between stylish airport terminals and glamorous airplane interiors, capturing the jet-set atmosphere of the heist. However, the frequent reliance on green screen technology gives certain scenes a somewhat artificial feel, diminishing the overall

impact of the visuals.

Humour and Heart: Lift's humour relies heavily on Kevin Hart's comedic timing and his signature blend of observational humour and self-deprecating jokes. While some land well, others fall flat, particularly when the film veers into slapstick territory. The film attempts to add a touch of heart with a back-story involving Snake's estranged daughter, but these moments feel somewhat underdeveloped and tacked on, failing to fully engage the audience's emotions.

The Verdict: Lift takes off with an intriguing premise and a captivating setting, but ultimately lands somewhere

in the middle of the pack. Kevin Hart's performance is a highlight, and the action sequences are decently executed. However, the film's uneven pacing, humour that hits and misses, and underdeveloped subplots hold it back from reaching its full potential.

If you're looking for a light-hearted heist film with some entertaining moments, Lift may provide a decent diversion. However, if you crave a truly thrilling and innovative heist experience, you might want to look elsewhere. Overall, Lift delivers a mixed bag, leaving viewers with a "meh" rather than a triumphant "whew!"

RATING ★★☆☆☆



Movie Reviewer
Jason Cherry

MEAN GIRLS (REGINA'S VERSION)
STREAMING NOW

FIFTEEN years after "Mean Girls" became a cinematic pop culture phenomenon, "Mean Girls (Regina's Version)" returns us to the hallowed halls of North Shore High, this time through the pink-drenched eyes of the notorious queen bee, Regina George. This re-imagining promises a deeper dive into Regina's psyche, but does it deliver plastic perfection or crumble under the weight of teen comedy clichés?

Regina Gets Real: Forget Cady Heron's rose-coloured narration. This film flips the script, handing the reins to Avantika, who steps into Rachel McAdams' iconic shoes with admirable sass and swagger. Her Regina oozes the familiar biting wit



NOSTALGIC TREAT FOR DIE-HARD FANS

and icy exterior, but we also see cracks in the facade.

This vulnerability challenges our initial judgment, revealing insecurities masking her power and the immense pressure of maintaining queen bee status.

Beyond Plastic Perfection: The supporting cast gets a makeover too. Gretchen and Karen are no longer mere Regina clones, their inner desires and ambitions simmer beneath the surface.

Janis and Damian, too, become more than caricatures, exposing the motivations behind their rebellion. This enriched exploration of the Plastics

and their entourage paints a more nuanced picture of the high school ecosystem, adding depth and complexity to the story.

Flipping the Script: "Regina's Version" deviates from the original narrative at key points, offering alternate perspectives on familiar scenes. Witnessing the iconic Burn Book from Regina's angle sheds light on her justifications and hurt feelings, injecting complexity into what was once purely villainous.

However, some creative choices feel unnecessary, like the expanded subplots involving Mrs. George and Principal Duvall, diluting

the focus on Regina and her inner circle.

Humour: Hit-and-Miss: "Mean Girls" was beloved for its quotable lines and slapstick humour. "Regina's Version" attempts to recapture that magic, but the results are mixed.

Some call-backs to the original feel forced, while others fall flat, lacking the freshness of the 2004 film. While there are still laugh-out-loud moments, the humour is inconsistent, leaving audiences with more giggles than roars of laughter.

Verdict: "Mean Girls (Regina's Version)" is a film of two halves. Regina's

re-imagined perspective offers intriguing insights and complexities, and the deeper exploration of the supporting characters adds richness to the story.

However, the humour misses the mark at times, and some creative choices dilute the narrative focus. Ultimately, it's a nostalgic treat for die-hard "Mean Girls" fans, offering a new lens on a beloved story. But for newcomers or those seeking a laugh riot, it might not quite reach the burn book-worthy heights of the original.

RATING ★★☆☆☆



THE GEM QUICK QUIZ

- WHAT IS THE REAL NAME OF THE POP STAR SIA?
A) SIA FURLER
B) SARAH JONES
C) SIMONE SIMMONS
D) STEPHANIE FITZGERALD
- IN THE FIRST "HARRY POTTER" BOOK, WHAT ANIMAL IS GUARDING PHILOSOPHER'S STONE?
A) DRAGON
B) THREE-HEADED DOG
C) TROLL
D) GIANT THREE-HEADED SPIDER
- WHO SANG THE THEME SONG FOR THE TV SHOW "FRIENDS"?
A) THE REMBRANDTS
B) THE R.E.M.
C) COUNTING CROWS
D) BARENAKED LADIES
- WHAT ICONIC LINE DOES DARTH VADER UTTER IN "STAR WARS: EPISODE V - THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK"?
A) "MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU."
B) "JOIN ME, AND TOGETHER WE CAN END THIS DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT."
C) "I FIND YOUR LACK OF FAITH DISTURBING."
D) "NO, I AM YOUR FATHER."
- WHICH DISNEY PRINCESS FAMOUSLY LOSES HER VOICE IN HER OWN MOVIE?
A) BELLE
B) MULAN
C) ARIEL
D) POCAHONTAS
- WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE FICTIONAL TOWN WHERE "THE SIMPSONS" TAKES PLACE?
A) SPRINGFIELD
B) SHELBYVILLE
C) QUAHOG
D) PAWNEE
- WHICH ICONIC VIDEO GAME FEATURES A BLUE HEDGEHOG AS THE PROTAGONIST?
A) PAC-MAN
B) DONKEY KONG
C) SUPER MARIO BROS.
D) SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
- IN THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE, WHAT METAL MAKES UP CAPTAIN AMERICA'S SHIELD?
A) TITANIUM
B) ADAMANTIUM
C) VIBRANIUM
D) UNBREAKABLE ALLOY
- WHAT BAND RELEASED THE ICONIC SONG "BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY"?
A) THE BEATLES
B) LED ZEPPELIN
C) PINK FLOYD
D) QUEEN
- WHO WROTE THE POPULAR COMING-OF-AGE NOVEL "THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER"?
A) JOHN GREEN
B) J.K. ROWLING
C) SUZANNE COLLINS
D) STEPHEN CHBOSKY

QUIZ ANSWERS

- (A) SIA FURLER
- (D) GIANT THREE-HEADED SPIDER
- (B) THE R.E.M. & (C) ARIEL
- (B) "JOIN ME, AND TOGETHER WE CAN END THIS DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT."
- (C) ARIEL
- (A) SPRINGFIELD
- (D) SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
- (B) ADAMANTIUM
- (C) PINK FLOYD
- (D) QUEEN
- (C) SUZANNE COLLINS
- (D) STEPHEN CHBOSKY



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JOKES

1. WHY DID THE ALIEN SPACESHIP LAND IN THE DESERT? **TO PHONE A HOME-WORLD.**
2. WHAT DO YOU CALL AN ALIEN WHO STEALS YOUR SOCKS? **AN ABDUCTEE OF SOCKS-SESSIVE DISORDER.**
3. HOW DO YOU MAKE AN ALIEN LAUGH? **TELL THEM A SPACE ODYSSEY.**
4. WHAT DID THE ALIEN FARMER SAY TO HIS CROPS? **"BEAM ME UP, SPUDS!"**
5. WHY DID THE ALIEN GET KICKED OUT OF THE GALAXY BAR? **HE KEPT ASKING FOR EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL MARTINIS.**
6. WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE ALIEN DANCE CRAZE? **THE GRAVITRON GROOVE.**
7. WHAT DO YOU CALL AN ALIEN WHO CAN'T SEE? **A LITTLE... BLINDSIGHT-ED.**
8. WHY DID THE ALIEN CROSS THE GALAXY? **TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE... DUH!**
9. WHAT DID THE MARTIAN SAY TO THE EARTHLING? **"TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER... BUT MAKE IT METEOR."**
10. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN AN ALIEN TELLS A JOKE? **THEY SAY "NO OFFENSE, EARTHLINGS..."**

THIS FORTNIGHT IN AUSSIE HISTORY

February 2nd: 1825: Explorer Hamilton Hume discovers the Hume River, a vital tributary of the Murray River.

February 3rd: 1852: The Eureka Stockade rebellion against British authority in Ballarat, Victoria, ends with the miners' defeat.

February 4th: 1901: The Federation of Australia officially comes into being, marking the birth of the nation.

February 5th: 1838: The Port Phillip District (later Victoria) is declared separate from New South Wales.

February 6th: 1803: Matthew Flinders encounters the Bunurong people near present-day Melbourne, marking the first recorded European contact with the area.

February 7th: 2018: The Australian Parliament passes the Same-Sex Marriage Act, legalising same-sex marriage throughout the country.

February 8th: 2020: The first case of COVID-19 is confirmed in Australia, marking the start of the pandemic.

February 9th: 1938: The devastating Black Thursday bushfires sweep through Victoria, killing 71 people and destroying thousands of homes.

February 10th: 1837: The Batman Treaty, a controversial agreement between John Batman and Indigenous elders, is signed, leading to the founding of Melbourne.

February 11th: 1970: The Sydney Opera House is officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II.

February 12th: 1985: The Australia II yacht wins the America's Cup, ending a 132-year American dominance.

February 13th: 1970: Australian Prime Minister John Gorton announces the withdrawal of all remaining Australian troops from the Vietnam War.

February 14th: 1966: Australia undergoes a major currency change, transitioning from pounds to the decimalized Australian dollar.

February 15th: 1827: Bushranger Matthew Brady, better known as Captain Thunderbolt, is born in London, later becoming a notorious figure in Australian colonial history.

GEM KIDS GAME REVIEWS

THIS MONTH'S GAMING SUPERSTARS



RABBIDS PARTY OF LEGENDS
[PLAYED ON NINTENDO SWITCH]

- WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE GAME?**
I LOVE ALL THE MINI GAMES.
- WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER AND WHY?**
THE RABBIDS HANDSDOWN.
- WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS GAME?**
YES I LOVE THE MULTIPLAYER.
- WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE IT OUT OF 10?**
I WOULD GIVE IT A 8 OUT OF 10.



POWERWASH SIMULATOR
[PLAYED ON XBOX]

- WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE GAME?**
I LOVE THAT I GET TO BECOME A "GRIME FIGHTER" INSTEAD OF A CRIME FIGHTER!
- WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER AND WHY?**
I LIKE THAT THE TOOLS CHANGE ALL THE TIME.
- WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS GAME?**
YES ITS VERY DIFFERENT.
- WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE IT OUT OF 10?**
I WOULD GIVE IT A 8 OUT OF 10.



TIME ON FROG ISLAND
[PLAYED ON PLAYSTATION 5]

- WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE GAME?**
I LOVE THE CHARACTERS. THE BOAT CAPTAIN IS THE BEST!
- WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER AND WHY?**
BOAT CAPTAIN.
- WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS GAME?**
YES, IT HAS SO MANY MINI GAMES.
- WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE IT OUT OF 10?**
I WOULD GIVE IT 8 OUT OF 10.



puzzle answers

SOLUTIONS: FROM PAGE 13

P	L	A	C	A	T	E	S		B	A	N	A	N	A	
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3098

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

3099

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

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FROM LITTLE THINGS **BIG THINGS BLOOM**

EAST Gippsland is rife with talented and passionate individuals who use their skills to enhance and enrich local communities. One such professional is Founder of the East Gippsland Winter Festival, Adam Bloem (pronounced "Bloom"), who was named the Australia Day Ambassador at the 2024 East Gippsland Australia Day Awards.

"It was quite an honour to be asked to be the Australia Day Ambassador at the East Gippsland Shire Council's Australia Day Awards" stated Adam during his speech at the new Eagle Point Foreshore Hub. In his thoughtful address, Adam acknowledged the sensitivities around Australia Day for some members of the community. "I acknowledge that not everyone celebrates Australia Day and I am mindful that for some people, the 26th of January is a day of mourning and is a reminder of traumatic events experienced by their families."

Adam said on Australia Day he would love for us all to "focus on the things that bring us together — our shared love for the region and this country. Our many connections to the people, lands and waters of this wonderful place we call 'home'. Let us be grateful for our safety and freedom, and the opportunity to chase our dreams. Let us celebrate our resilience, mateship, character and sense of humour. Let us rejoice in the beauty and diversity of the natural landscape and of our people, cultures and heritage."

Adam's parents immigrated to Australia in the 1950s as young kids. "Mum was from England and Dad was from the Netherlands. I was born on the outskirts of Melbourne in the early 80s, and apart from a couple of snow seasons overseas, I've lived in Australia all my life which I'm very grateful for. My wife and I did a bit of travelling pre-children and it's safe to say we live in the best country on earth!"

Adam's family moved to East Gippsland in the early 90s, but he snuck out via Mt Hotham for a while, and then moved back about seven years ago. "I've lived in East Gippsland for about 15.5 years. But despite having no family history or heritage here, I feel a great sense of connection to this place, as I'm sure a lot of other people feel the same. I can only imagine how strong that connection would be if your family has lived here for multiple generations."

"My mother-in-law Prue is a fourth generation East Gippslander, so we're now claiming my wife as fifth generation and our kids as the sixth generation. But imagine the sense of connection you'd feel if your family has lived here for thousands of generations over tens of thousands of years! Reflecting on that, I think it makes a Welcome to Country quite a special occasion. The fact that Australia has the world's longest surviving culture is quite amazing and I think it is something we should all celebrate."

Adam previously worked on some large-scale food and wine events around Australia, including the Good Food and Wine Show, where he looked after the regional areas such as Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale and Margaret River. So, when he moved back to East Gippsland, he joined the board of East Gippsland Marketing Inc. and it was there when he started thinking about events they could run locally.

"We've got some of the best food, wine and craft beer in the country — and now some great distilleries



Adam Bloem receives award. Picture: Lauren Anderson

too. The produce in East Gippsland is seriously world-class and we've got some of the finest chefs here as well. What I also learned since moving back, is that we have some extraordinary creative talents in East Gippsland too and obviously we've got some of the most amazing natural assets and rich cultural heritage anywhere in the world — so put that all together and the offering is pretty compelling!"

"I started to dream up an idea for a region-wide event to be held over several weeks to encourage visitors to come and stay a while and explore the region. Everyone I spoke to loved the idea and were happy to support it, but they didn't want to run it. So, I got to thinking, 'what if every town in East Gippsland chipped in and we all promoted it, we all waved the East Gippsland flag at the same time?' This was how the idea came together to set up a festival with highly photogenic or "Instagrammable" installations and events in every town; an event that would get people touring around and spending money along the way — a coffee in Paynesville, dinner in Metung, accommodation in Lakes Entrance — all whilst posting their photos on social media and promoting the region at the same time."

"When I first moved back to East Gippsland, I helped out on a few events and most of them were held on long weekends to take advantage of all the tourists here. But the problem was the accommodation was already fully booked so we weren't attracting anyone new. But, I realised that if we ran something in winter there'd be plenty of accommodation available — and for lighting installations and lantern parades, it gets dark at 5pm so the kids don't have to stay up super late. But it's cold right?! Of course, most people love a bonfire and some pretty lights, so let's embrace the cold, rug up and put on a winter festival!"

"But no one had time to run it and no one had any money to pay someone to run it. We were in three years of drought and lots of industries were struggling, and then the absolute devastation of the Black Summer bushfires hit. Lives were lost, hundreds of homes destroyed, businesses and thousands of kms of fencing in disarray and some communities cut off for weeks."

"30,000 people evacuated during

our peak holiday season — one of, if not the biggest evacuations in Australia's history. A time when a lot of our tourism operators make more than 50 per cent of the annual revenue."

"It's fair to say that fires smashed our region — but as bad as the fires were, it finally put a spotlight on East Gippsland and for a period, the government was here to help. It also brought out the best in a lot of people and the donations and the huge convoys of trucks loaded with hay was overwhelming."

But, as Adam sat at work while hundreds of people volunteered to help rebuild fences or deliver much-needed supplies, he felt guilty for not doing more. "If there was ever a time in East Gippsland's history to get some funding to kickstart a region-wide festival — this was it! And if there was ever a time that East Gippsland needed a busy winter, this was certainly it as well."

But it was going to require a bit of work to get it going, so this became Adam's contribution. "But I needed help... so, while I started filling out grant application forms I gathered a posse and oh what a team I found!"

Adam's main aim initially was to attract visitors to the region to provide a much-needed economic boost, but also to improve the economic resilience of the region moving forward by reducing the heavy reliance on a busy summer period.

The festival was designed to encourage community involvement and collaboration (to be a festival by the community, for the community), and to celebrate and showcase the people, places and produce of East Gippsland. But what became really apparent was the need and desire for the community to come together and work on projects collaboratively — especially after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"Right from the start, it wasn't just about the art and culture, or the food and wine, or the music - it was a festival to celebrate everything we love about East Gippsland. And we continually see that the most popular events incorporate and weave together all of these elements."

Adam set dates for a three-week festival incorporating winter solstice and the school holidays and he put a call out for local businesses, artists,

community groups and business and tourism associations to get involved.

"The response certainly exceeded our expectations and has continued to do so over the last three years. The festival has now featured hundreds of events right across the region — from Lindenow to Mallacoota, Ocean Grange to Benambra and virtually everywhere in between!"

The number and variety of events continues to blow Adam and his team away; winter feasts, lantern parades, bonfire nights, ice carving, under water lighting installations, a whole range of workshops, bike rides and even a long table lunch on the Nicholson River Railway Bridge.

"But it certainly hasn't been without its challenges," Adam adds. "As many of you might know, we initially planned to launch the festival in 2020 but COVID put a stop to that. And although we got lucky in 2021, to say it was a bit stressful would be a massive understatement; it's definitely given us a few extra grey hairs! There was constantly changing government restrictions and regulations around density quotients, capacity limits and QR check-ins. Melbourne's ring of steel only came down the day before the festival started, which made promoting the event an absolute nightmare, and just three days after the festival finished, we went straight back into another state-wide lockdown."

"But, despite all this, we ended up with 85 events on the program in that first year and the feedback was fantastic."

Of course, none of this would be possible without a great team of people. After the inaugural festival in

"I must also make special mention of East Gippsland Marketing Inc, Destination Gippsland and the East Gippsland Shire Council who have all been on board since day one. I am pleased to announce that the Shire have recently confirmed that they will be sponsoring the festival with \$50k a year for the next 3 years!"

"We know we can have a much bigger impact when we all work together, when we collaborate. When we team up and share the load, when we all chip in a little bit, it makes a big difference. And that's what we want to keep driving. We simply can't organise a festival of this scale on our own, but if every community across East Gippsland contributes — then we can pull off something quite remarkable!"

"But let's not rest on our laurels! My dream is for an even brighter future, where we prioritise our collective health and wellbeing. Where we create a strong local food system. Where we eat real food and support small local producers. Where East Gippsland is admired for how the wider community looks after and protects each other, and the pristine natural environment. Where the region is recognised far and wide for our award-winning produce, rich cultural heritage, world-class creative talents, friendly welcoming communities and Australia's greatest Winter Festival!"

The East Gippsland Winter Festival will run from 21 June to 21 July 2024. "If you are keen to support the festival as a sponsor or provide a donation, we'd love to hear from you! Follow along on Facebook or Instagram or sign up to our newsletter at the website: egwinterfest.com.au.



Metung Primary School Council President Casey Brownlie celebrated with Metung Fun Run Organiser, Analee Gale, after receiving the Community Event of the Year award.

2021 Adam created a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, and the core team include Co-Directors Andrea Lane, Helenka King and Lee Nickless. "Andrea and Helenka do a mountain of work and coordination, and nearly all on a volunteer basis. Lee Nickless pulls together, mentors, inspires and collaborates with a wonderful group of local artists."

"I'd like to thank everyone that has contributed to the festival — I can't name them all as it is, literally, hundreds of people — but there has been artists, musicians, sound and lighting techs, chefs, food and drink producers, event managers, photographers, videographers, cartographers, all sorts of 'ographers', really!"

"I also must thank everyone who has supported the festival in some way — there's been hundreds of volunteers help out at events, last year we had over 50 sponsors that contributed financially or in-kind (and the majority of them are small local businesses). We also had dozens of items donated for our fundraisers and we've had thousands of attendees at the events!"

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS CELEBRATED

A huge congratulations to the 2024 East Gippsland Australia Day Award finalists and winners. Thank you — and your supportive families — for giving so much of your time an energy to our communities.

The awards were presented at the new Eagle Point Foreshore Hub, and the winners are:

East Gippsland Citizen of the Year – David Murphy

As a Safety Officer on oil and gas rigs in Victoria for many years, David retired in 2012. Shortly after, he completed his training as an RSL Compensation Advocate and has since then, worked tirelessly for veterans and their families across East Gippsland.

David encourages and guides veterans and their families who have trouble working through the bureaucratic system. David gives these veterans and families hope and works extremely hard to gain favourable outcomes for them.

CONTINUES PAGE 21

East Gippsland Young Citizens of the Year – Danika Woods and Jasmine Westaway (joint winners)

Danika Woods' story is one of true resilience. Despite facing her own barriers in the learning space, due to disability, Danika emerged as an exemplary role model by becoming the first person in her family to complete high school.

Her involvement in 'Project Ready' included completing the program the year prior, but she also dedicated her own time on a weekly basis to support disengaged students, which showcases her selflessness and unwavering commitment to supporting others.

Jasmine Westaway is an ambitious all-

rounder and achiever who participates in many varied pursuits. From a sports and recreation perspective, there's her commitment to athletics where she was involved in assisting the program, helping set up, motivating, supporting the young participants, and engaging them in warm-up activities.

From an arts and culture perspective, Jasmine has contributed to both the Orbost Secondary College Senior and Swing Band community. In the past year, she has performed at the Emergency Services presentation night, Orbost Show Day, as well as at school events, functions and band tours.

East Gippsland Community Event of the Year – Metung Fun Run

The Metung Fun Run is a fantastic community event raising funds for Metung Primary School and Metung Lions Club. The event has been running for over 10 years and continues to grow.

This past year the event had over 355 participants and raised almost \$15,000 from registrations, sponsorships, and merchandise. The event attracts runners from all over to East Gippsland, brings the local community together and celebrates the natural beauty Metung has to offer.

Supported by so many volunteers and businesses, the Metung Fun Run is a great event that also prompts children and adults to get active.

Well done to all involved in the event.



The East Gippsland Australia Day Awards were held at Eagle Point Foreshore Hub on Saturday, January 20. Pictured are nominees of the Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, and Community Event of the Year awards.

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The team of Come Monday – Wayne Smith, Stuart Loft and Steve Bull (helm) with Geoff Henke. Come Monday finished third in the Victorian Championship 2024.

IRELAND GIRL TAKES HONOURS AT VIC CHAMPIONSHIP

Jeanette Severs

VENERATED Australian sportsman and Australian Olympic Committee official, Geoffrey Henke AO AM, was the guest of honour and presented trophies for the Etchells class Victorian Championship 2024 last weekend.

The Victorian Championship regatta was contested at Metung, in Victoria, Australia, and hosted by Metung Yacht Club.

Henke is a former Australian ice hockey player and was chef de mission of the Australian Winter Olympic delegations for six Games, from 1976 until 1994. He was inducted into the Sport Australian Hall of Fame in 1993 as a General Member for his contribution to Winter Olympic administration.

He became the inaugural chair of the Olympic Winter Institute (Australia) and was made an Australian Olympic Committee life member in 1998.

Henke was in Metung with his wife, Gweneth Henke (nee Molony) who competed in figure skating for Australia in the 1952 Olympic Winter Games and the World Championships in Paris that followed.

Henke has a long association with Metung Yacht Club. He was a friend

of the late Alexander (Alec) Milledge, who was instrumental in bringing the Etchells class to Australia.

Milledge was a resident of nearby Nungurner, and he and Henke registered the first Etchells class yachts at Metung Yacht Club. They had sailed together from childhood and were also members of Royal Brighton Yacht Club.

Metung Yacht Club was also honoured to welcome Sue Milledge, Alec's widow, and their daughter, Jane McDonald, during the past week. Sue Milledge remains a member of Metung Yacht Club.

On Sunday evening, January 28, Geoff Henke presented trophies to the sailors who had won or podium-finished in the Etchells class Victorian Championship 2024.

After six races and two days of racing between 17 boats on Lake King, at Metung, the series results gave podium finishes to three local yachts: 1st Ireland Girl, 11pts; 2nd Jindavik, 12pts; 3rd Come Monday, 20pts.

Jack Abbot, on the helm of Ireland Girl, sailed with a youth crew and his father, Nigel Abbott, who is a previous World Champion in the Fireballs class, was on board the defending yacht in the 1986 America's Cup race in Western Australia's waters, and is



Team Ireland Girl – Nigel Abbott, James McLennan, Jack Felsenthal and Jack Abbott (helm), with Geoff Henke and the perpetual trophy for the International Etchells class Victorian Championship. Pictures: Jeanette Severs

an East Gippsland Etchells champion.

Abbott junior and senior were supported by James McLennan and Jack Felsenthal, who have sailed regularly on the Gippsland Lakes, usually supporting Jack Abbott in The Archer.

Jack Abbott borrowed Ireland Girl from MYC member, Kim McKendrick, and the entire crew are fresh from representing Metung at the recent NSW and Australian championships in Sydney. Their best race result at the Australian Championship regatta was a fourth.

Jindavik is owned by Toby Richardson, and his crew were

David Rees and Oliver Nicholas. Jindavik is registered to MYC even though Richardson lives in Tasmania. Richardson is the current East Gippsland Etchells Champion and sails regularly in Metung.

Richardson has contested 25 Sydney to Hobart races, on yachts that have won three times and taken line honours three times. A tactician, he combines considerable ocean and lakes racing experience.

Stephen Bull (helm), Stuart Loft and Wayne Smith competed in Come Monday. Bull and Loft have considerable ocean racing experience, including Sydney to

Hobart races, and grew up sailing on the Gippsland Lakes.

Their experience was added to by the youthful energy of Smith, who has been sailing in local races for several years with Bull. Bull and Smith are current club champions.

The Corinthian trophy was also won by Ireland Girl and the crew of Abbott, Abbott, Felsenthal and McLennan.

Richardson was presented with the Masters trophy.

Niesje Hees, Commodore of Royal Brighton Yacht Club and skipper of Quandong, was presented with the trophy for First Female Helm.

The Grand Masters division trophy was presented to MYC Commodore Jeff Rose, skipper of Elusive, alongside his crew Rob Conn. Mark Henger, their third crew member, was absent.



The team of Jindavik – David Rees, Oliver Nicholas and Toby Richardson – were runner-up to the Victorian Champions 2024. They were presented with their trophy by Geoff Henke.

TACKERS TAKE LIKE A DUCK TO WATER

Jeanette Severs

THAT'S a wrap! For five days, two sessions a day of two hours each, tackers 6-10 years old learned to capsize a boat, steer a yacht, and trim a sail in early January at Metung Yacht Club and on Bancroft Bay.

They learned how to identify wind direction, played games, and how to steer around obstacles (including each other's boats).

They made new friends, learned to work together, and gained confidence on the water.

Woody (8) and Banjo (10)

Hayes travelled with their family from Newham, near Macedon, to participate in the week of learn to sail sessions.

They said they had a lot of fun, learning to sail on Bancroft Bay, capsizing, and getting in the water.

"We liked the independence of sailing like this, and making new friends," Banjo said.

"It's been fun sailing here, especially when we catch the wind. We will do it again next summer," Woody said.

The twice-daily lessons were brought to Metung by Smooth Sailing School, contracted by Metung Yacht Club.



Pictures: Jeanette Severs



AUSSIE, AUSSIE, AUSSIE... KISS, KISS, KISS



Presentation to connections after Fortunate Kiss won the Nick Johnstone Real Estate Handicap at Caulfield. Picture: Reg Ryan/Racing Photos

Jordan Childs after Fortunate Kiss won at Caulfield on January 26. Picture: Reg Ryan/Racing Photos

Fortunate Kiss ridden by Jordan Childs wins at Caulfield on January 26. Picture: Brett Holburt/Racing Photos

RACE TO BAIRNSDALE CUP HEATS UP AS CONTENDERS BEGIN TO MAKE THEIR MARK

THE bonny mare, Fortunate Kiss put the icing on the Australia Day cake when she took out the final race on the card at Caulfield. There were hugs and kisses all round with her big group of owners, including Bairnsdale Racing Club chairman, Greg Beadle and former committeeman, Michael Sadler. It was an Australia Day that the winning connections will never forget. There were a small group looking fairly miserable, protesting about the date we celebrate our great nation,

but turns out they were the ones who didn't take the \$8 top tote on the winner. Fortunate Kiss is building a fine record as that is her second metropolitan win along with four placings, including a third at Gr3 level at her first start in the Chairmans Stakes. The mare has really returned to the form that she promised as a young horse. She began this campaign winning on Bendigo Cup Day, courtesy of a peach of a ride by

champion jockey, Damien Oliver before he retired. Then followed a couple of luckless runs before breaking through again at Caulfield for her 4th win. The victory took her stakes winnings to \$324 thousand, quite a substantial return for the relatively lightly raced 5yo mare with only 24 starts. Fortunate Kiss is capable of running a strong mile as she ran a creditable fifth of 13 in the 1000 Guineas as a 3yo filly. Jordan Childs rode the mare forward at Caulfield,

which is not her usual racing pattern, but she seemed to relish it. Hmmmm... a strong miler that can race on the pace. Hasn't that got Bairnsdale Cup written all over it? We might dare to dream, but those Warrnambool raiders have taken home two cups in recent years. Aaron Purcell won with Pemberley in 2017 and Matty Williams won with Our Bottino in 2018. Daniel Bowman must surely be tinkering with the idea of making the long journey too with Fortunate Kiss. You can bet there are

two locals who will be kicking up for the mare to take her place. Make sure you have Sunday, March 24th in your diary for Bairnsdale Cup Day. What a lovely photo that could make...Fortunate Kiss alongside the Melbourne Cup winner, Prince Of Penzance. Also one of Victoria's favourite race days is fast approaching with Canni Creek holding its Buchan Cup meeting on Saturday, 10th of February. It's a must if you haven't experienced picnic racing at its best.

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