



Keeping Northam Beautiful

Editor: Naomi Sherrington

editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

Manager: Theresa Lee - 0427 472 729

manager@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

Sales: Jodie Longmire - 0414 086 904

jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

Graphic, Pagination and Artwork:

Jodie Longmire jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

Sports: jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

Additional Stories: L.Lane

Proof Reader: Madi Byfield

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Please contact Jodie Longmire at email:

jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au if you would like to be included in distribution within the Shire of Northam.



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Editorial

This March edition is especially significant as we recognise International Women's Day, which falls on the 8th of March. Our focus on International Women's Day is more than a date — it's an acknowledgment of the ongoing work toward gender equity. While both men and women have their days of celebration (that's right — there is actually an international men's day! It's the 18th of November), the emphasis on International Women's Day stems from a history of systemic inequality and the ongoing need to address gaps that remain.

This year's theme — Balancing the Scales — reflects that exact call to action. In our region, we know firsthand that balance is often elusive — whether we're talking about gender roles in the workplace, leadership opportunities, or safety within homes.

In Australia, it can be tempting to believe that gender inequality is a problem we've already solved. But the reality is more complicated. Women still experience disproportionate rates of domestic and family violence, still shoulder most unpaid caring responsibilities, and still face barriers to safety, leadership, and economic security. International Women's Day exists not to deny progress, but to acknowledge what remains — and to keep the momentum moving forward.

As part of this edition's theme, I'll be speaking with a local police officer about domestic violence. Because of that, I feel it is important to share something personal: six years ago, I experienced domestic violence. I mention this partly for transparency — if I am writing about this issue, I believe you, the reader, deserve to know what may shape my perspective — but mostly because speaking about it helps break the silence.

For too long, domestic violence was treated as something that belonged behind closed doors. Even now, it remains significantly underreported. We also need to become better at recognising the warning signs that often appear long before physical violence begins. That is why we talk about it: so we can change it. And if someone reading this finds in these pages the information — and the hope — they need to take steps toward changing their circumstances, and beginning to heal, then it is worth saying out loud.

Let this edition be a celebration of women's achievements and also a call to action. We balance the scales by acknowledging realities — both the challenges we face and the strength we share.

If you are experiencing family and domestic violence

- 1800RESPECT — 24/7 counselling and support — 1800 737 732
- Women's Domestic Violence Helpline (WA) — 24/7 — 1800 007 339
- Crisis Care (WA) — 24/7 — 1800 199 008
- Police / emergency — 000 (if in immediate danger)

If you are worried about your own behaviour (or want help to change)

- Mensline Australia — counselling and support for men (24/7) — 1300 789 978
- Men's Domestic Violence Helpline (WA) — support and referral — 9223 1199 or 1800 000 599

If you are concerned about a friend or family member

- 1800RESPECT can also support friends and family seeking advice on how to help safely.

Our Cover



This month's cover features local community group, Clean Up Northam. Ahead of the Clean Up Australia Day events across the nation, the Northam Clean Up Day will be held on the 7th of March. See all details in the article on page 8.

Thank you to Angie Roe from Angie Roe Photography for the early start capturing this image for our cover.

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For advertising contact:

jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

For editorial contact:

editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au
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Aboriginal People should be aware that this publication contains images or names of people who have passed away.

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Sue Rodgers



Susan Rodgers
2026 Senior Citizen of the Year

by Naomi Sherrington

Sue Rodgers doesn't describe herself as a 'greenie' — but after speaking with her, I'd have to respectfully disagree. I've heard very few people speak with such genuine passion and guardianship for our environment, and the earth would benefit greatly if more people shared her mindset.

Sue credits her years growing up in the Kimberley for shaping that outlook. From the age of 14, she spent about 20 years there, living on cattle stations. She absolutely loved it, and still feels a deep connection to Kimberley country — a connection that never really left her.

Sue has now lived in the Avon Valley region for more

than twenty years. She explained that when she first came down for a visit and drove around the area, she fell in love and bought a block of land. She and her young family lived there first in a caravan, then in a demountable home — and she loved how close it felt to the bush. In many ways, she said, it helped fill the space left by how much she missed the Kimberley.

Sue notices the living world in a way many people don't — the river, the birds, the subtle shifts in the landscape. She spoke about the drive home from the city, and how the bush scenery is never quite the same twice. We even laughed about the shared sense of relief at The Lakes turn-off, where the first glimpse of Wandoo woodland feels like a tonic — washing away the stress of the city.

Sue's passion for wilderness and wildlife is also evident in the horror she expresses at the number of species humans have already driven to extinction. She is deeply unsettled by how much has been lost in such a short time. In our conversation, we both tried to recall the statistic about how many species have disappeared since industrialisation — and neither of us could bring the exact number to mind. (I looked it up afterwards and found current human-driven loss is estimated to be up to 1,000 times faster than the normal evolutionary extinction rate.)

Sue talks about land clearing, mining, and environmental damage not as abstract political debates, but as something personal — something that has happened in our lifetime, and something that will shape what the next generation inherits.

"I've got four grandkids," she said, and it is clear that the future is never far from her mind. For Sue, environmental care isn't about virtue-signalling or labels. It's about responsibility — what we leave behind, and what we choose to protect. The environment belongs to all of us, and Sue believes that means we have a duty to be good stewards of it.

Sue channels that love of the environment into the way she lives. She speaks about the peace of the Avon Valley with real feeling — the kind of quiet that makes you slow down and notice what's around you. Living out of town, with farmland on one side and only a neighbour or two nearby, she says she can almost pretend she's still right in the bush.

It's no surprise, then, that gardening has become another of Sue's great passions. For her, it isn't separate from environmental care — it's part of the same instinct: to nurture what's living, protect what's fragile, and stay connected to the earth in a way that feels grounding and real.

In addition to deepening her own connection to the world around her, Sue has for years been a familiar figure at community clean-ups in Northam — organising, encouraging, coordinating, and doing the work alongside everyone else. She is the founding coordinator of Clean Up Northam Community, a group that has brought together residents from all walks of life around a simple idea: the town belongs to all of us, and looking after it is something we can do together.

This year, her contribution was recognised when she was named Senior Citizen of the Year at the Shire of Northam Australia Day Awards — a moment that also shone a light on the wider movement she helped build. Clean Up Northam Community won the Active Citizenship award at the same ceremony.

For Sue, the recognition is appreciated — but it was never the point. Her deepest gratification comes from taking an area that's been neglected and left covered in litter, getting it clean, and keeping it that way. And she's noticed a wonderful pattern emerge: "If you keep an area clean, people are less inclined to leave their rubbish there."

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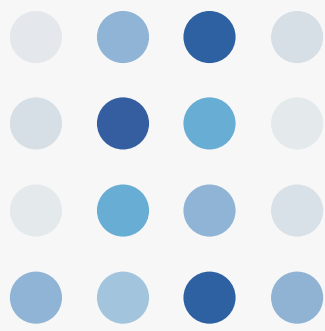
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Sue counts community strength and spirit as the thing she loves most about Northam. She said the Avon Valley is the kind of place where people rally around each other when it matters — whether it's a family going through illness, a house fire, or another crisis. She believes that sense of collective care is one of the



Photo: Sue Rodgers and the Clean Up Northam Community Group receiving the 2026 Active Citizenship Award

Sue's story is a reminder that leadership often comes from inspiring others simply by doing the right thing. Sue Rodgers is one of those people — and Northam is

At its core, Sue's message is simple: people should care, and people should act. And if you are passionate — speak up, and don't stay silent. It's a message worth hearing loud and clear.

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Balancing the Scales: Policing Family Violence in the Avon Valley

by Naomi Sherrington

This International Women's Day, as we reflect on the theme "Balancing the Scales," it's vital to look beyond pay gaps and leadership parity and focus on another critical imbalance: the response to family and domestic violence in regional communities like ours. While Western Australia overall has seen rising reports of domestic violence, it's in regional areas — like the Wheatbelt and Avon Valley — where risk factors are often higher.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), intimate partner violence affects 23% of Australian women and 7.3% of men since age 15. Though men can be victims, data suggests that on average women experience more severe and recurring violence, and tragically, intimate partner homicide overwhelmingly involves female victims; in fact, about 89% of such cases involve a female victim, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology.

In regional WA, including Northam and surrounding towns, the challenges are even more pronounced. WA Police data shows that statewide reports of family violence rose by 18% last year, but research also indicates that regional and rural communities face elevated risks. Factors like isolation, limited access to support services, and stigma around seeking help can exacerbate these patterns.

To better understand this frontline reality, I spoke to Sergeant Josh Humble from Northam Police Station.

Balancing the Scales

What Police Want You to Know

- Family violence is often a pattern, not a single incident.
- Early reporting can prevent escalation.
- Police can act quickly, but the legal process requires evidence.
- A restraining order is a tool, but it's not a guarantee of safety.
- You're not wasting police time — your safety matters.

BALANCE THE SCALES

For ALL Women and Girls

Balance the Scales is a promise that every woman and girl — regardless of background or identity — should be safe, heard, and free to shape her own future. Yet in 2026, millions of women and girls across Australia and the world are still denied that fair go. Discriminatory laws, harmful practices, and gender-based violence remains widespread, while structural barriers continue to block access to justice.

These barriers are not inevitable. They are built — and they can be dismantled.

Equality is not about advantage for some; it's about dignity, safety, and fairness for all.

When women and girls stand equal, families are stronger, workplaces are fairer, communities thrive, and society becomes safer for everyone.

This International Women's Day, let's Balance the Scales together.

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Clean Up Australia Day in Northam

by Naomi Sherrington

Clean Up Australia Day is on Saturday, 7 March — and local organisers are encouraging residents, families, businesses and community groups to get involved in what has become one of Australia's most visible national environmental events.

In Northam, the day is expected to be strongly supported by Clean Up Northam Community, a grassroots group that has built a reputation for practical action — and has recently been recognised at the Shire of Northam Australia Day Awards.

At the awards, Clean Up Northam Community took out the Active Citizenship category, acknowledging the group's ongoing contribution to the town through community-led clean-up events and environmental care.

The group's founding coordinator, Sue Rodgers, was also honoured with the Senior Citizen of the Year award, recognising her leadership and long-term commitment to keeping Northam clean, connected, and proud of its shared spaces.

Sue said the group received \$500 for each award, and that money will be combined with Containers for Change funds to support expanded projects this year.

Sue said the clean-up movement is about far more than rubbish.

"It's about community," she said, describing the pride that comes from looking after a town together, and the way small actions can shape a culture over time.

Clean Up Australia Day provides an opportunity for local residents to take part in a coordinated effort — whether that's cleaning up roadsides, parks, reserves, waterways, or other public areas that can accumulate litter over time.

In the six years since it was founded, Clean Up Northam Community grew into a structured local initiative, with regular clean-ups and increasing community participation. Sue said the group's work expanded through the Keep Australia Beautiful 'Adopt-a-Spot' program, which allows community members to adopt an area of their choosing on the condition they

commit to at least four clean-ups per year.

Sue said the approach helped build accountability and momentum, and the group now has around nine adopted sites across the wider area. These include roads leading in and out of town, public spaces, and locations that were previously dumping hotspots.

Sue explained that the group's work is both organised and flexible: the main clean-ups take place on the first Saturday of every month, where larger numbers gather and tackle key sites together. But smaller clean-ups happen all the time — including informal efforts by individuals who walk daily and simply take a bag with them.

Sue believes this kind of cultural shift is key — that people choosing to pick up rubbish as part of their normal routines is one of the most powerful parts of the movement.

And she has reason to believe it's working.

"It's catching on," she said, explaining that more and more people now take a bag on their walks and pick up what they see.

Sue loves to see individuals doing their own clean-ups in their spare time. She encourages locals to contact her directly — she keeps supplies on hand and is happy to drop off large rubbish bags for anyone who wants to collect litter on their regular walks.

She also reminds residents that Containers for Change can be a practical incentive for collecting drink bottles and cans — turning rubbish into cash, which the group then puts back into supporting its work.

Sue shared that last year alone, volunteers collected more than 500 bags of rubbish across Northam. On one 16-kilometre stretch of road, she said, the group collected 95 bags. The most common types of litter they encounter are takeaway packaging and alcohol-related rubbish.

Sue said the group is now hoping to expand further into tree planting initiatives. She explained that some projects will require consultation with the Shire to ensure approvals are in place, but that other planting efforts — particularly outside town — may be able to proceed more directly with the help of locals who have offered machinery and support.

How you can get involved

Organisers are encouraging locals to register, bring a hat and water, and invite friends along — with Clean Up Australia Day offering a simple way to contribute to Northam's environment while spending time with others in the community.

For Clean Up Northam Community, the day is another chance to build momentum — and to remind people that community pride is something you can see in the landscape.

On Saturday 7th March the Clean Up Northam Community Group will meet at Bernard Park at 4pm to Clean Up Northam. Grab your gloves and come along and give back to your home town.

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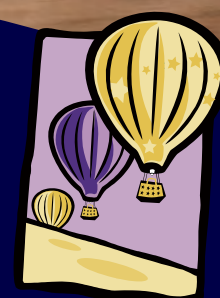
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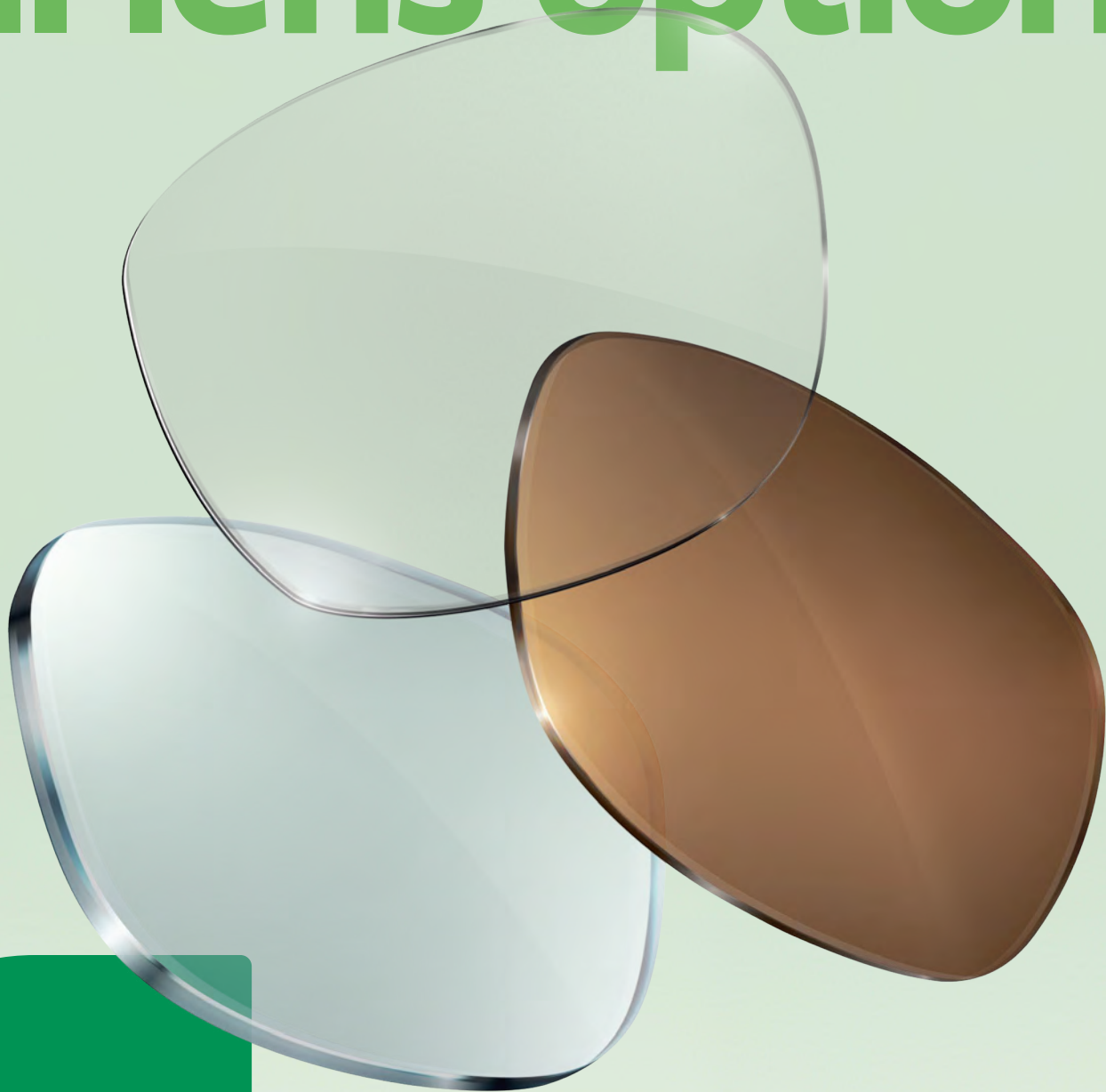
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Perth's Rubbish to become Our Problem: York Landfill Approval Sparks Fresh Anger

by Naomi Sherrington

The Western Australian Environment Minister has approved the controversial Great Southern Landfill proposal at Allawuna Farm — a decision that has reignited anger and concern across the Avon Valley and beyond.

Located on the Great Southern Highway at Saint Ronans, about 80 km east of Perth and roughly 15–20 km west of York, the landfill is intended to receive tens of thousands of tonnes of waste from the metropolitan area each year.

The approval has struck a raw nerve in regional communities. The Wheatbelt produces a significant share of Western Australia's agricultural output — supplying staple food and livestock products enjoyed across Perth and beyond — yet it generates a relatively small portion of the state's waste.

For many, it symbolises a harsh imbalance: the region's farms cultivate the food on Perth's tables, but those same urban populations may now send their rubbish back into rural landscapes.

Residents and councils alike argue that this is not just an environmental issue, but a matter of fairness and respect for regional communities.

One of the strongest points of community resistance has been the anticipated increase in truck traffic. Reports leading up to the EPA's assessment documented local concern that hundreds of heavy vehicles could traverse the two-lane Great Southern Highway daily to deliver waste from Perth, raising questions about road safety, especially at peak tourism and farming periods.

While official projections for truck movements vary, local leadership has repeatedly raised road suitability as a key issue, emphasising that the highway is a central freight and tourism corridor that was not designed for regular heavy-haulage waste transport.

Contrary to some public claims, groundwater protection was a central part of the EPA's assessment. The landfill design incorporates engineered containment systems, including liners and leachate capture ponds, intended to minimise the potential for pollutants to reach groundwater. Monitoring programs — including regular sampling of nearby Thirteen Mile Brook and other water points — were also outlined to detect early signs of any contamination.

Hydrogeological studies submitted during the assessment process indicated that groundwater flow beneath the site is likely to discharge locally rather

than connect with distant drinking-water catchments, a technical point supported by assessments from state water regulators. Although it is clear there were specific groundwater protection measures proposed and assessed, opponents argue they are insufficient.

The Shire of York and regional community groups have vowed to continue their opposition, citing concerns about environmental risk, impacts on tourism and the broader quality-of-life implications for the Avon Valley.

Northam and other neighbouring towns are watching closely, given the potential impacts on road safety and regional traffic flows. Critics say the approval reflects broader planning and policy failures — a sense that community voices and regional interests were not given sufficient weight in the final decision.

The Northam Advertiser is committed to keeping the community informed about this matter. We have sought comment from government representatives and decision-makers, as well as technical experts, and will continue reporting on this issue in coming editions.

Have your say: Community members are invited to voice their concerns and comments by contacting The Northam Advertiser editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au.

Northam Community Pays Tribute on National Servicemen's Day

by Naomi Sherrington

On Saturday, the Northam RSL Sub-Branch hosted a poignant commemorative service to honour the contribution of Australia's National Servicemen — the men who were called up for compulsory military service in the decades following World War II.

The service — observed locally at Northam Memorial Hall — brought together veterans, families, and community members, to demonstrate respect and appreciation for a generation of servicemen whose duty often came at personal sacrifice.

The event was introduced with a welcome address delivered on behalf of the Northam RSL Sub-Branch by Junior Vice President Thomas Bennetts, which reflected on the commitment of National Servicemen ('Nashos') and the role they played in Australia's defence.

National Servicemen's Day, observed each year on 14

February, recognises the service of more than 280,000 Australians who were conscripted under national service schemes between 1951 and 1972. These schemes were part of Australia's defence policy during the Cold War era and saw young men undertake compulsory military training and, in many cases, deploy with regular units overseas. These servicemen were affectionately known as "Nashos".

The first scheme, running from 1951 to 1959, saw young men train with the Royal Australian Navy, Army or Air Force, completing hundreds of days of service before transitioning back to civilian life. The reintroduced scheme from 1965 to 1972 included a birthday ballot selection system and, for those called, two years of full-time service followed by additional reserves commitments. During this period, many Nashos served in operational theatres including Vietnam, Borneo, and Malaysia, and in defence roles at home.

While service experiences varied widely, what remains

constant is the shared sense of duty and contribution to Australia's defence preparedness. For many, compulsory service meant putting life plans on hold — careers, education and family life were interrupted or reshaped by military commitment. The nation's collective memory of these sacrifices is increasingly recognised through memorials, medals such as the Anniversary of National Service 1951–1972 Medal, and commemorative events like the one held in Northam.

The Northam RSL Sub-Branch's ceremony served not only as a remembrance of the past, but as an opportunity for the present-day community to express gratitude and ensure these contributions are not forgotten. As wreaths were laid and reflections shared, attendees acknowledged that the legacy of Nashos — in service and in civilian life — continues to be an important chapter in Australia's military history. We will remember them.

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Northam Senior High School's student leader's team announced



by Mia Davies

Northam Senior High School has announced its Year 12 student leadership team for 2026, with six senior students stepping into roles that require public duties, responsibility and a strong focus on supporting younger peers.

Leading the team are school captains Aliza Berrell and Benjamin Lance, with prefects Wednesday De Merlo, Deakin Francis, Hannah Jones and Kale Taylor rounding out the group.

There'll be the public-facing parts of the job like the microphone moments at assemblies and representing the school at community events — but much of the role is away from the spotlight, including being the person other students can approach when friendships wobble, or when peers require a supportive pathway to navigate challenges at school.

"We want students to know there's always someone they can talk to, even if it's just to help them find the right person," Aliza Berrell said.

"If you're new, nervous, or having a rough day, it helps

to see a friendly face who's been through it and can point you in the right direction."

Student leaders are expected to help guide their peers to the right support, whether that's the Student Support Officer, AIEO, a trusted teacher, or the school leadership team.

Principal Jodee Vause said the leadership group played an important role in shaping culture at the school, particularly for students finding their feet in the early years of high school.

"In a school community, leadership is about service," Ms Vause said.

"Our student leaders help younger students feel welcome, help connect them to support when they need it, and set the tone for the kind of respectful, inclusive school we want Northam SHS to be."

They'll also be busy behind the scenes, helping set up whole-school and year group assemblies, working with staff to plan student events, and taking on real responsibility to complete tasks on time.

Prefects will sit on committees within their year group and attend student leader meetings twice a term, the practical engine room where ideas turn into action.

For the school captains it means promoting a positive school profile, building the confidence and capacity of younger leaders, and advocating for the student body by providing input into school decision-making.

"Leadership isn't just a badge, it's about lifting the standard and setting the tone," Benjamin Lance said.

"We want to support our fellow students, listen to what matters to them, and make this a year where people feel proud of our school."



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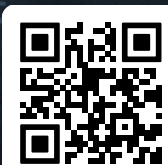
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Home-Grown Sounds Set for Riverside Hotel



Photo: The Paddock Surfers

by Jim Lucy

On March 14, the Riverside Hotel in Northam will play host to a showcase of home-grown talent, with three local bands taking to the stage for a night celebrating regional musicianship.

While all of the musicians involved are well known on the local circuit, two of the acts are relatively new in their current line-ups. The Paddock Surfers and Gentlemen of Questionable Taste will be making their mark alongside established local favourites, Sorry Molly, promising an evening that blends experience with fresh collaborations.

The Paddock Surfers, a new regional band features highly respected local musicians: Rhys Byfield (The Killer Grapes, Sorry Molly) is on bass and vocals; Damian Wensing (ex-Melbourne's always alive, live music scene) is on drums; Steve Shaw (who in his own words has been around so long he's forgotten when he started) is on rhythm guitar and vocals; and on lead guitar is a living guitar legend, Toodyay based Ben Hollister (Rum Jungle, Another Fine Mess).

The Paddock Surfers deliver powerhouse blues/rock with just a hint of jazz. They're inspired by the music of guitar legend Robben Ford. For this Riverside gig they'll be performing Ford's 2005 Album "Handful of Blues" from start to finish.

Sorry Molly are an original four piece indie rock band from the Avon Valley. The band formed in 2019 are comprised of Brittney Davidson (vocals), Rhys Byfield (bass, vocals), Kitt Byfield (drums) and Chris Sharples (guitar). Having released their new single 'April Nights' in 2025, Sorry Molly are busy preparing for another release this year, featuring new material that fuses upbeat with sombre.



Photo: Sorry Molly

Gentlemen of Questionable Taste features a sound likened to swamp music with a dark hue. The Questionable Taste gentlemen include local musicians Pete Byfield on lead, slide, and vocals (a seasoned musician who has been a part of the WA music scene for a long time); Grant Arthur on harmonica, vocals, and bass (Blue Healers, 3 Sheets to the Wind); Moose Nicholson on drums and vocals (Moose on the Loose, 3 Sheets to the Wind) and Jim Lucy; bass, rhythm, and vocals (Nightwatch).



Where Am I? – February – St Saviours Church, Katrine

The St. Saviours Church and Cemetery is located on Katrine Road, near the intersection of Katrine Road and the Northam-Toodyay Road, 15km from Northam.

The church at Katrine is one of the oldest surviving churches in the Northam district. Built in 1861-62 on land donated by early settler Simeon Viveash, the stone church was consecrated by the first Anglican Bishop of Perth, Matthew Blagden Hale. Local stone was used in its construction, likely with the labour of ticket-of-leave men.

The church served the Katrine settlement, where early farming families gathered for worship, weddings, baptisms and funerals. A modest cemetery remains on the site, containing graves of several pioneering families.

Although Katrine declined as Northam developed, St. Saviours Church remains largely intact and is now recognised as an important heritage landmark, preserving the story of early settlement along the Avon River.

The church and cemetery are managed by the Parish of Northam. Katrine Cemetery is a private cemetery which is open to the families of the pioneers of the district, known as the Friends of St Saviours, and funerals and interment of ashes can be arranged with the parish administrator. Weddings, baptisms and funerals are sometimes conducted in the church by arrangement with the Parish of Northam.

Street Name Origins



Woodley Farm Drive is the road entering the Woodley Farm Estate, a subdivision on the south-western edge of town near the York/Northam road that was established in the mid 1990s.

Woodley Farm (later known as Oakover) was tenanted by pioneering farmer William Martin in the mid 1850s, who were among the early agricultural settlers in the Avon Valley. Martin was an established farmer and grazier and later purchased nearby land, expanding farming operations in the district.

In the late 1880s the farm was acquired by George Throssell and was worked by his son Harold.

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A Vibrant Start to a Landmark Year at St Joseph's School



by Andrea Woodgate

As the new school year begins, our school is buzzing with an energy that feels both fresh and historic. This year marks a significant milestone in our journey, as we proudly welcomed the inaugural third stream of Year 7 students. Their arrival represents more than just an increase in enrolments—it signals the beginning of an exciting new chapter in the life of our school. The school is now able to accept more students for their high school years, which is great news for Northam and the wider Avon Valley, as families choose to keep their children closer to home.

The addition of this third stream reflects the trust our community places in us and the growing reputation of our programs. Walking through the grounds in these first weeks, it has been inspiring to see our newest students settling in with enthusiasm, forming friendships, and embracing the opportunities ahead. Their presence brings a renewed sense of possibility, and we look forward to watching this cohort grow and flourish.

Our growth is also being matched by significant investment in our facilities. This term marks the beginning of a 12 month building program on the secondary campus that will reshape the learning environment for years to come. While the construction

period will require patience and careful logistical planning, the outcomes will be well worth the effort. The project includes four new classrooms, additional toilet facilities, and a purpose built cooking room designed to support hands on learning. In addition, we are undertaking a complete refurbishment of the Design and Technologies building. This upgrade will deliver a brand new woodwork and metalwork facility—modern, safe, and equipped to inspire creativity and practical skill development in our students. These improvements represent a major step forward in ensuring our school continues to offer high quality, future focused learning spaces.

Amid these developments, our community has already enjoyed a standout highlight: the Year 11 and 12 School Ball. Held at the picturesque Burswood on Swan, the evening was a resounding success. Our senior students arrived in style, carrying themselves with maturity, joy, and a sense of celebration that set the tone for the year ahead. The venue provided a stunning backdrop, and the atmosphere was filled with laughter, elegance, and genuine camaraderie. Events like this remind us of the importance of community, connection, and marking milestones with pride.

Our primary campus has also enjoyed a wonderfully smooth start to the year. Mornings have been filled with

smiling faces, eager greetings, and the unmistakable joy of children returning to their friends and routines. Classrooms have quickly come alive with curiosity and chatter, and it has been heartwarming to see our youngest learners step confidently into the year ahead. Their excitement sets a beautiful tone across the whole school community.

As we look ahead, I am filled with optimism. This year promises growth, challenge, and achievement — and I have every confidence that our students and staff will rise to meet each moment with the spirit and grace that define our school.

We welcome applications from prospective families. School tours are also available. Please contact administration on 9621 3500 or admin@sjsnortham.wa.edu.au



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Farewell 'Taz'



Photo: Mark & Yoland

by Jim Lucy

“Mark Wayne Tazewell — amazing human, loving son, brother, husband, father, uncle and loyal friend,” were the opening words of his eulogy. Few phrases could have captured him more honestly.

Mark Wayne ‘Taz’ Tazewell, a proud Northam lad, is remembered as a loving devoted husband, father, family man, loyal mate and larger-than-life character who never forgot his roots.

Born in 1962 at St John of God Maternity Hospital in Northam, Taz grew up in Gordon Street and attended Northam Primary School and Northam High School. Mark’s parents, Tom and Pat, were established residents of Northam, namely the Tazewells and Daltons. His childhood was filled with simple country pleasures — time with family and mates, climbing trees, helping at the family’s Northam Machinery business and holiday trips that helped shape a lifelong love of travel and adventure.

Friendships forged through school, sport and social life remained central to his story. Whether it was football, hockey, basketball or time spent at the Trans Tavern, Taz built bonds that would last decades. It was often noted on the hockey field as an opposition player that the imposing image of goalie Taz was one of slight pressure.

After leaving Northam High School in 1978, he began an electrical apprenticeship with Verlinden’s Electrical Service, quickly becoming part of a close-knit team working across regional towns. In 1981, the Tazewell family moved to Broome following the purchase of Kennedy’s store, and Mark joined them in 1983 after completing his apprenticeship. Kennedy’s was a bustling retail hub, and Taz was involved across many departments, from hardware and furniture to camping and fishing gear.

Returning to Northam in 1985, he began the next chapter of his working life, taking up a role as marketing representative and acting station manager at Radio 6AM. He later worked as an insurance agent with Triton Broking Services, building a broad client base across the Wheatbelt. During this time, he bought his first home, was involved with hockey and football with Railways, and was a familiar face around town — including occasional shifts as a bouncer at the Trans Hotel.

In 1989, Taz left Northam to manage the Shell Roadhouse in Coolgardie, a demanding, round-the-clock operation that tested both stamina and leadership. From 1991 to 1998, he ran Funcoast, supplying and installing aluminium screen enclosures and conservatories.

Service to others became a defining feature of his life. Following the loss of a friend in 1996, Taz joined the board of the Leukaemia Foundation, helping implement initiatives such as regional patient accommodation and the early development of Shave for a Cure, now the World’s Greatest Shave. He later said he felt privileged to contribute to an organisation supporting people with blood cancer.

Over the next eight years, Taz held senior management roles with CAMS, Transfield and Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, working across Kalgoorlie, the Central Desert, Carnarvon, the Pilbara, Rottnest Island and Perth.

In 2006, while working for Spotless Services, he was seconded to manage aspects of Fortescue’s Newman Racecourse camp. This led to his meeting with Andrew Forrest and becoming employee number 96 at Fortescue Metals Group.

Over the next 17 years, he was part of the team that helped transform the company from exploration to large-scale iron ore mining, a period he regarded as one of the most exciting chapters of his career.

In 2007, Taz met Yoland, and their whirlwind romance led to marriage and the birth of their son Ethan in 2008. Fatherhood at 46, he often said, was the most rewarding experience of his life. Family travel, gatherings with friends and an open-door household became hallmarks of the Tazewell home.

One of his proudest professional achievements came after the Black Summer bushfires of 2019–2020, when he was seconded to the Minderoo Foundation’s fire response. After visiting devastated communities across New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Kangaroo Island, Taz sketched a concept for self-contained recovery pods built from shipping containers. The idea became reality, delivering 256 pods to fire-affected families in record time. He later described the project as — aside from the birth of his son — the most meaningful accomplishment of his life.

In 2023, Taz was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He faced the illness with characteristic practicality, humour and positivity, focusing on family, friends and planning for the future. As his health declined, friends and former colleagues streamed through his home, a testament to the impact he had on so many lives.

Ex-Northam resident Bruce Goldsmith, a regular visitor, said Taz was always planning ahead. “No matter how he was feeling, Taz was always organising something — whether it was a family holiday or a weekend with the boys,” he said.

Lifelong friend Allyn Cooper said Taz never lost his connection to his hometown. “He may have left Northam, but Northam never left him,” Allyn said. “He was honest to the point that people always knew where they stood. Growing up in Northam gave us lifelong bonds, and you could see that in the number of people who came to visit him.”

From his Northam beginnings to the Pilbara’s iron ore fields and beyond, Mark Tazewell’s life was marked by love to all, hard work, loyalty and generosity. He leaves a legacy of friendship, service and love that will long be remembered by family, mates and the many communities he touched.

Northam Army Camp Heritage Association receives Lotterywest funding

by Mia Davies

The Northam Army Camp Heritage Association Inc (NACHA) has welcomed a \$16,022 grant from Lotterywest to digitise its extensive collection.

NACHA Chair Genny Budas said the digitisation project would increase public access to NACHA’s collection of photographs, stories and historical artefacts.

“We are aiming to make stories, photographs and artefacts more accessible to the local community, tourists, schools, academics and researchers in Australia and around the world,” Mrs Budas said.

“Lotterywest support means we can properly digitise and protect important photographs, documents and records, and make them available to the community in a way that is modern, searchable and shareable.”

The project will preserve and share significant material that helps tell Western Australia’s cultural heritage story, including the impact of military activity and wartime experiences in the Wheatbelt, the history of displaced persons and migrants following World War II, and the presence of Italian prisoners of war (POWs) in Northam during WWII.

“It will help locals and visitors better understand Northam’s military and migrant history, and how those experiences shaped Western Australia,” Mrs Budas said.

“It’s important work because when we know the stories of our past it can build understanding and a stronger sense of community for our future.”

The project will also build local skills and volunteer capability through structured volunteer participation.

NACHA volunteers will develop practical skills in computers, scanning and photography, teamwork, research and decision-making, with flow-on benefits for employability.

In addition to the current NACHA volunteer base, a callout will be made to the community for people to register their interest in assisting with the project.

“We are particularly keen to engage with people living with a disability in our community who may like to learn a new skill or volunteer their time,” she said.

NACHA will use the Lotterywest funding to do the following:

- Acquire suitable digitisation equipment (including scanning and image-capture tools)
- Digitise key items from NACHA’s collections to contemporary standards
- Create accessible digital resources for the community, visitors, schools and researchers
- Grow volunteer capability and support pathways to employment through skill development
- Improve public knowledge of WA heritage relating to military history, POWs, displaced persons and migrants

As digitisation progresses, NACHA will provide details on how the public can access the digital collection and how schools and community groups can engage with the material.

Mrs Budas said NACHA were extremely grateful to Lotterywest for supporting the project.

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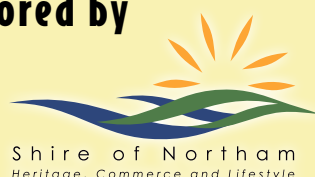
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March in the Avon Valley

by Naomi Sherrington

March in the Avon Valley is a turning point. The heat eases (a little!) and it's time to prep for the autumn planting season. It's still warm, so watering and soil care remain essential, but now we're thinking ahead to autumn planting.

March Checklist:

1. Keep watering deeply, but reduce frequency as nights cool.



2. Start preparing garden beds by adding compost and organic matter (I have started a cold compost this year — chook manure, and their hay bedding, plus a little soil/red dirt).
3. Prune summer crops that have finished producing.
4. Plan your autumn planting layout — native species or veggies.
5. Check for pests — caterpillars and aphids thrive in late summer (and so do grasshoppers — I have had to build some serious protection for one of my poor little macrocarpa babies!).
6. Start seeds indoors if you plan on planting cool-season veggies from seed.

Mulch Matters: Choosing the Right Mulch in Northam and the Wheatbelt

by Naomi Sherrington

In a Wheatbelt climate like Northam's, mulch isn't a luxury — it's essential. With hot summers, drying winds and generally low rainfall, mulch helps keep soil cool, reduces evaporation, suppresses weeds and makes every drop of water work harder.

But not all mulches suit all plants. In the Wheatbelt especially, using the wrong mulch around native plants can do real harm.

Many Western Australian native plants evolved in very old, nutrient-poor soils that are naturally low in phosphorus (P). Plants such as grevillea, banksia, hakea, verticordia, kangaroo paw and many eucalypts are highly phosphorus-sensitive.

These plants are extremely efficient at absorbing phosphorus, so even small increases — including those from mulch — can cause problems over time.

Common signs of phosphorus stress include yellowing leaves, leaf tip burn and poor growth or sudden decline. Often, the issue shows up months after mulching, which makes it easy to miss the cause.

The safest mulches for WA natives include pine bark mulch, hardwood or native tree wood chips and arborist mulch.

These mulches are low in phosphorus, break down slowly, improve soil structure and are ideal for native gardens in the Wheatbelt. Apply 5–10cm deep and keep mulch clear of stems and trunks.

Mulches to use for veggies and non-natives include lucerne / alfalfa, pea straw, sugar cane mulch and compost-rich mulches.

These are excellent for vegetable beds, roses, citrus and fruit trees, but they are often too rich for phosphorus-sensitive natives. Avoid using these mulches around grevillea, banksia, hakea and similar plants.

Gravel and mineral mulches like crushed granite, deco gravel, and pea gravel contain no phosphorus and are useful in very hot or windy areas where organic mulches blow away. They suit arid-zone natives but can reflect heat, so placement matters.

A Simple Rule for Wheatbelt Gardens

- Native plants? Wood chips or bark
- Veggie patch? Straw or compost
- Mixed garden? Match the mulch to the plant, not the location

IN BLOOM / TO HARVEST

Harvest late tomatoes, capsicums, and pumpkins.

Many native flowering shrubs (grevillea, callistemon) are showing their blooms.

WHAT TO PLANT

Begin planting hardy herbs — parsley, coriander.

Late March: Start planting native seedlings like kangaroo paw or grevillea if conditions cool.

GROWING PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

As summer draws to a close, it's a fantastic time to propagate some plants via hardwood cuttings. Many deciduous shrubs and some natives, like certain grevilleas, are ideal. Choose mature wood from the season's growth — woody but not brittle. Take cuttings about 15 cm long, strip lower leaves, dip in rooting hormone, and plant in a sandy, well-draining propagation mix. Keep them moist but not wet, and by mid-autumn, you may have young plants ready to pot.

IMPROVE YOUR SOIL

Autumn planting is on the horizon, and now's the time to get your soil in shape. Start by adding organic matter — compost, aged manure, or well-rotted mulch. If you have sandy soil, focus on building structure. For clay soils, add gypsum and organic matter to improve drainage. By enriching your soil now, you'll give autumn plantings the best possible start—and healthier, more resilient plants.

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How water shaped life in Northam

by Michelle Paul

We're so lucky to have luxuries like electric fans, air conditioners and swimming pools to cool us down during the hot months but imagine how uncomfortable and unhealthy it was during the 1800s when there wasn't even a reliable water supply. Even though Northam was built along the Avon River, water was not something people could take for granted.

Ordinary household tasks that seem easy today like cooking, cleaning, washing, and gardening required planning, physical effort, and careful use of limited water.

For early settlers, the Avon River was the main source of water but the river was not always dependable. During summer, water levels dropped and the river would become dry or stagnant, while in winter the Avon often flooded and the overflow would contaminate water supplies like wells and underground tanks with mud and debris.

To reduce their dependence on the river, many households dug wells on their properties. These wells were usually shallow and the quality of the water varied depending on the season and the surrounding soil. In addition to private wells, shared and public wells were used by people who couldn't afford to dig their own.

But the wells weren't reliable either. People had to wait for hours for a well to produce enough water to fill a small kerosene tin. The situation was even worse on Sundays when all the shops were closed, and you couldn't even buy a refreshing drink.



Northam's first water supply came from this well, located at the Aboriginal Reserve. Source — Western Mail, September 21st, 1933

As the years passed the river became polluted with all sorts of rubbish. Even though there were no shopping trolleys back then, rubbish accumulated and when stored water ran out people were forced to resort to polluted river pools. On top of that, Northam lacked proper sanitation and drainage, and a lot of filth was allowed to sink into the ground and seep into wells and underground tanks.

Typhoid fever (a serious bacterial infection spread through contaminated food or water) was common. Untreated, it can be fatal. Before the antibiotic era, the fatality rate of typhoid fever was around 20%.

The town's lifeline was the water carriers who transported clean water from nearby wells, springs, and deep river pools to sell to Northam residents.

Transporting water was a normal part of everyday life. People carried water in buckets or barrels, sometimes using horse-drawn carts to haul larger amounts. This made daily tasks physically demanding and time-consuming.

Laundry was the hardest and most time-consuming household job. Washing clothes usually happened only once every week or two, or even less during summer when people had to ration water. On wash day, large

amounts of water were collected and heated in copper boilers over a fire. Clothes were soaked, scrubbed by hand on washboards, then rinsed several times. The used water was never wasted, it was poured onto gardens.

Gardening was practical rather than decorative and depended heavily on rainfall. During dry periods, gardens were sometimes allowed to fail so that water could be saved for people and animals.

Personal washing and bathing were also limited. People washed using a basin and cloth, cleaning only the most necessary parts of the body. When there was enough water for a bath, the bathwater was shared by family members, starting with the cleanest.

Before any meal could be prepared, someone, usually women or children, had to fetch water from a well, tank, or the river. After meals, plates were scraped and wiped, then rinsed quickly, using the same water that had been used for cooking.

Cleaning was also water conscious. Floors were swept rather than mopped, and dusting was preferred over damp cloths. When water was used, it was boiled and reused.

Limited water supply shaped household routines, from hygiene and cooking to cleaning and gardening. Water scarcity encouraged habits of reuse, careful planning, and restraint, making conservation a routine part of life.

In 1896, the government announced the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, and allowed Northam to connect when the pipeline reached town. At last, people could look forward to a reliable supply of fresh, clean water.

While this was welcome news, it also meant that attempts to address the existing water shortage were dismissed because any money spent would be wasted once the Goldfields pipeline became operational.



Northam's Goldfields Water Supply offices were built in late 1890s and still stands today, currently housing the Department of Family and Children's Services. Source — Lost Northam



Construction of the pipeline for the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme. Source — State Library of WA

All council could do was pass a by-law stating that new buildings have gutters designed to channel rain into tanks, barrels, or underground storage.

Rainwater stored in the winter was preferred for drinking because it was cleaner than river water. However, Northam's climate meant that long, dry summers could empty tanks quickly. When this happened, families had to ration water carefully and return to using the river, wells and carted water until the next time it rained.

The water supply was stretched even further during the late 1890s when thousands of prospectors passed through Northam on their way to the Goldfields. Nearly all of them stayed for up to a week, equipping themselves with items for carrying their swags and stores, or waiting to join an outward team for their long trek to the Goldfields. During the six week Christmas exemptions prospectors would flock back to Northam. At one stage it was estimated that there were 1,000 men camped on the banks of the Avon River, and all of them needed water.

In 1902, the pipeline finally reached town. A tap was installed behind the Town Hall, and over three hundred people gathered to see it being turned on for the first time. When the valve was turned, water burst skyward, soaring more than seven metres into the air. It was an incredible sight for a town that had waited so long for a reliable supply of fresh water.

After knowing what it was like to spend hours waiting at wells or washing in polluted rivers, people could fully appreciate the relief and security of having a reliable, endless supply of clean water.

The following year the Government approved plans to reticulate Northam. People would be able to have running water in their homes.

A service tank was built on James Byfield's paddock at the top of Burgoyne Street. Currently, this spot is still used for water distribution through Northam.

On June 8, 1904 the day Northam had dreamed of finally arrived. Before an eager crowd, the Mayoress, Mrs. H. V. Cox, stepped forward and turned on the tap. Crystal clear water poured into the reservoir and everyone cheered.

Having a steady supply of clean water changed everything. Jobs that used to take hours suddenly became easier. People were healthier, and they didn't have to worry about running out of water. Clean, fresh water flowing through town marked the start of a whole new chapter for Northam.

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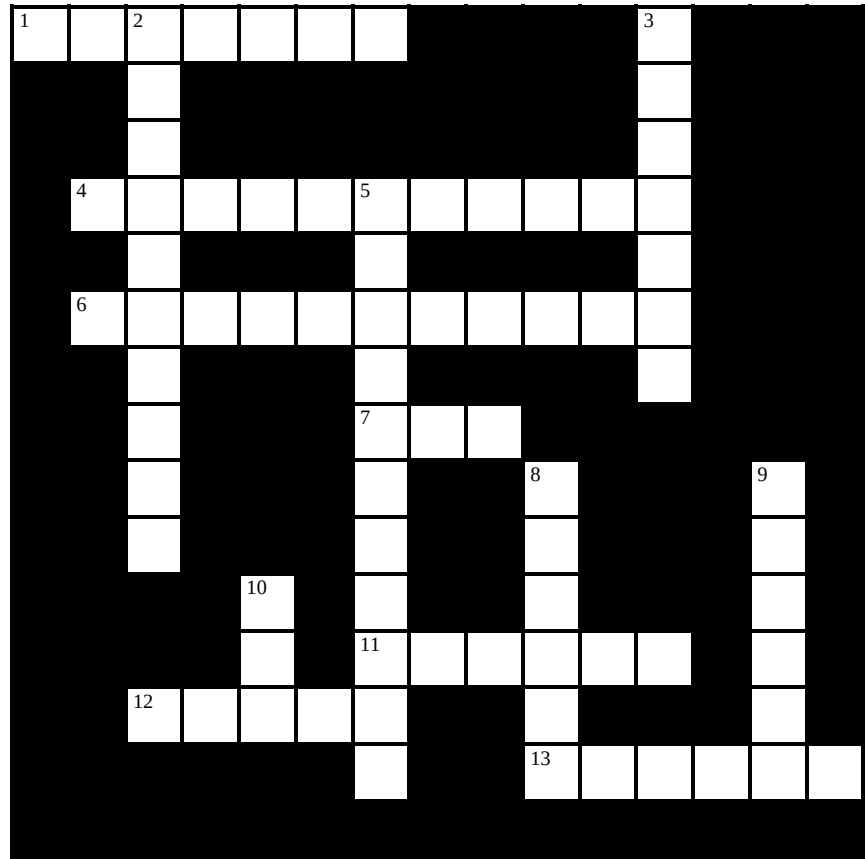
Where am I? Northam Air Field Winner: No winner

Who am I? – Kym Edwards
Winner: Luke Brennan

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- 8 Element named after Marie Curie (6)
- 9 A woman-led invention that shaped modern life: disposable _____ (6)
- 10 The key structure revealed by Rosalind Franklin's work (3) being

WORD SEARCH

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

Animals

- BIRD

CAT

CHEETAH

CHICKEN

CHIMPANZEE

COW

DEER

FLY

HAMPSTER

KANGAROO
- LIZARD

OCTOPUS

OTTER

OWL

PANDA

PIG

RAT

SEAL

SNAIL

SPARROW
- SPIDER

SQUID

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Young Avon artists invited to step into the gallery spotlight at YAYA



YAYA EXHIBITION

Free workshops + Youth Week exhibition
For young artists aged 10–25

From the shires of:
Northam • York • Toodyay • Beverley • Goomalling

YAYA is a series of free workshops, mentoring days and a gallery exhibition designed to help young artists get their work onto the gallery wall.

KEY DATES:

- Ask an Artist Mentoring Days
Sat 14 March & Sun 29 March, 10am
- Entries Close
2 April (online)
- Hanging & Curating Day
Fri 10 April • 10am–3pm
- YAYA Youth Exhibition
12–16 April
Sun: 10am–4pm
Weekdays: 12pm–4pm

Avon Valley Arts Society
www.avonvalleyartsociety.org.au

YOUTH WEEK
WA 10-16 April 2026

STRENGTH
IN OUR STORIES

Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

Young creatives across the Wheatbelt are being encouraged to take their artwork from the kitchen table to the gallery wall through a new regional initiative from the Avon Valley Arts Society.

The Young Avon Youth Art Exhibition 2026 ('YAYA') is a series of free workshops and mentoring opportunities culminating in a public Youth Week exhibition. The program is proudly supported by the Department of Communities and aims to help young artists build the confidence and practical skills needed to exhibit their work professionally.

Aimed at young people aged 10–25, the program has been designed to reach artists across the region by delivering workshops in multiple towns, including York, Toodyay and Northam, with young artists from Beverley and Goomalling also encouraged to take part.

The first series of workshops focuses on preparing artwork for exhibition — a process many emerging artists have never experienced. Participants will learn why art awards have entry rules, what 'original work' really means, how copyright and reference images are assessed, and how to present and frame their work professionally.

In March, the Northam gallery will host two 'Ask an Artist' mentoring days, giving young creatives the chance to bring works in progress, ask questions and receive guidance from experienced artists. Similar sessions are planned for York and Toodyay, with dates to be confirmed.

Entries for the exhibition will be submitted online via Avon Valley Arts Society's website with convenient artwork drop-off locations across the region to make participation easier for families.

A highlight of the program will be a hands-on Hanging and Curating Day during Youth Week, where young artists can help install the exhibition and learn the behind-the-scenes work involved in creating a professional gallery display.

Avon Valley Arts Society hopes the initiative will act as a springboard for future opportunities, helping participants gain the confidence to enter larger art awards and exhibitions across the Wheatbelt and beyond.

The YAYA Youth Exhibition will then open to the public in April, showcasing the creativity and talent of the region's young people and celebrating youth creativity in the Avon Valley.

Key dates:

- Ask an Artist mentoring days (Northam) – Saturday 14 March & Sunday 29 March, 10am
- Exhibition entries close – 2 April
- Hanging & Curating Day – Friday 10 April, 10am–3pm
- YAYA Youth Exhibition open to public – 12–16 April
Sunday 12 April: 10am–4pm
Weekdays: 12pm–4pm

Weekdays: 12pm–4pm

Young artists and families are encouraged to get involved and help celebrate the next generation of creative talent in the Avon Valley.



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March in York

by The York Scribe

Well, I don't know about you, but I am exhausted! After all that cricket and tennis along came the Winter Olympics and I was totally unprepared. Are these amazing super fit athletes quite barmy? And who on earth thought sliding headfirst down an ice track at a million Ks an hour was a good idea? And the mogul? Did someone live on a mountain inhabited by giant moles who made tunnels and large mounds making it almost impossible to get to the shops except on skis flying over large obstacles? As usual, I digress, and anyway I need to get into training for Wimbledon.

There is an old 'Pommie' saying 'Mad as a March Hare' which probably doesn't really work in Australia but, if you are mad about horses, markets, motorbikes or just having a great time, York in March is the place to be.

Sunday 1st March sees the return of the night markets to York, always a good way to spend the afternoon with an interesting range of wares to buy and food to try from 3pm to 8pm. Located in beautiful Avon Park alongside all the usual attractions to keep the children out of your hair for 5 minutes.

Rose of York on the Labour Day long weekend (Monday March 2nd) is one of the two major race days in York each year. This is an opportunity to have a fantastic day out at WA's oldest racetrack still in regular use, enjoy the excitement of the racing and come dressed in your best eye-catching finery to join in the Fashions on the Field! Bring your friends, some loose change, hire a marquee, have fun!



Photo: Kerry Ryan featuring at the Blues & BBQ Breakfast



Photo: Richard, WA Digital Museum

St Patrick's day 17th March, any excuse for Guinness! Don't forget to wear something green!

The Annual Motorcycle festival is on 22nd March, this is when the whole of Avon Terrace is a sea of bikes of all shapes, sizes, colours and ages all spruced up for this very special day! The cream of the crop is on show in the Town Hall and then there is lots of hair-raising activity at Avon Park not to mention the increase in decibels! Bring your camera, bring the kids, don't forget the earplugs, it will be an amazing day!

With Easter being early this year the York Antiques and Collectibles Fair will be the first weekend in April. This event has been going for over 30 years and attracts large numbers of collectors and stall holders every year offering everything imaginable from top end antique silver and bone china to assorted memorabilia and random paraphernalia! Come along and grab a bit of history or, just comment as I do in passing, "My gran had one of those. I wonder what ever happened to it?"

Plans for the York Heritage Weekend are gathering momentum, and it looks like being a packed three and a bit days! We kick off on Friday 24th with the opening 'Family Concert' being held this year at Avon Park. All the acts are our very own talented local musicians and are very deserving of your support. Concert will start at 6pm but there will be some pre-show entertainment as well so get there early to grab your spot. It's a BYO evening so a great opportunity for a great family night out without breaking the bank.

Despite rumours to the contrary I am reliably informed the York Anzac Day March will go ahead! This is

always the great lead up to the commemorations at the war memorial and follows on from the Dawn Service and the ever-popular Gun Fire Breakfast. It is so important to keep these events going and to continue to give thanks for those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the many conflicts that Australia has been involved in. Please make an effort to attend an event wherever you are on this very important day.

One change to the Heritage Sunday morning Blues and Barbecue Breakfast, we are sorry to say Rupert can't be with us, but we have the amazingly talented blues guitarist Kerry Ryan stepping up to take his place. This will be a fantastic morning of blues to kick off your Sunday morning and you can purchase a super breakfast from the great HSW team so you can face the day of heritage wall to wall activities. We are calling this 'Sunday at Sandalwood' and there will be other heritage attractions during the morning so note the date and look out for tickets on Humanitix to make sure you don't miss out!

Our good friends the Mad Tatters will be joining us on Sunday 26th so be ready to join in and learn how to use those big sticks without causing injuries to all around you!

You still have time to search out any of Dad's, grandad's or great grandad's military memorabilia that you would like to get digitised and preserved by our friends Richard and Angela, the Western Australian Military Digital Library team, they can do this for you on the day, so come along, have a chat and bring those precious documents.

More Heritage updates next month or check out the York heritage Weekend facebook page for all the news!

See you in York!



Photo: Mad Tatters Morris Dancers

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a soul ”
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Citizen Science - Community Involvement

by Peter Weatherly of the Avon Valley Environmental Society inc

On Saturday 14 February, Sylvia (a fellow volunteer and colleague) and I attended the opening of a 'Citizen Science' corner at the Northam Library. An initiative of Louisa and her staff, it represents the beginning of a push to highlight and encourage people of all ages and abilities to follow their passions and interests — and thereby expand our knowledge of the world around us.

Central to this idea is that it is the people who make the decisions as to what, when and where. The library will facilitate this process by providing some of the means and resources to do so.

Historically, it has been citizens who have furthered knowledge — often at great expense to themselves. Governments are latecomers to the game — but bureaucracy and red tape can easily stifle the spontaneity that drives discovery.

A good local illustration of this is the research done by the late Jim Masters who, while living on his farm alongside the Avon River, became fascinated by the river system. He undertook extensive investigation of the river environment: the way it flows, how it changes over time, the impact of the River Training Scheme, its chemical analysis, water salinity, detailed weather data, and much more. He became the expert on the flora and fauna that lives and grows in that environment.

Without Jim's work, we would now be ignorant to the fact that the river is four times more saline than at settlement and has, surprisingly, a greater flow rate despite the steady loss of rain — due largely to the River Training Scheme and the massive land clearing leading to more run-off.

He also did something very important: he kept records. He wrote it down for posterity.



Photo: Clare at the library and eager to help

He was part of one of the major citizen science projects in Australia: Birds Australia. His passion was contagious, and his family followed in his footsteps. Members regularly visit certain spots and record the birds present. They have been doing this for about 150 years. A massive effort.

This project is how we know that the much-maligned seagull is not native to Northam — and can even tell, to the month, when they first arrived: about 20 years ago.

There also exists in the Avon Valley our fellow environmentalists in the Toodyay Naturalist Club. It is full of citizen scientists who are experts in the field of their own choosing. Together, they have written a book — The Avon Valley: The Naturalists' View (1986). It is a gem of a little book and is full of detailed information about the natural environment in the Avon Valley. It includes many charts and photographs and covers many points of interest, such as lists of birds, fungi, fish, reptiles, mammals and invertebrates. It also covers items such as the history of the Valley, topography and physiography.

Copies of the book are available from the club. They

recently printed a new version, but I personally have a preference for the 1986 version for the solid knowledge base it gives the reader — and the way it encourages further exploration.

And most importantly: they've written it down.

Personally, as I take my daily walk through our natural environment, I notice changes day by day, season by season, and wonder why there appears to be such variation. I ask questions such as: Why is this particular plant flourishing this year, yet may be almost absent the next? Why is this Marri tree flourishing in this place when it is well out of place in our York gum and jam tree country?

But I rarely write it down — not good. Much of my knowledge will die with me.

The take-home message is: follow your passion. Do your research. Write it down. The library will help you.

...nor long shall any name resound

Beyond the grave

Unless be found

In some clerk's book!

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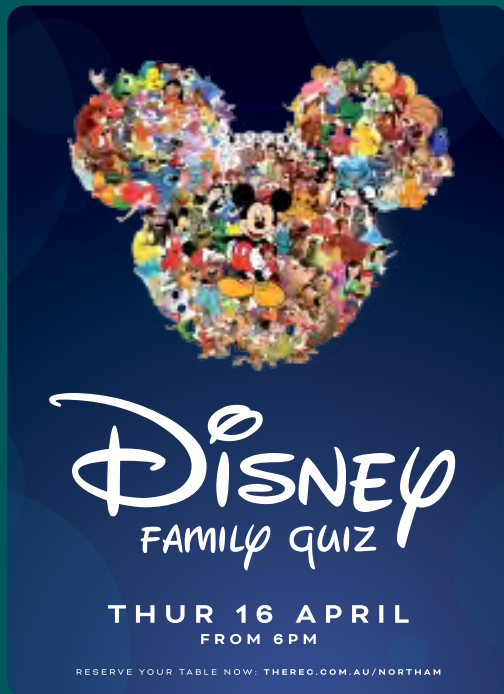
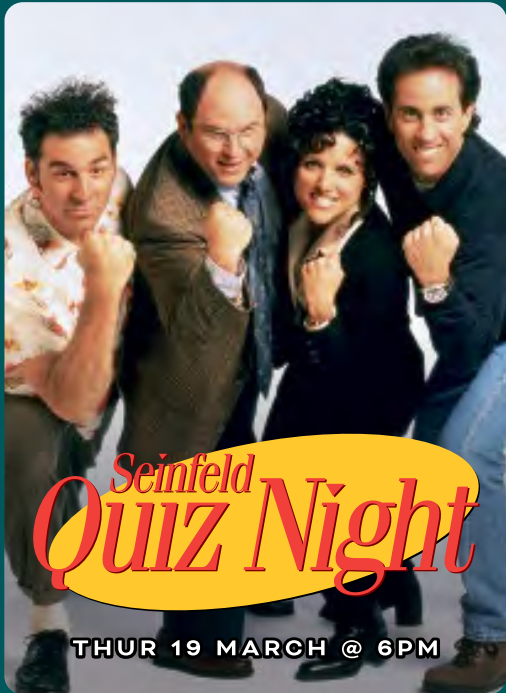
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MAR 05
LIVELIGHTER AGED CARE GAMES

Fun event for Seniors in Care, in Aged Care Facilities, Day Centres, Clubs/Groups or in their own home. Register teams of 6-10 at Ph: 6118 2718

MAR 06
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2026

Focus on Nigeria- held at the Northam Uniting Church, 103 Duke Street. At 10am followed by Morning Tea. Contact Ann Barnes for more details 0407 579 349.

MAR 07
SPANX AND THE CITY

Think "Sex and the City" meets "Stress in the Suburbs" — no sex, no stilettos, just the deep desire to be on the couch... alone... in trackies. Link Theatre - 5.30pm, Tickets \$42 at <https://events.humanitix.com/spanxandthecity-northam>

MAR 13
ROTARY DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The 2026 Rotary WA Conference will be held from 13-15 March 2026 in the heart of the picturesque Avon Valley, Northam. More info at <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1434744>

MAR 14
COUNTRY FUNDRAISER- TEAM TOPGUN

Shitbox winter rally entrant David Lawrence and Jo Hulme are hosting a country fundraiser from 11am at Southern Brook Hall. Raffles, Auctions, Yabby Races, rubber duck racing and more.

MAR 14
DEATH & DYING FOR BEGINNERS

10-12pm at Northam Library- Session 1: Get your Death ducks in a row - A starting place for the legal and logistical end of life admin. Book on eventbrite.

MAR 14
PAINT & SIP WITH ELLY

Paint, sip, laugh, and create your own masterpiece! Bottomless sparkling wine, Delicious nibbles, From 1PM at The Rec Hotel Northam.

MAR 15
BAKERS HILL FAMILY FAIR & COLOUR RUN

12pm until 4pm at Bakers Hill Oval, St George St, Bakers Hill. Colour run and foam - wear a white t-shirt for best result!! FREE event, live music, food and market stalls

MAR 15
AVVVA ANNUAL VINTAGE SWAP MEET

Selling: Vintage Cars, Trucks, Tractors, Motorcycles, Machinery, Engines, Used Spare Parts, Collectables, Household Items, etc. At the Toodyay Oval from 7am-1pm

MAR 14 & 15
KATRINE STEDDING WEDDING OPEN W/E

Join us as we open the gates across two special days for a relaxed and romantic viewing of Katrine Steading. Sat 3.30-6.30pm & Sun 9am-12pm. FREE event.

Sponsored by:


TEAM TOPGUN'S

David Lawrence and Jo Hulme
Shitbox winter rally entrant



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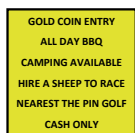


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SATURDAY 14TH MARCH 2026
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1 pm duck races
2.30 Sheep races
4 pm Yabby races



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Northam Country Club
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Club history displays & photo moments
Dress code smart casual with a touch of tennis flair
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All members, past and present, warmly invited



<https://square.link/u/FRbehRkg>

Tickets by QR Code by 1 March 2026
www.northamcountryclub.com
Enquiry Kathy Saunders 0419 025 917


Northam Love Letters

Love was quite literally in the air this Valentine's Day, thanks to a simple but powerful "quick win" activity we, the Northam Town Team (NTT), found irresistible.

In the lead-up to February 14, we invited community members via Facebook to submit Valentine's messages for their favourite local businesses. The response was overwhelming, with more than 70 heartfelt notes received — from sweet thank-yous to cheerful shout-outs celebrating friendly service, great coffee, and the people who keep our town ticking.

With creative assistance from our buddies at the Avon Valley Arts Society, the messages were lovingly decorated and transformed into bright Valentine's displays. Then, in true community spirit, NTT cupids delivered the surprises, placing them on shop windows for business owners to discover when they arrived the next morning.

The result? Smiles up and down the main street from passersby and businesses too.

This quick, low-cost initiative proved that building community doesn't always require a major event — sometimes it's about creating simple moments of connection. By linking residents with local businesses in a fun and unexpected way, the project celebrated kindness, creativity and the power of saying "we appreciate you."

NTT is proud to create initiatives that bring people together and add vibrancy to our town centre. If you'd like to learn more about us or maybe support our work with a \$50 financial membership, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch via our Facebook page and be part of the momentum building in our community.


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More details
In the New Year

What Old Wives Sleep Remedies Actually Work?



elusive for a lot of people. At some stage, we'll all have trouble getting a good night's sleep, but for some, it's an unwelcome part of their daily life.

Old Wives' Tales That Work for Better Sleep

• A Glass of Warm Milk

It may be a stereotype, but this Old Wives' Tale is backed up by science. Dairy milk contains trace amounts of tryptophan, which is a chemical that helps to induce sleepiness. It is just as effective consumed warm or cold, however warm drinks at bedtime are soothing.

• A Warm Bath

A warm bath before bed is a great way to relax and it also helps sleep come easier and faster. The body's temperature naturally drops a little within a couple of hours of falling asleep, and by taking a warm bath, the process of cooling down is sped up dramatically.

• Use Lavender

Lavender is a proven remedy to assist with relaxation and sleep. It reduces blood pressure and decreases the heart rate. Diffuse lavender essential oil, pour a few drops in your evening bath or sprinkle a little onto your pillow. You could even rub a few drops onto your temples.

• Chamomile Tea

While coffee, green tea, and black tea are not a good idea late at night (due to caffeine), drinking chamomile tea is a proven sleep remedy that supports relaxation and good sleep patterns.

• Count 'Sheep'

Visualisation is a powerful way to gently focus the thoughts away from daily stresses. Counting sheep, your breaths, or anything you prefer can help you switch off.

• Avoid Late-Night Eating

Eating a large meal can overstress the digestive system, leading to insomnia and potentially vivid or disturbing dreams. It can also cause indigestion. Particularly, avoid alcohol, spicy foods, heavy foods, and cheese late at night.

• Dim Your Lights

The body naturally responds to darkness and this is important for sleeping at night. Only go to bed when you are legitimately tired — and dim your lights an hour or two before bedtime. This will help your body release and respond to melatonin and rest more effectively.

• Read in Bed

Reading before sleeping (a traditional book or non-backlit e-reader) is a great bedtime ritual to help you wind down. It is a relaxing, satisfying part of a bedtime routine.

• Screens Off!

In modern life, screens are everywhere — and they are the worst thing for sleep! Bright or backlit screens disrupt your natural dopamine levels. This is a brain chemical essential to mood and sleep. Turn off the TV, phone, computer, and gaming devices at least an hour or two before bed.

• Wear Socks to Bed

It might not be the 'sexiest' look, but wearing socks to bed can help to improve circulation in the legs and speed the process of becoming drowsy and falling asleep.

• Try Valerian

Valerian is a herbal remedy that was used at least as far back as ancient Rome to help people sleep deeply. It works by subtly boosting the production of a brain chemical called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) which promotes sleep and drowsiness, as well as alleviating anxiety. It is effective and easy to purchase in pharmacies and health food stores. It must be taken regularly but not for more than one month without medical advice. It can sometimes cause vivid, strange dreams for some people.

Find what works for you — and if you have chronic trouble sleeping well, chat to your doctor about it to rule out any health issues which may be contributing to the problem. No matter what the cause, there is a solution and you will feel better, perform better, and be healthier with a regular good night's sleep.

Article taken from <https://whia.com.au/what-old-wives-sleep-remedies-actually-work/>

by Alana Wills

There are numerous sleep remedies that people swear by — from old wives' tales to modern technologies. Some of them are backed by science; others, not so much! But even then, the mind is a powerful thing and an expectation that something will help with a better night's sleep is often enough to achieve it.

A great night's sleep is essential for your overall health and wellbeing, yet for many reasons, it can be

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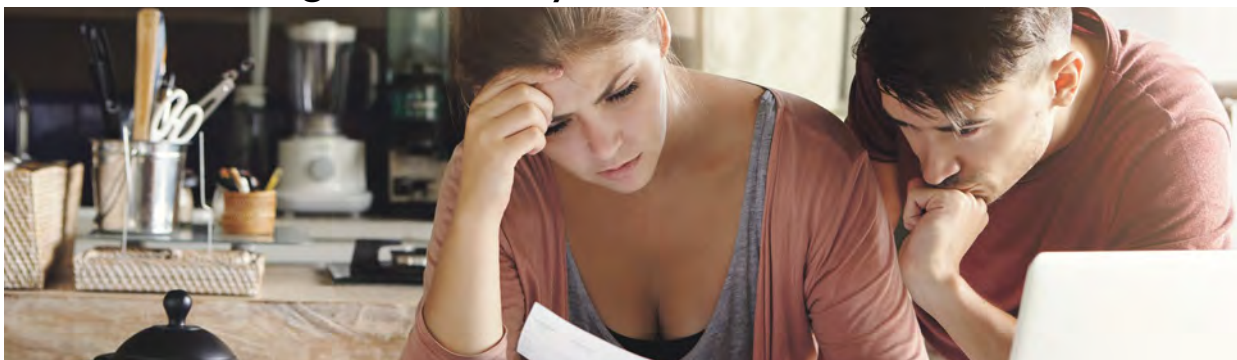
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Our Wellbeing and Money



We work hard for our money; therefore, it is important to know where it goes and how we can manage it, invest it, plan for retirement or a rainy day. As the saying goes, "Money without financial intelligence is money soon gone".

Scams, get rich schemes and a dodgy email from that international prospective partner, are ways other people will try to fleece us out of our money. As with many things in life, if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is. We need to be vigilant and not share any of our personal and banking details with third parties until we have verified that they are who they say they are.

Before making any big financial decisions, don't rush into anything, do your own research and ensure you talk to all those who will be impacted by these decisions. Seeking sound financial advice from a chartered accountant or registered financial advisor is a good way to get an independent professional point of view and allow you to make an informed decision.

Just as we should get a yearly check-up with a GP, it's important to have a yearly financial check-up with your accountant, financial advisor or bank manager. Prepare for the meeting with your questions written down so all your personal and business financial concerns are addressed. This is an opportunity to look at interest rates, refinancing options, new products and tax concessions to make sure you are getting the best 'bang for your buck' or the best deal.

Communication is key for so many things in life, so remember to talk to your partner about any personal money decisions if you have joint accounts, credit cards or loans. Uncommunicated expectations are often the main cause of interpersonal conflict.

It is also vital to talk to your business partners about

financial decisions and their potential impacts both in terms of financial viability and how they will emotionally affect the business relationship. Failure to do so will have potentially long-term negative effects on your relationship with your business partners as well as your physical and mental wellbeing.

If you are struggling to repay loans, be open and honest and talk to those in your circle including the bank manager. They can't help you if they don't know what's going on.

Financial hardship and other general money worries, if not addressed, can negatively impact our wellbeing and contribute to our situational distress and lead to other problems in our life.

Some signs that financial stress is affecting your health and relationships include:

- Arguing with the people closest to you about money.
- Feeling angry, fearful, or experiencing mood swings.
- Withdrawing from others.
- Feeling guilty when you spend money.
- Delaying health care you need, due to the cost.

We encourage a holistic way to look after yourself. Looking at your diet, exercise and time spent on self-reflection are all ways to improve your general health and help manage your wellbeing and money.

The Regional Men's Health Initiative

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When does an Airbnb stop being rental income and become a business?

Navigating the ATO threshold between rental income from a property investment and running an Airbnb business.

Short-term rentals like Airbnb have become a common part of the Australian property market. This might start as a side-hustle, renting out an investment property, or sometimes just a room to boost income. For some, that investment is lucrative enough that it quickly evolves into a more commercial operation. A single investment property might expand into owning multiple properties, with regular guest turnover, active marketing, add-on services, and hands-on management.

We often get asked if you need an ABN before you can start renting out your investment property as an Airbnb. Most of the time, the answer is no, as the ATO usually treats Airbnb as rental income and not business income.

However, there are circumstances where it does get treated as business income. If you own or are thinking about starting your own Airbnb, it's important to understand the distinction. How the ATO classifies your Airbnb or short-term accommodation activity can significantly affect your tax obligations, the deductions you can claim, your GST position, and how your overall affairs are structured. Getting it wrong can be expensive, so it's important to understand how the ATO approaches this issue.

How the ATO decides if it's rental activity or a business

As with many areas of tax and ATO decisions, there is no single test they use. Instead, they look at the overall pattern of your activities, what it looks like in practice.

When an Airbnb looks like an investment property:

- You have limited hands-on involvement.
- You own one, or only a small number of properties.
- You provide basic accommodation only.
- You don't provide 'hotel-like' services (such as meals, tours, or daily cleaning).
- A property manager or agent handles most of the work. You mainly approve expenses and review statements provided.

In these cases, Airbnb is simply the booking platform, and your income is treated as rent from a property, not a business.

Example 1: Liam owns 12 residential units across three locations. A professional property manager handles all

bookings, cleaning, rent collection, guest issues and maintenance. Liam reviews monthly reports and approves major expenses but has little day-to-day involvement.

Despite the number of properties, Liam's role is passive, and the activity is treated as rental income rather than a business.

When Airbnb start to look like a business:

- You control and manage multiple short-term rental properties.
- You spend significant time each week on bookings, guest communication, cleaning, and maintenance.
- You provide additional or recurring services beyond basic accommodation, such as welcome hampers, linen services, cleaning between stays, concierge-style assistance, or curated local experiences.
- You operate in a clearly organised and commercial way, with systems, planning, and marketing.
- The activity looks like a scaled and organised operation rather than a passive investment.

The more your setup looks and feels like a commercial operation, the more likely it is to be treated as a business.

Example 2: Sophia and Daniel own 18 short-term rental properties. They manage the properties themselves, handling marketing, guest communication, cleaning schedules, pricing, and repairs. They also provide local visitor information and additional guest services.

They spend approximately 30 hours per week running the operation and have documented systems and procedures in place. Due to the active management, time commitment and commercial approach, their activity is classified as a business.

Importantly, the number of properties alone is not decisive. The level of involvement and commerciality are key.

How does this impact Airbnb owners?

There is compliance risk and consequences for getting it wrong. Misclassification of Airbnb and short-term accommodation income is an area the ATO regularly reviews, and owners can face penalties and back taxes.

For individual operators receiving rental income:

- Income is declared in the rental schedules in your tax return.
- You can claim deductions such as interest, depreciation, repairs and maintenance and management fees.
- GST generally does not apply unless the property



qualifies as commercial residential premises.

It is important to be realistic about your level of involvement. One holiday rental with minimal services is very different from a hands-on, multi-property tourism operation.

To reduce risk:

- Ensure your classification aligns with ATO guidelines.
- Maintain clear documentation of how your operation runs.
- Review your tax position if your Airbnb evolves.

For Airbnb business owners:

- Income is reported under business schedules.
- You may need an ABN and to register for GST if turnover exceeds \$75,000.
- You may be entitled to a wider range of deductions, including marketing, admin costs, and other operating expenses.
- Look at structuring through a company or trust which may provide better tax outcomes.
- Keep clear and detailed records of income, expenses, and services provided.
- Treat your operation like a business if that is how you're running it.

How RSM can help

There is no universal rule that applies to every Airbnb owner. What matters is what you do, how involved you are and how commercial the set up really is.

Professional advice can provide clarity if you are operating in a bit of a grey zone or moving towards it. Getting professional advice early can help you avoid costly mistakes.

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Update from Chris Antonio, Shire of Northam President

It's great to see a number of both Shire-led and community events over the next couple of months. Events of note include the Rotary 9423 District hosting a regional conference in March, the Northam Motor Sport Festival in April, and both the Wheatbelt Futures Forum and the Regional Housing Conferences being held in Northam in May. Information on upcoming events can be found on the Shire's website and social pages, and if you want to keep up to date with what I've been up to, follow me on Instagram by searching @shire_of_northam_president.

Towards the latter end of Summer, our aquatic facilities have been promoted outside of the Shire by Social Media Influencers. It's great to see our wonderful facilities recognised by visitors from all over WA.

At this time of year, remember to be emergency ready. Prepare to fight or flight, and consider becoming a volunteer to help the great number of local people who give their time and efforts to assist everyone within the Shire.

Finally, a note to remind everyone that Council meeting dates during 2026 have been updated with changes (June 2026 meeting) and are available on the Shire of Northam website and social pages.



Northam Motor Sport Festival

The Northam Motor Sport Festival is back for 2026 and it's going to be bigger, better, and louder than ever!

Sunday 26th April | Northam CBD

Northam CBD will come alive with the sound of engines as vintage cars take over the streets for a thrilling series of races throughout the day.

If you are looking for even more action-packed fun, we've got you covered. Don't miss:

- Shannon's Show'n'Shine car show at Bernard Park
- Harley Davidson stunt performances throughout the day. Stunts at 10am next to the Village Green, main performance at 12:30pm on Minson Avenue, and again at 3pm next to the village green
- Carnival rides (rides incur a fee) in the Bernard Park car park
- Bouncy Castle at Bernard Park
- Arcade Alley in the Northam Boulevard
- Face Painting and crafting activities courtesy of AVAS and Bunnings
- Market stalls and local businesses open for trade
- Food trucks and local restaurants serving delicious food all day
- Another Fine Mess delivering the best tunes at the Bernard Park Sound Shell from 5:30pm until 8pm

Monday 27th April (Public Holiday) | Mount Ommanney

The annual Hill Climb at Mount Ommanney begins at 10am, presented by the Triumph Sports Owners Association of WA. Brace yourself for some intense moments as drivers tackle the challenging 2km course.

This historic event truly has something for everyone, so mark this long weekend in your calendars, and join us for a wild ride!

For full event details, follow @northammotorsportfestival on Facebook.

Restricted Burning Season

The Shire of Northam is expected to enter the Restricted Burning Period in March. For full details on what you can and cannot do during Restricted Burning, visit the Fire and Emergency information page on our website.

Community Workshops

We are currently undertaking a review of our Council Plan, and are inviting community members to have their say.

The Council Plan guides the Shire's priorities, services and projects over the coming years. Your feedback will help us understand what matters most to our community and ensure the Plan continues to reflect local needs, aspirations and ideas.

Bakers Hill

Tuesday 31st March | 6:00pm-8:00pm
Bakers Hill Recreation Centre

Northam Morning Session

Wednesday 1st April | 9:15am-11:15am
Northam Recreation Centre

Northam Evening Session

Wednesday 1st April | 6:00pm-8:00pm
Northam Recreation Centre

Join us at a relaxed community workshop where you can:

- Share your ideas and priorities for the future
- Talk directly with Council Members and Shire staff
- Discuss what's working well and what could be improved
- Help us to review the current Council Plan to continue to shape the direction of our community

These sessions are informal, interactive, and open to everyone. No preparation or prior knowledge is required.

All feedback gathered during these sessions will be used in conjunction with the results of the recent community survey to dictate our priorities for the coming years in the Shire of Northam. Light refreshments will be provided.

What about me, I'm family too? Inheritance and Family Business

by Dr Catherine Bowen (PhD), Family Business Conflict: Strategy, Planning; Communication. Professional Mediator

What are the inheritance rights of those family members not involved in the family-business (FB)?

A particularly challenging aspect for all FBs, especially farming, the threats associated with disgruntled family members feeling over-looked or unfairly treated in a will, comes straight back to their rights via The Family Provisions Act 1972 (Inheritance Act — amended 2011 and 2013). The many grey areas associated with this Act reminds us that someone can challenge a will where they feel they have not been “adequately provided for in the estate of a deceased relative”.

In recent years, I have seen an increase in the expectations of entitlement from family not involved in the business, of family members who, often driven by resentment or greed, hit the go-button for a legal challenge.

So, how do we protect our business from these potential difficulties?

The word communication is very significant here.

Generally, most family members expect something from their parents' wills. Clear and open 'asset' discussions allow people to understand the decisions made and can work to circumvent future problems.

For example, past benefits granted to certain family members who may have been 'given a hand' are often overlooked. Finance made available for a car, housing, business backing or such may have been quietly arranged — unbeknown to other family members. It is very difficult to measure the life-advantages and ultimate real value gained by having access to (free)



finance when it is most needed. It is equally difficult to measure any associated financial difficulties experienced by the parents in order to provide the needed support. Over time, and lacking any documentation, these early 'gifts' are easily minimised and forgotten and recipients feel justified in expecting their 'share' in the Will.

From the point of view of the Courts, (as per the FPA 1972), that person may well be 'entitled'.

So, is there a solution?

One rule holds firm in family business: 'fair does not mean equal'. The most typical arrangement for most FBs is to try to build assets independent of the FB, which can be transferred to non-FB members at an appropriate time.

But not everyone is financially able to set these things up.

This is where communication comes to the fore. Good family governance should practice open and inclusive discussions of just what people have received / are receiving or are entitled to receive from family-owned assets.

AGMs, to which non-FB members (bloodline only may be best) are invited, should become a practice for

you. It is an easy communication tool and however uncomfortable, might save your will and business from future challenges.

My experience has shown that this awareness lessens the propensity for demand from others.

Should the worst occur and you receive a letter from a lawyer representing a non-FB member, don't panic, but do act quickly. Consider engaging an independent party (relative, friend, consultant) to arrange to meet and discuss things first. It won't be comfortable or easy, and most antagonists won't agree, but you need to know you have tried. It is all about negotiation.

Try to avoid the time-consuming, lose-lose tango of exchanging letters via a legal consultant. Whatever the outcome of the challenge, be prepared, it will always cost more than you want or expect.

Ultimately, good management should include sound and consistent communication practices and be an essential component of all FB survival kits.

Contact Dr Catherine Bowen by email at mydesk801@gmail.com | www.gentogen.com.au




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From CEO's Desk

by Theresa Lee

As we move confidently into 2026, it's wonderful to see businesses across Northam back in full swing following the holiday period. The energy around town has lifted noticeably in recent weeks, with shopfronts buzzing, tradies on the move, hospitality venues humming, and new ideas already taking shape. 2026 is already shaping up to be one of opportunity, collaboration and growth for our business community.

In February, together with Wheatbelt Business Network (WBN), we were proud to host a successful training day with St John WA here in Northam. Our participants in the Tourism WA Workforce Development Program undertook first aid training, strengthening both their skill sets and their confidence. Investing in workforce capability is critical for our region, particularly as we continue to build Northam's reputation as a welcoming and professional destination. A huge thank you to St John for delivering such a valuable and practical session. Programs like this ensure our local tourism and hospitality operators and their staff are equipped to provide safe, high-quality experiences for visitors and locals alike.

Looking ahead, excitement is building for the 2026 Wheatbelt Futures Forum, to be held in Northam on 1 May. This event brings together industry leaders, government stakeholders and community voices to explore the economic future and opportunities for our region. With a focus on infrastructure, construction & housing, renewable energy, and health, the 2026 Forum lineup promises to initiate many thought-provoking, collaborative conversations and actions towards overcoming the challenges and seeing sustainable growth across the Wheatbelt.

Another project we're particularly proud of is the Northam Business Directory, which is well on track for production. This will be the first locally produced, comprehensive printed directory showcasing businesses and community groups across Northam and surrounds. In an increasingly digital world, there remains strong demand for an accessible, tangible resource that connects residents, visitors and businesses. The Directory will celebrate the breadth of services available in our region while encouraging people to shop local and support local. We look forward to sharing more details soon.

February also saw the launch of our Northam Women in Business 'Monthly Meets'. We kicked off at Sportspower Northam, in collaboration with Kavan London from Kavan's Pilates Flow and the team at Happy Days Coffee Pot in the Northam Boulevard. The atmosphere was vibrant, supportive and inspiring, with meaningful networking amongst attendees. These monthly events provide a platform to showcase local businesses while creating a welcoming space for connection and collaboration.

We are also preparing to roll out a schedule of business upskilling workshops across 2026, designed to respond to the needs of our members and the broader business community. From marketing and digital skills to grant writing, business and succession planning, understanding financials and more, these sessions will provide practical tools to help local businesses thrive.

If you'd like to have a conversation about being part of a well-connected and supportive business community that actively engages in the dialogue shaping our town and region, I warmly encourage you to reach out to me at the Chamber on 0427 472 729 or info@northamchamber.com.au.



Photo: NWIB meeting at Sportspower



Photo: First Aid course participants



MOTORING

GWM teams up with Northam locals

by Jo Lee, Dealer Principal

At Northam GWM, we believe buying a car should feel exciting, not intimidating. It should be about finding the right fit for your life, your family, your work, and your adventures — and enjoying the journey along the way. That belief is at the heart of everything we do.

GWM has quickly become one of Australia's fastest-growing automotive brands, and it's easy to see why. With a lineup that includes tough and capable utes like the Cannon and Cannon Alpha, stylish and tech-packed SUVs such as the Haval Jolion, H6, H6 Hybrid and Tank range, GWM delivers outstanding value without cutting corners on quality, safety, or comfort. All backed by a 7 year warranty. These are vehicles designed for real Australian conditions — whether that's weekday commuting, weekend getaways, or hard days on the job.

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Focus on Farming by Chris Antonio

Planning for the 2026 year continues, with many broadacre agribusinesses in the process of applying lime and gypsum. Agribusinesses are also engaging with professional business partners as part of the planning process.

With the formal announcement of the biggest harvest being delivered across the state and into the CBH storage and handling system, grain growers are keeping an eye out for pricing opportunities – and also for the upcoming season.

With the recent CBH Board Grower Representative Districts 1 and 4 Member elections being held and announced, I congratulate all nominees and the eventual winner. The grower representatives on the board guide the strategic future of our co-operative. Watch out on CBH communications channels for upcoming statewide and local events. For community groups, CBH regularly offers grant funding.

We are still waiting for the outcomes of the results for those who applied to the Live Export Transition Grants round 1. Round 2 is due to be opened for applications soon.

As advised, here are a couple of excerpts of Agribusiness related programmes and AI uses. The first is regarding Xero, an accounting and bookkeeping programme for both agribusiness and small businesses. The second is around Agworld, a popular agribusiness planning tool. Xero has publicly signalled a major strategic focus on AI as part of its long-term growth plan. Management says it is deploying AI across its accounting platform to automate tasks, deliver insights and help small businesses make smarter financial decisions. Agworld has been highlighting Alma, an AI-powered insights platform aimed at helping agronomists and growers make decisions (e.g., pest/disease management, weather risk interpretation). As Agworld have been quoted — AI here is positioned as helper to experts, not a replacement.

Under the Milky Way Tonight: Space Tech in the Wheatbelt by Naomi Sherrington

I was listening to reflections on the Challenger disaster anniversary while driving through farmland on the Northam-York Road, and it struck me: what once seemed like distant space tech now influences how our Wheatbelt paddocks are farmed. Today, satellites overhead quietly revolutionise farming. They help farmers monitor soil moisture, so they only irrigate when needed; they give accurate weather forecasts to plan sowing or harvesting; GPS guidance — also powered by satellites — lets growers plant with pinpoint precision, reducing waste; and, when pests or diseases loom, satellites announce the threats with an early warning. Our paddocks now rely on space-age insight, and it's shaping the future of farming.

Satellites are more than distant objects in the sky. Earth-observation systems sense and send detailed images of vegetation health back to operators on the ground, enabling farmers to see colour changes in crops that might otherwise go unnoticed from the cab of a ute. These images can reveal stressed or underperforming areas early in the season, so producers know where to intervene with targeted watering or nutrients rather than applying treatments everywhere. This sort of crop monitoring from above is now part of precision agriculture across Australia.

One of the clearest benefits of satellite data lies in managing water, a perennial challenge in the Wheatbelt's low-rainfall environment. By interpreting satellite measurements of soil moisture and plant water use, farmers can fine-tune their irrigation scheduling, avoiding both underwatering and overuse. This isn't just good for paddock productivity; it's increasingly essential for stewardship of precious water resources. Satellite insight helps make each drop count.

It's not only moisture that satellites help with: modern space-based systems feed into advanced weather

forecasting too. Infrared and microwave sensors on orbiting satellites contribute to rainfall estimates and regional weather models, giving farmers a broader picture of conditions days ahead. That's vital when deciding the best window for sowing, spraying or harvesting — decisions that can mean the difference between strong yields and avoidable losses.

Another practical boon in the paddock is early detection of pests and diseases. Satellite imagery analysed with pattern-recognition tools can flag anomalies in crop health long before symptoms show up at ground level. Identifying potential outbreaks early allows growers to act swiftly, protecting crops and reducing reliance on wide-range sprays. While satellites don't replace agronomists or on-farm observation, they extend the field of view far beyond what human eyes can see.

These technologies don't come without challenges. Smaller producers may find high-resolution data or subscription-based services costly, and reliable internet connections are still patchy across rural WA, which can constrain real-time use of big data streams on farm. However, a combination of free government-led products and increasing commercial competition is making satellite information more accessible than it once was.

Farmers in the Wheatbelt are blending decades-old agricultural wisdom with data and insight from 36,000 km above, once reserved for scientists and planners. The result is informed, productive, and resilient farming that benefits not just individual producers but local communities and the broader Australian agricultural landscape.

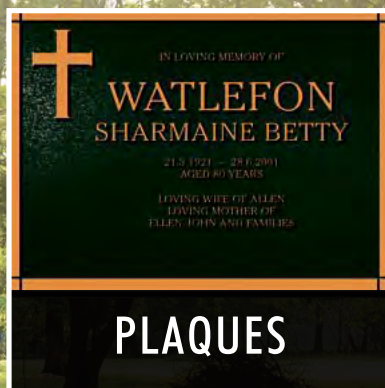
And next time you're out under the Milky Way on a clear Wheatbelt night, take a moment to look up and see how many satellites you can count. Most of them are silently circling overhead, carrying the very data that helps shape decisions in our paddocks — from soil moisture maps to weather forecasts. They're small dots of reflected sunlight, but their impact on the way we farm is anything but tiny.

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In a Strong National Harvest, WA Crops Stand Tall

by Naomi Sherrington

Western Australia has delivered what many growers are calling a once-in-a-generation season. Across the Wheatbelt, growers have been reporting exceptional results, and the strength of the season has been hard to miss: full headers, long delivery queues, and a real sense of momentum in paddocks and receival sites.

The federal ABARES December 2025 forecast projected Australia's total 2025–26 winter crop at around 66.3 million tonnes, with Western Australia expected to deliver about 26.2 million tonnes of grain across cereals and other winter crops — roughly 40% of the national crop. As of mid-February 2026, Western Australia's grain harvest has delivered a state record of about 27.35 million tonnes of total grain, including exceptionally strong cereal output.

So how did the eastern states and South Australia compare?

Australia's 2025–26 crop has been strong overall, and while final figures are yet to be released, official reporting indicates total grain production across the country will be well above the long-term average. However, WA's season has been notable for being consistently strong across a wide area, rather than isolated to one or two standout districts. That matters, because the national grain story is rarely uniform: a good season in one state can be tempered by drought, frost or harvest rain in another.

For many eastern growers, the challenge this year wasn't simply 'rain versus no rain': it was timing. In parts of Victoria and South Australia, spring rainfall helped crops fill grain and lift yields, particularly in later-sown paddocks. But rain during harvest is a different beast; worst case scenarios can see harvest ruined.

Even when it doesn't reduce tonnes, harvest rain can affect quality — increasing the risk of downgrades due to staining, sprouting or higher screenings. In practical terms that can mean the crop is still there, but less of it qualifies for premium grades. So while the east and South Australia did not see their harvest 'ruined' overall, many growers dealt with a season that was more variable and weather-interrupted than WA's.

South Australia's grain production has lifted sharply compared to recent years. SA may not have had the same widespread record tonnages WA has seen, but it has still delivered a much better result than the drought-leaning seasons many growers have endured recently.

Across the eastern states, the 2025–26 harvest has been described as above average overall, with particularly strong performance in Queensland and parts of northern New South Wales. Early industry estimates show about 11–12 million tonnes of grain receivals in eastern and southern storage systems — a useful indicator of harvest size ahead of final state production figures.

Queensland's crop delivered solid results in 2025–26. Despite a slight year-on-year reduction in total winter crop area and some regional variability, conditions across much of the state were favourable for grain growth, with soil moisture profiles strong at planting and timely spring rainfall helping crops fill out. Industry reporting indicates Queensland's total winter crop production is among the strongest in recent years.

New South Wales presented a mixed picture: strong in some districts, more restrained in others, but generally above the long-term average for total grain.

Victoria also performed well in many regions, with spring conditions supporting yield potential across a

number of cropping areas.

At the time of going to print, eastern and southern states' total grain figures are still being finalised, and final production totals from official sources are yet to be released. However, early harvest and receival data point to a broadly solid season outside Western Australia, albeit with more variability and weather-related interruptions in some regions.

A large WA grain harvest can influence local pricing, but not always in the way people expect. While strong supply can place downward pressure on some grades at certain points in the season, prices are also influenced by export demand, freight capacity, storage constraints, quality outcomes, and global market conditions.

Importantly, WA's grain pricing is closely tied to international factors — including Northern Hemisphere production, shipping costs, and currency movements — not just local tonnage. For growers, the key takeaway is that a large crop is generally positive for regional throughput and export flow, even when price signals fluctuate.

For growers and regional communities in the Avon Valley, the significance of WA's record season isn't just local pride — it's the national role WA plays when conditions in other states are more variable.

A huge WA crop can influence national supply, freight demand, port throughput and export momentum. Even if eastern states deliver respectable seasons, WA's sheer volume this year reinforces how much of Australia's grain-export engine runs through western ports.

And for many in the Avon Valley, it's a reminder of something farmers already know: in Australian agriculture, the national story is rarely one story — it's several, happening at once.

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Property market update:

The regional property market across Western Australia's Wheatbelt continues to show strong activity and demand, particularly for well-priced properties, with buyers acting quickly once listings hit the market. According to the latest REIWA regional data for the Wheatbelt (week ending 1 February 2026), residential sales remain steady, with 20 houses sold and 87 houses listed during that week. While unit and land listings lag behind houses, the overall rhythm of transactions shows an active and balanced regional market.

A standout feature of the current market is how quickly properties are being taken under offer when priced correctly. Across many parts of WA — including the Wheatbelt — homes that are marketed at the right price point are attracting attention within days of going online. This reflects a broader West Australian trend where scarcity, low stock, and strong buyer demand are driving faster transactions.

For Sellers:

Properties that are well-presented and accurately priced are generating strong enquiry and offers quickly — even in the Wheatbelt. This is especially true for 3–4 bedroom homes and lifestyle acreage, which tend to gain the most traction.

For Buyers:

Preparation is key. In a market where properties can secure offers rapidly, having finance confirmed and an understanding of recent comparable sales gives buyers the best chance of success.

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What to make with left over Easter Egg Chocolate!

Easter Egg Chocolate Bark



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2. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
3. Pour the melted chocolate onto the tray and spread into a thin, even layer.
4. Sprinkle over your chosen toppings, nuts, fruit, pretzels, sweets & press them in lightly.
5. Refrigerate until fully set, then break into shards and enjoy.

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Vol .28 Newsletter



Oldbury Home wins 2025 HIA WA Project Home of the Year

The Rural Building Co.'s Oldbury home has been awarded Project Home of the Year 2025 at the HIA Western Australian Housing Awards, and is now a finalist for the 2026 HIA Australian Project Home.

Located in the picturesque Oldbury region, this thoughtfully designed custom home offers a peaceful retreat that combines rural charm with modern practicality. The home's front elevation reflects a classic Australian aesthetic, with corrugated steel cladding and a generous verandah extending into a spacious alfresco area, creating an effortless indoor-outdoor lifestyle.

Inside, an over-height vaulted entry leads into the open-plan living and kitchen space. High ceilings and featured gabled windows flood the space with natural light and

sky views, while double sliding doors further enhance the home's connection to its surroundings.

The modern kitchen features an expansive central island bench perfect for entertaining and family gatherings. An open-plan scullery conceals the fridge and walk-in pantry, blending style and practicality. Adjacent to the scullery, the concealed laundry includes an extensive walk-in linen closet and direct external access, streamlining everyday routines.

Together, these features craft a home that embodies comfort and functionality with a distinct Australian style.

In addition to its state-level victory, the Oldbury home received significant recognition at the 2025 HIA

Truecore Steel Perth Housing Awards, including Project Home Over \$650,000, Project Home of the Year, and finalist for Home of the Year.

"Winning Project Home of the Year speaks to the consistency and care our team brings to every custom home," said Tony Harvie, General Manager.

The home will now represent Western Australia as a finalist for the 2026 HIA Australian Project Home, continuing The Rural Building Co.'s strong national reputation for designs that are grounded, functional, and suited to regional living.

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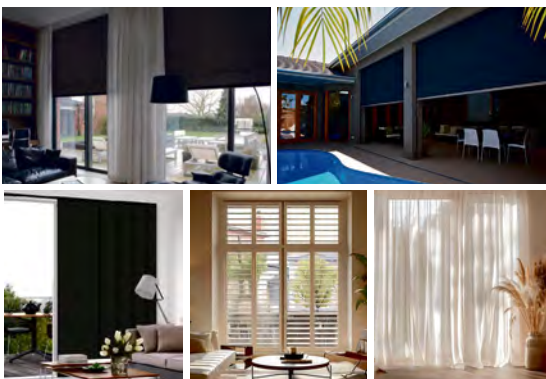
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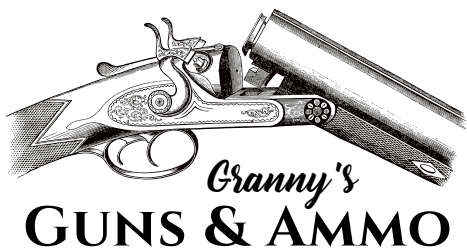
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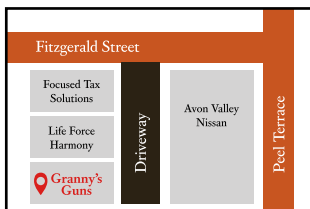
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For Further Job Related Information: We encourage you to contact **Samantha Cornthwaite** on **9690 2400**.

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Obituary



FOX (Laura)

10.11.1931 - 14.01.2026

Born Moora, Western Australia

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Laura Fox aged 94 on 14th January 2026, at Bethavon, Northam.

Laura was the loving sister of Gwen, and dearly loved wife of Eric (dec) and mother of Norman, Marie, Douglas, Geoffrey and Andrew.

Precious Grandmother of Justin, Imogen and Lynton; Bradley and Gavin; Cameron, Sabrina, Julian and Valentina; and Jeremy and loving Great Grandmother of Oliver, Abbigayle, Eloise; Scarlet; Hazel, Harper, Hudson and Hadley.

We are comforted to know that Laura passed peacefully and is now reunited with her beloved husband, Eric.

Thanks to the staff of Bethavon for their respectful care in her final years.

Public Notice

Northam Race Club

Notice to Members

Members are advised that the AGM for the Northam Race Club Inc. will be held at 6pm on Wednesday 25 February 2026 at the race course 175 Yilgarn Ave, Northam.

AGM Agenda has been posted or emailed to current members.

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2026 York & District Archery Club is OPEN!



Photo: Beginner workshop

Another year has gone by for the York & District Archery Club (YDAC). Saturday 24th January was our first archery shoot of the year and the weather turned out beautiful! It was a good turn out with all manner of bow types. Although we promote traditional archery with recurve and long bow, we also include compound bows as well. All are welcome.

The Club has grown since we began in 2022. We've had a lot of interest in the sport of bush archery from ages 8 to 90yrs! Our members come from Northam, Goomalling, York, Beverley, Mundaring, Pingelly and Wundowie not to mention a family in Perth — they might just have to move up here! The club has a fantastic family atmosphere, a challenging sport and good times socially.

Located at Talbot Reserve, 20 minutes SW of York, the Club now has two bush ranges — a shorter 14-18 target Blue range with novelty targets and a longer 20-24 target range scoring with 3Ds and vinyl targets. Plans for an all 3D course is in progress of being mapped out.

What's in the works for this year?

Free 'Come & Try' morning — Saturday 21st March 2026 — so book early for a spot! All ages are welcomed. Experienced archers will talk about safety and give the tips and techniques of archery with practice on the range. Afterwards enjoy a fundraising sausage sizzle and chat about those near bullseyes. A fun morning for all!

Regular archery shoots alternate Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate family schedules — one weekend a scoring shoot and the other weekend a fun shoot. Two bush ranges to choose from. Weekly Club shoot days, and special events (an exciting new addition — watch this space!) to be had for kids and adults.

Beginner lessons once a month. All equipment is included and held once a month with certified coaches teaching safety and shooting techniques with lots of practice on the range. Lesson times are always posted on Facebook and bookings are essential. Flexible dates can be arranged.

In-house club workshops — The club already had a well-attended workshop on how to fletch your own arrows, a skill much needed to repair the old. Other workshops to be scheduled are tips on maintaining your archery equipment, making new bow strings to replace the old and many more.

Interest groups or team building — A fun time for groups who just want to get out and have some social time together while learning the art and sport of archery. Bunnings, Northam came out for some social time and had a great time practicing archery at targets of various distances as well as seeing who had the top scores! We encourage other businesses and groups to take time away

from their busy schedules and enjoy the company and bonding of your employees in a social atmosphere.

Our annual inter-club weekend/camping competition is on 11th — 12th of April this year. The club invites other WA archery clubs nearby to enjoy a time of competition and showing off their skills at the range. Novelty shoots bring laughter and a challenge.

The Club is truly grateful for our past regular sponsors who have helped us provide the Wheatbelt region with a bush archery club. A big thank you to Northam Coles, Woolworths, Bunnings and our political reps of the region, to the Shire of York, York Community Bendigo Bank and York IGA Co-op — All have been a great help support special events such as our Club sausage sizzles, our annual Interclub Archery and enabling us to equip the club with rental bows, targets and other equipment.

To keep updated on events and beginner lessons follow us on Facebook — York & Districts Archery Club Inc. Any questions? Email: yorkwaarchery@gmail.com or call Albert 0449678840 or Debbie 0410815003.

Meet us each year at the York Medieval Fayre for a try out.



Photo: YDAC Fletching workshop



YORK & DISTRICTS ARCHERY CLUB

Come and Try Morning FREE

Saturday 21st March

9.30am & 10.30am

Fun for ages 7 years and older.
(16 & under with a parent or guardian)

Sausage sizzle and drinks
Cash only on the day.



314 Talbot Hall Rd
Talbot
Adults & Children welcome.
No experience necessary,
as you will be coached on the day.

Bookings Essential
RSVP by:
Monday 16th March

For more information
EM: yorkwaarchery@gmail.com
Ph: 0410 815 003 Debbie

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LADIES & JUNIORS

Come & Try Day!

15th MARCH 2026



AGES 12 & UP!

\$25 PER PERSON

10AM AT THE CLUB

RSVP BY 10th MARCH 2026 TO:
northamctc@gmail.com

Robertson's Full-Circle Moment as Eagles Return to Northam

There was a familiar face among the blue and gold in Northam recently, but for many locals it felt like welcoming one of their own back home.

New West Coast Eagles recruit Dev Robertson enjoyed an emotional return to the Wheatbelt town as the West Coast Eagles held their annual Community Camp, reconnecting with regional supporters and schools.

For Robertson, 24, the visit carried extra significance. Northam is where his football journey began — from backyard kicks to dreaming big on local ovals — and where he once walked the corridors of St Joseph's Primary School as a student.

On Monday night, the midfielder stayed with his father, who still lives in the area, adding a personal touch to what was already a special trip.

"I've got fond memories of this place. It's great to be back," Robertson said.

The former Northam junior, now with 47 AFL games to his name, vividly recalls being on the other side of a similar visit.

"I distinctly remember Eagles players coming out when I was at school," he said.

"Seeing the people you look up to in the flesh makes it all feel possible."

The annual Community Camp sees players travel across Western Australia to engage with regional communities, visiting schools, junior clubs and local organisations. For young fans in towns like Northam, the chance to meet AFL players can leave a lasting impression.

Robertson knows that better than most.

As a schoolboy, those encounters helped fuel his belief that a career at the elite level was attainable. Now wearing the Eagles colours himself, he hopes to provide the same spark of inspiration.

"If I can inspire even one or two kids to chase AFL footy, that'd mean a lot," he said.

While the Eagles' visit brought excitement to classrooms and local footy grounds alike, Robertson's homecoming served as a reminder of the powerful connection between regional communities and the AFL pathway.

From the schoolyard at St Joseph's to the national stage, Robertson's journey stands as proof that big dreams can grow in small towns — and that sometimes, coming home can be just as meaningful as making it.



Photo: Devan Robertson during the Northam visit

Northam Railways Football Club update

The Northam Railways Football Club is gearing up for the upcoming season, with preparations well underway at Henry Street Oval.

Training sessions are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 6pm, with players, coaches and supporters encouraged to get involved as the club builds momentum toward round one.

As part of the pre-season program, the Railways will host a scratch match in Northam on Saturday 28 March, providing a valuable opportunity for players to hit match conditions and for supporters to catch an early glimpse of the team in action.

The official season opener will be played at home on Saturday 12 April against Quairading Football Club at Henry Street Oval. The day will also double as Sponsors Day, celebrating and thanking the businesses and individuals who support the club throughout the season.

The club looks forward to welcoming the community back to Henry Street Oval for what promises to be an exciting start to the year.



Helena Avon Valley Shotokan

Has been with our club for over 5 years. She is actively stepping up into leadership roles, volunteering to assist younger students throughout the junior classes. She volunteers her time on weekends to collect rubbish for our club as well as helping out with all fund-raisers. She is encouraging to other members who may be struggling with self motivation. She has been selected the travel internationally to represent Australia in March. She attended all holiday training, running laps on the oval and doing drills to improve fitness in preparation for her competition in March.

Well done Helena.

Our Junior Club Champ of the month gets a Shop Northam \$25 Eftpos Card thanks to Hon Steve Martin MLC



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- Northam Clay Target Club
- Northam Community Men's Shed
- Northam Golf Club
- Northam Railways Football Club

- Northam Town Team
- Shire of Northam Bilya Festival
- Shire of Northam Elevate Festival
- Stryka Fight Team
- Plus scholarships for students from
- Northam Senior High School
- St Joseph's High School
- Central Regional TAFE

Find out more. Call 9622 8159 or search Bendigo Bank Northam.



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100 Years of Aces and Friendships:

Northam Lawn Tennis Club Celebrates Centenary



Photo: French tennis player from the 1920's

This March, Northam's sporting community will come together to celebrate 100 years of the Northam Lawn Tennis Club (NLTC) — a century of competition, friendship and local pride.

On Saturday, 21 March, past and present members, supporters and tennis lovers alike are invited to join the celebrations at the Northam Country Club, with a buffet luncheon and displays of club memorabilia and photographs, for a day set to honour the friendships, rivalries and community spirit that have defined the club for generations.

How it all started

The Northam Lawn Tennis Club's early history was reported in the Northam Advertiser in 1926, when the Parks and Reserve Committee of the Northam Shire Council recommended that the club be granted a lease over a portion of Burwood Park for a period of 13 years, expiring on March 31, 1939.

In the club's earliest days, members began with two grass courts — and through hard physical work, expanded quickly. By August 28 that year, three courts were established, the grass had been planted, and a fourth court was nearing completion.

The courts were to be fenced, as reported at the time, to prevent errant tennis balls escaping the premises. As other tennis clubs existed in Northam, membership in the NLTC grew steadily, including as players from other clubs migrated to the Burwood Park courts.

Following the expiry of the initial lease, the local council — then operating as the Town of Northam — later provided the club with a peppercorn lease, helping secure its future as a long-standing sporting home in the community.

Join the celebrations

All present and past members are encouraged to attend this historic centenary celebration.

Tickets are available via QR code at <https://square.link/u/FRbehRkg> or can be purchased from the Northam Country Club.

For enquiries, please contact Kathy Saunders on 0419 025 0917.

Whether you played pennants, learned your first serve as a junior, or simply enjoyed the social side of the club, the centenary will be a fitting tribute to a proud Northam sporting institution — and the people who built it.



NEW BISTRO BÉARNAISE ANGUS. CHEF'S KISS.

Available after 10.30am for a limited time. Serving suggestion.