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Editorial

June marks a meaningful milestone for The Northam Advertiser – this edition is the 50th since the paper was re-established.

Over those fifty editions, this paper has told local stories – stories that rarely make headlines outside regional Australia, but matter deeply to the people who live here.

Regional newspapers occupy a strange but important space. We are part historical record, part watchdog, part community noticeboard and part storyteller. In many small towns, local newspapers remain among the few institutions still consistently connecting people across generations, industries and backgrounds.

That matters more than many realise.

Recently, I attended a small and deeply moving gathering for the unveiling of a plaque commemorating little Ronald Wilcox – a toddler who tragically drowned in a sheep dip in Grass Valley almost a century ago. For decades, the story survived quietly through family memory and fragments of local history.

Standing there with his brother and family members who never had the chance to meet him, it became obvious that the story still mattered profoundly. Not because it was sensational or recent, but because it was human.

Stories like Ronald's remind us that regional communities are built not only on roads, farms and infrastructure, but on memory – on shared griefs, triumphs and humanity passed from one generation to the next. In many ways, preserving those stories remains part of the role local newspapers continue to play.

But regional journalism also serves another important purpose: helping communities understand how decisions made in Canberra and Perth ripple outward into everyday regional life.

Which brings us to the recent State and Federal Budgets.

Like most Budgets, both contained good news, political theatre, genuine investment and carefully chosen omissions. There was welcome spending in areas such as housing, health and cost-of-living relief, some of which will benefit regional communities.

But Budgets are not just about what governments choose to fund – they also reveal what is not being prioritised.

For many regional Australians, some of those gaps are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Telecommunications blackspots, freight infrastructure, road safety and fuel security remain defining challenges for regions like the Wheatbelt, yet long-term investment still often feels fragmented compared to the scale of what is required.

Beneath every modern Budget also sits a larger question: what kind of future are we building for regional Australia? One where regional communities merely survive – or one where they genuinely thrive?

Because thriving regions require more than occasional grants and election-cycle announcements. They require sustained investment and recognition that regional Australia is not simply a backdrop to the national economy – it is one of the engines driving it.

Although this is personally only my fifth edition, as The Northam Advertiser reaches this milestone, I want to sincerely thank our readers, contributors, advertisers, photographers, volunteers, sporting clubs, community groups and local businesses who continue supporting local journalism.

I would also like to acknowledge Jim Lucy, whose work in re-establishing The Northam Advertiser – alongside many others – helped ensure this community retained a truly local voice. Reviving a regional newspaper is no small undertaking, particularly at a time when local journalism across Australia continues to face enormous pressures. Jim recognised that communities like Northam deserved a paper focused on local people, local issues and local identity. Fifty editions later, that vision still matters.

A newspaper ultimately reflects the community around it. These fifty editions exist because this region still believes local stories are worth telling.

And they are.

Our Cover



Our cover this month celebrates our 50th edition of The Northam Advertiser. From left to right is the paper team, Naomi Sherrington, Theresa Lee, Jim Lucy, Jodie Longmire and Madi Byfield.

This image was captured by Angie Roe from Angie Roe Photography. A big thanks to Angie for capturing this image for us. And yes, she did make us crawl into the bushes to get this image!



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Scan the QR code to view our Media Kit.

Acknowledgment of Country

The Northam Advertiser acknowledges and pays respect to; the Ballardong Traditional Custodians and Elders - past, present and future; the Nyoongar Nation and the continuation of their cultural, spiritual and educational practices.

Aboriginal People should be aware that this publication contains images or names of people who have passed away.

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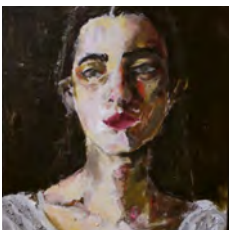
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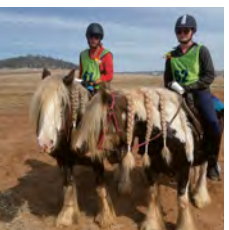
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Kevin “Jaws” Holland

by Naomi Sherrington

There are some people in a town who become so woven into community life that it is difficult to imagine the place without them.

In Northam football circles, Kevin “Jaws” Holland is one of those people.

For decades, Kevin has been a familiar face on sidelines, at junior games, around Railways Football Club, Little Athletics, BMX events, carpet bowls and countless community activities. Not because he sought attention, but simply because he kept turning up – week after week, year after year.

Recently, that lifetime of quiet contribution was recognised when Kevin was awarded Life Membership of the Northam Junior Football Club – adding to his existing Life Membership with Railways Football Club.

For many local families, Kevin has simply always been there.

He comes from a very large family of 12 siblings. “There was no TV back then,” Kevin joked, explaining the size of the family. Humour comes easily to Kevin, but beneath it sits a lifetime of service to community sport.

Despite being so deeply associated with football, Kevin says he never really played the game seriously himself, except for one occasion where “Railways were short one day against Federals... but I got scrambled,” he recalled with a laugh.

Instead, his contribution came in other ways – running water, helping behind the scenes, volunteering, supporting junior players and eventually becoming the designated timekeeper for junior football in Northam.

For generations of local children, the sound of the siren

and the rhythm of game day often came through Kevin.

Football, however, was only part of the story.

He credits Mark “Shadow” Davis for getting him into footy. But Kevin has also long been involved with Little Athletics, including helping run raffles and supporting junior events over many years. He says he still enjoys attending Little Athletics because he loves seeing young people participate and improve.

Born on October 18, 1948, Kevin grew up near Meckering, though he notes he was not there during the devastating 1968 earthquake.

His upbringing was humble and shaped by his very large family.

Despite the hardships that often came with country life, Kevin speaks about it with warmth and matter-of-fact resilience. His determination to “just keep going” perhaps explains why Kevin remains such a beloved figure across multiple community groups.

Outside football, he has also been involved with BMX, the Men’s Shed and carpet bowls at the Northam Recreation Centre – for which he proudly showed off his championship medal from 2025.

Friends and fellow volunteers describe him as dependable, generous and community-minded – someone who never sought recognition but earned it anyway.

Recently, he was presented with a Life Membership at Northam Junior Football Club. The award was presented by Karen O’Driscoll, who has known Kevin since she was 15 years old, and described him as her “go-to” person for junior football over the years, highlighting the deep friendships formed through decades of volunteering. The pair shared a laugh over the differing treatment handed



out by one particularly vigilant umpire. Karen once received a yellow card as a runner for entering the goal square while trying to call an ambulance for an injured player – who later required surgery – yet Kevin recalls being caught in the square by the very same umpire himself without so much as a penalty.

Northam Railways Football Club has described him as a “club legend” and noted that he had served as the designated timekeeper for junior football games in Northam for decades.

That kind of service cannot really be measured in years alone.

It is measured in winter mornings spent setting up grounds. In children who grew up seeing the same reassuring face each weekend. In communities strengthened not by grand gestures, but by ordinary people consistently giving their time to others.

People like Kevin “Jaws” Holland are part of what gives country towns their heart.

And Northam is richer for having him.

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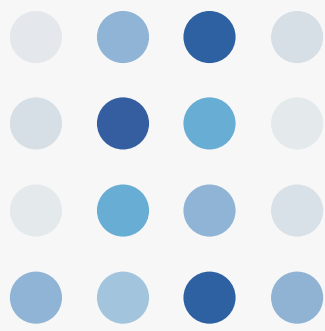


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Vanished into the Jarrah Forest: New Podcast Revisits the Mystery of Northam-Born Man Among the “Nannup Four”

by Naomi Sherrington

Nearly two decades after four people vanished from a remote farmhouse near Nannup, one of Western Australia’s most haunting mysteries is again capturing national attention through a new ABC podcast series.

But for Wheatbelt readers, the story carries an especially unsettling local connection.

One of the missing four – Tony Popic – was born in Northam.

ABC’s award-winning investigative podcast series *Expanse* has dedicated its latest season to revisiting the disappearance of what became known as “The Nannup Four” – a baffling case involving alleged cult-like beliefs, spiritual paranoia, isolation, and the unexplained disappearance of three adults and a young child in 2007.

The four people who vanished were:

- Simon Kadwill,
- Chantelle McDougall,
- Chantelle’s five-year-old daughter Leela,
- and Northam-born Tony Popic.

The group disappeared from a rural property outside Nannup in July 2007.

What they left behind only deepened the mystery.

A note reportedly pinned to the farmhouse door claimed the group had gone to Brazil. Yet investigators later found no evidence they had boarded a plane, used passports, accessed bank accounts, or established new identities elsewhere.

To this day, nobody knows whether the group died in the surrounding bushland, deliberately disappeared, or fell victim to foul play.

Spiritual beliefs and cult allegations

Central to the mystery is Simon Kadwill, a British-born spiritual figure who had developed a small but devoted following in regional WA.

Former associates interviewed in the podcast describe increasingly extreme beliefs surrounding apocalyptic prophecy, spiritual ascension, and withdrawal from mainstream society.

Kadwill authored a spiritual text titled *Servers of the Divine Plan*, reportedly describing a coming “great transition” for humanity.

The ABC series explores allegations that the group had become immersed in a highly controlling environment

sometimes referred to as the “Truth Fellowship”.

Episodes examine claims of coercive control, emotional isolation, and escalating paranoia in the lead-up to the disappearance.

The podcast also focuses heavily on the devastation experienced by family members left behind – particularly Chantelle McDougall’s parents, who have spent nearly twenty years searching for answers.

A uniquely Western Australian mystery

The case has long occupied a strange place in Western Australian folklore.

Partly because of the eerie circumstances.

Partly because of the isolated South West setting.

And partly because no definitive explanation has ever emerged.

For many regional Western Australians, the mystery carries an especially unsettling quality precisely because it unfolded in the sort of quiet country setting familiar to communities across the Wheatbelt and South West.

In 2017, a coronial inquest examined the disappearance, but the coroner ultimately concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the four were alive or dead.

The dense jarrah forests surrounding Nannup have often featured heavily in theories surrounding the case, with investigators acknowledging how difficult the terrain can be to search.

Podcast reignites public fascination

The new *Expanse* season has reignited widespread interest in the mystery, introducing the story to a new generation through interviews, archived evidence, and newly explored leads.

Rather than focusing solely on sensational theories, the podcast spends considerable time examining how vulnerable people can become drawn into insular belief systems and controlling personalities.

But at the centre of the series remains the same question that has haunted Western Australia for nearly twenty years: how can four people simply vanish?



The Shaka Project Returns to Northam with Powerful Community Message



For the second time, Sean and Adam from The Shaka Project returned to Northam to deliver another impactful presentation focused on mental health, resilience, and connection within the community.

Following Sean’s previous visit in September and many asking for his return, this latest session brought a slightly different approach while continuing to reinforce the same important messages around vulnerability, support, and checking in with one another. The presentation encouraged open conversations and highlighted the importance of community in supporting mental wellbeing and suicide prevention.

A strong turnout of 115 people attended, demonstrating the ongoing interest and support for initiatives that create meaningful conversations around mental health and personal wellbeing.

The Shaka Project ambassadors and organisers, Ebony & Lucas Cleveland, extended their sincere thanks to the local businesses and organisations that helped make the event possible, including Shire of Northam, Northam Town Team, Avon Valley Toyota, Patchwork on Avon and Domino’s Northam. They’d also like to thank the business and community members who displayed posters, shared the event on social media and encouraged others to attend.

For more information head to the website

theshakaproject.com.

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MEMBER FOR CENTRAL WHEATBELT



Authorised by L. Hunter, 185 Fitzgerald St, Northam WA 6401

Wheatbelt Forum Focuses on Housing, Energy and Regional Growth

by Naomi Sherrington

The 2026 Wheatbelt Futures Forum, recently hosted by the Northam Chamber of Commerce and Wheatbelt Business Network, brought together government representatives, industry leaders, researchers and regional stakeholders to examine the major challenges and opportunities shaping the future of the Wheatbelt. Held in Northam as part of the forum's fourth annual event, discussions focused on infrastructure, housing, renewable energy, healthcare and workforce development, with keynote presentations and panel sessions aimed at identifying practical pathways for long-term regional growth.

Following the event, organisers released the 2026 Wheatbelt Futures Forum White Paper – a summary document capturing keynote presentations, panel discussions and key themes raised throughout the day, intended to help businesses, local governments and community stakeholders continue discussions and pursue opportunities identified during the forum.

The white paper paints a picture of a region caught between enormous opportunity and mounting structural pressure. Across housing, infrastructure, energy, healthcare and workforce development, one message emerged repeatedly throughout the forum: the Wheatbelt is ready to grow – but increasingly constrained by systems struggling to keep pace.

While many of the issues raised were familiar, speakers consistently stressed that the urgency surrounding them has intensified.

One of the clearest examples came through discussion surrounding fuel shortages and supply chain vulnerability. Minister for Regional Development Stephen Dawson acknowledged the extent to which the Wheatbelt had been exposed by recent disruptions, particularly after shipping issues through the Gulf affected fuel deliveries into WA.

The State Government's response included appointing a State Fuel Coordinator and introducing emergency regulatory measures aimed at prioritising fuel distribution where it was needed most.

However, forum panellists also warned the crisis revealed deeper vulnerabilities in Western Australia's economic model. Concerns were raised not only about fuel security, but about broader dependence on external supply chains, including fertiliser imports and freight logistics.

The issue of infrastructure emerged as a dominant

theme throughout the day.

Roads, rail, telecommunications, water access and power connections were repeatedly identified as major barriers preventing the Wheatbelt from reaching its economic potential. Several speakers argued the region is not suffering from a lack of opportunity, but from insufficient enabling infrastructure and slow approval systems.

Arc Infrastructure CEO Stephanie Unwin warned the Wheatbelt rail network is approaching a critical point, with infrastructure originally designed in the 1960s now carrying dramatically increased freight volumes due to record harvests.

At the same time, concerns were raised about delays connecting new developments to essential services. Member for Central Wheatbelt Lachlan Hunter said some residents were reporting delays of up to a year for Western Power connections, questioning how new projects could proceed if basic infrastructure constraints remained unresolved.

Telecommunications also featured heavily, particularly following the decommissioning of the 3G network. Hon Steve Martin MLC argued mobile coverage in regional areas had deteriorated significantly, with some users abandoning government-funded systems due to reliability concerns.

Housing was another central focus, with speakers describing affordability and supply constraints as one of the most serious challenges facing the region.

Professor Steven Rowley from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute stated the Wheatbelt requires approximately 650 new dwellings each year to keep pace with demand, yet current approvals remain well below that level.

Rental shortages are also becoming increasingly severe. In some parts of the region, availability has reached critically low levels, contributing to rising rents and growing difficulty attracting workers into regional communities.

Speakers repeatedly linked housing shortages to broader workforce challenges, arguing the region cannot retain young people, attract healthcare workers or support industry expansion without adequate accommodation.

Several panellists advocated for more innovative approaches, including modular housing, adaptive reuse of vacant buildings and greater willingness to experiment with smaller dwellings and higher density development.

Renewable energy represented both one of the Wheatbelt's biggest opportunities and one of its most

complex emerging challenges.

Deputy Director General of PoweringWA Tim Bray described the Wheatbelt as central to WA's energy transition due to its strong wind and solar resources, with multiple major renewable projects planned across the region.

However, rapid project expansion is also generating anxiety in some communities.

Yued Aboriginal Corporation CEO Rewi Lyall described the overwhelming scale of renewable proposals across Yued Country, noting traditional owners were being approached by numerous developers simultaneously, often with limited transparency regarding which projects were likely to proceed.

Meanwhile, Curtin Institute for Energy Transition researcher Dr Maureen Boyle said a lack of trust in government and poor information sharing were contributing to uncertainty across regional communities.

A particularly striking tension emerged around electricity reliability itself. Bray acknowledged some parts of the Wheatbelt currently experience significantly poorer reliability than metropolitan areas, despite hosting infrastructure expected to power WA's renewable future.

Healthcare pressures formed another major component of the discussion.

WA Country Health Service Wheatbelt Executive Director Danny Rogers outlined growing demand across the regional health system, particularly due to an ageing population and increasing patient complexity. Northam Hospital occupancy now exceeds 90 per cent, with the average inpatient age sitting at 75 years.

The forum also highlighted the absence of a dedicated inpatient mental health facility anywhere in the Wheatbelt, forcing many patients to travel to Perth for treatment.

Volunteer burnout, GP shortages and the growing cost burden placed on local governments attempting to sustain healthcare services were also raised as significant concerns.

Despite the scale of the challenges discussed, the overall tone of the forum was not pessimistic.

Repeatedly, speakers pointed to the Wheatbelt's economic strength, regional resilience and capacity for innovation. The recurring message was that the region does not lack opportunity – it lacks coordinated long-term investment and faster delivery of essential infrastructure and services.

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Meckering Kaolin Project Sparks Community Discussion in Wheatbelt

by Naomi Sherrington

A proposed kaolin mining and processing project near Meckering is beginning to attract growing community attention, with consultation sessions now underway as developers seek to progress plans for a new industrial operation in the eastern Wheatbelt.

The project – known as the “Deep White Project” – is being advanced by LB Minerals Australia, part of the European-based Lasselsberger Group. The company says the development aims to produce high-grade kaolin clay for domestic and export markets, with local processing forming part of the proposal.

Kaolin is a fine white clay used in a wide range of products, including ceramics, paints, paper, fibreglass, cosmetics and construction materials.

According to company material, the project would be located near Meckering and could eventually employ around 50 permanent staff once fully operational. The company has also promoted the proposal as an opportunity to bring more downstream processing and industrial activity into regional Western Australia, rather than simply exporting raw material overseas.

While consultation appears to still be in relatively early stages, the project is already raising broader questions familiar to many Wheatbelt communities balancing economic development with long-term agricultural sustainability.

For many residents, the key issue is not necessarily whether mining should occur at all, but how it occurs – and what protections are put in place for surrounding farmland, water resources and local infrastructure.

Water usage is likely to become one of the most closely scrutinised aspects of the proposal. Depending on the processing methods used, kaolin beneficiation can require significant volumes of water. In a region where farming operations already contend with increasingly variable rainfall and water security pressures, questions around groundwater extraction and long-term impacts on surrounding properties are expected to feature prominently.

Dust management is another likely concern. Kaolin is an extremely fine material, and nearby landholders may seek detailed information regarding dust suppression

measures, haul road management and the potential impact on crops, livestock and neighbouring properties.

Heavy vehicle movements and road impacts may also emerge as a significant issue for local residents, particularly given the importance of transport infrastructure throughout the Wheatbelt and the increasing pressure already placed on regional roads by agriculture and freight.

At the same time, others within the community may view the project as a potentially important source of regional jobs and economic diversification.

The Wheatbelt economy remains heavily reliant on agriculture, and proponents of industrial development often argue that additional industries can help create employment opportunities, strengthen local business activity and provide greater economic resilience during difficult farming seasons.

The project also arrives at a time when regional Western Australia is increasingly finding itself at the centre of broader debates surrounding resource development, critical minerals, industrial processing and the balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Importantly, kaolin mining is not entirely new to the Meckering area. Earlier kaolin proposals associated with Altech Chemicals progressed through parts of the State’s approvals system several years ago, including environmental and works approvals. It remains unclear publicly whether the current proposal is connected to, expanded from, or separate to earlier developments in the region.

For Wheatbelt communities, these conversations often become about more than a single project.

They touch on larger questions surrounding what regional development should look like in coming decades – particularly in areas where farming, environmental management and industrial expansion increasingly intersect.

With consultation now underway, the Meckering proposal may become one of the more closely watched regional development discussions in the eastern Wheatbelt over the months ahead.

Information may be sought at lbminerals.com.au/contact.

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“What Was Once a Rumour Is Now a Fact”: a Grass Valley family tragedy remembered

by Naomi Sherrington

Some stories never really leave a place.

They settle quietly into the landscape – into roadsides, old farming country, family conversations and fading memories passed from one generation to the next. Over time, details blur. Stories become half-remembered. People begin sentences with, “I think...” or “I was told...”

But every now and then, something brings the past back into focus.

Recently, family members and locals gathered quietly in Grass Valley for a small plaque ceremony commemorating little Ronald Roy Wilcox, a 19-month-old boy who drowned in a communal sheep dip near Carter Road on August 29, 1934.

The plaque itself is simple and deeply moving:

Dedicated to the memory of Ronald Roy Wilcox, aged 19 months, who tragically drowned in a communal sheep dip at this site on 29.08.1934. Loved son of Frederick & Iris Wilcox.

The gathering was intimate and deeply personal. Among those reflecting on the tragedy was Bernie, Ronald's younger brother, who was not yet born at the time of the accident but has grown up carrying the story and its legacy through his family.

As old newspaper clippings outlining a coronial inquest were shared and discussed, Bernie quietly reflected: “What was once a rumour now is a fact”.

The tragedy occurred on August 29 in an era when sheep dips were common throughout rural Australia and often sat unfenced beside roads, paddocks and homes. According to reports from the coronial inquiry, the dip near Carter Road was approximately 37 feet long, three feet wide and up to five feet deep in places.

Ronald's father, Frederick Wilcox, worked for the Water Supply Department at Grass Valley. On the afternoon of

the accident, he had been working nearby when Ronald's mother, Iris, ran towards him in panic.

“Kevan says Ronnie has fallen into the water and can't get out.” Kevan – Ronald's older brother – was only three years old.

The newspaper reports describe the terrible confusion of those first moments. There were several pools of water nearby, but Frederick quickly realised the child must have fallen into the sheep dip because the other pools were shallow enough that he would have been visible.

He ran to the dip and jumped in.

Ronald Wilcox found his son at the bottom and brought him to the surface. For more than 20 minutes, attempts were made to revive the little boy, but they were unsuccessful.

A post-mortem later confirmed Ronald had drowned.

Even now, reading the reports is confronting.

The witness statements capture moments no family would ever wish to endure – the sudden silence noticed by Ronald's mother while she was inside attending to household chores, the frantic search, the desperate attempts to save him, and the awful reality that everything unfolded in only a matter of minutes.

The coronial inquiry heard evidence from several local witnesses who described the sheep dip as dangerous and unprotected. One witness noted that children often played nearby. Another observed that not only children, but adults and wandering stock, could easily fall into it.

The acting coroner ultimately concluded the dip should have been fenced “to prevent further accidents.”

Residents recall the sheep dip remained unfenced for decades after the coroner recommended it be enclosed.

Yet the story is no longer only about the tragedy itself. It is also about remembrance.



Photo: Younger brother, Bernie Wilcox, at the newly installed plaque

The plaque was organised by local man Gerard Sermon, who felt the little boy and the story surrounding his death should not disappear into history. At the ceremony, Gerard described the memorial as “a memento to the Wilcox family”.

It is a simple phrase, but perhaps an important one.

Because in small communities like Grass Valley, people remember. They remember families. They remember loss. They remember the stories attached to particular roads, paddocks and places, and make sure those memories are not entirely lost to time.

Little Ronald Ray Wilcox was only here for 19 months, but he was loved deeply, grieved profoundly, and is remembered still.



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believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life.

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Local Voices invited on Chalice's Gonneville Project

The Voconiq Local Voices 'Pulse' survey returns this June, inviting community members to share their views on the future development of Chalice Mining's Gonneville Project, located on Chalice-owned farmland approximately 25km west of Toodyay.

Now in its fourth year, Voconiq Local Voices continues to provide an independent platform for capturing community perspectives on the Gonneville Project and related activities, while also creating a meaningful way for locals to support community groups across the region.

Insights gathered through the survey help build a clearer understanding of the potential impacts and benefits of a future mine, to inform decision-making and engagement as planning progresses. Community feedback has played an important role in shaping project priorities to date, and this year's survey will again explore key topics such as future infrastructure corridor considerations in the area.

The program is designed to ensure local voices are heard and reflected over time, tracking how sentiment and priorities may change as the project evolves. By taking part, residents can contribute to a broader understanding of what matters most to the community, helping to inform both current planning and longer-term development considerations.

Participation also delivers direct benefits to local organisations. As a thank you for their time, participants who complete the survey can support local not-for-profit organisations registered with the Local Voices Community Rewards Program. Each completed survey enables participants to allocate \$5 to a local charity, sporting club or community group of their choice. Simply put, more survey responses mean more funding for local organisations.

The Local Voices 'Pulse' survey is completely confidential, giving participants the opportunity to share their views in a safe and independent process. Participation is entirely voluntary, with no obligation to donate.

The survey is independently managed by the Voconiq team and is available both online and in hard copy to ensure accessibility for all community members. Representatives from Chalice Mining will also be visiting the community throughout May and June, providing updates on the Gonneville Project and sharing information on how to take part in the survey.

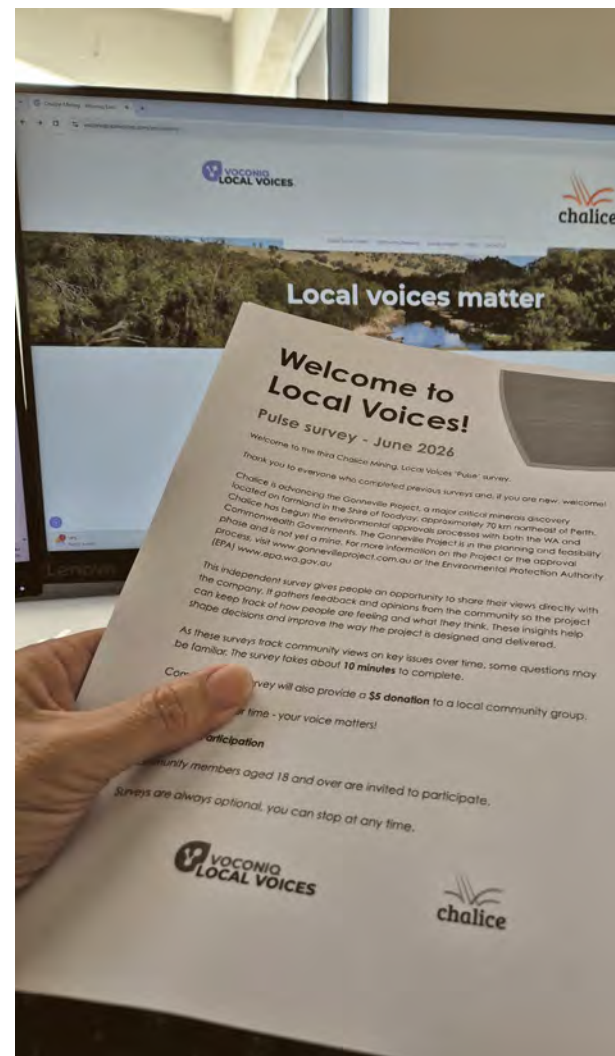


Photo: Complete the Local Voices survey online or pick up a paper survey and mail it off to Voconiq in the reply-paid envelope

Paper surveys and reply-paid envelopes will be available at the Chalice Toodyay Office, Toodyay and Chittering Shire offices, and the Northam Chamber of Commerce, making it easy for residents to participate at a time that suits them.

To complete the survey online and view results from previous years, visit:

<https://voconiqlocalvoices.com/chalice>

**Have your say on the
Gonneville Project.
Survey opens 2nd June,
closes 5th July 2026**

Voice your opinion - Provide feedback on Chalice Mining's Gonneville Project and help inform decisions on the Project.

Reward your community - Complete the survey and allocate \$5 to a community group of your choice.

Quick and simple - Complete on your smartphone, desktop or tablet in under 10 minutes.



You can pick up your paper survey from the following locations

- Chalice Toodyay Office
- Toodyay Shire Offices
- Chittering Shire Offices
- Northam Chamber of Commerce

To learn more and see previous survey insights visit:

voconiqlocalvoices.com/chalice
fb.com/LocalVoicesChalice

Scan the code and
take the survey now:



**VOCONIQ
LOCAL VOICES**

chalice



northam bilya festival

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Bendigo Bank Street Parade Applications Open!

Entries Close Friday 31 July

This year's theme is Hollywood; get your school, community group, or workplace together and put together an entry for your chance to win!

To register, visit:

www.northam.wa.gov.au/parade

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events@northam.wa.gov.au
www.northam.wa.gov.au

Bendigo Bank



Shire of Northam
Heritage, Commerce and Lifestyle

Northam SHS students thrive in gifted and talented program

by Mia Davies

Students at Northam Senior High School are building leadership, creativity and problem-solving skills through the school's growing aspirant Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program.

The program brings together high-achieving students from Years 7 to 12, providing opportunities to work collaboratively on projects, competitions and real-world challenges designed to extend learning beyond the classroom.

From coding challenges and technical drawing to endurance racing and public presentations, students are developing practical skills while exploring their individual interests and passions.

The State Government funds and operates a formal selective-entry Gifted and Talented program in metropolitan Perth, Bunbury and Albany.

To support aspirant students in the Wheatbelt while remaining connected to their community, the school's local program works to support the Department of Education selective-entry Gifted and Talented online program while providing local context and relevance to learning.

Participating students have represented the school at forums including the SPARK STEM Conference where they showcased projects and research alongside students from across the state.

One of the program's standout initiatives has been the 'Kids Teaching Kids' project, which encourages students to design and deliver peer-learning activities while building confidence, communication and leadership skills.

Students have also taken part in the Department of Health Innovative Think Tank Challenge, competing against teams from across Western Australia in timed problem-solving exercises focused on real-world issues.



Another major focus has been participation in the WA Pedal Prix competition run by the West Australian Human Powered Vehicle Association.

Over the past two seasons, Northam SHS students have worked together to build, customise and maintain human-powered trikes before competing in six-hour endurance events.

The competition requires students to organise training schedules, prepare equipment and work collaboratively under pressure, while promoting fitness, teamwork and resilience.

As the GATE program continues to evolve, students are also exploring opportunities in movie making, innovative thinking projects, fundraising activities and student-led presentations.

The program is providing important opportunities for students to challenge themselves, connect with like-minded peers and develop skills that will support them well beyond school.

UPCOMING at AVAS

Sketchbook Club

Teens, Wednesdays, after school - 5pm

Youth, Thursdays, after school - 4pm

Sketchbook Club is a chance to engage in creative practice, informal collaboration, and peer support.

All other materials supplied. Cost: \$10

After School Art Classes

Tuesdays 3.30pm Drawing Skills with Jess is a hands-on class focused on building real drawing skills. Cost: Casual classes \$25, or \$20 per session when booking the remainder of the term. Bookings: email avas1@wn.com.au or message us on Facebook.

The Art of Still-Life

Friday 5th June, 6 - 8pm

Join Marie and Ratna for a relaxed guided drawing workshop focused on observation, proportion, composition, and expressive mark-making while working from a still life setup. Cost: Members \$25, Non-members \$30 Bookings: Trybooking/DMKRE

Mosaic Morning

Saturday 20th, 10am - 12 pm

Bring along a surface to mosaic at our monthly mosaic morning. All materials and tools provided.

No bookings necessary.

Cost: Members \$10 Non-members \$15

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Northam Optical's Allyson Freind Bringing Clear Vision to Fiji



Allyson Freind, the heart behind Northam Optical, is preparing for her third journey to Fiji, where she will join 15 dedicated volunteers from Australia and New Zealand. Together, they have already brought a

clearer vision to thousands, offering over 2,400 free screenings and gifting 1,200 pairs of prescription glasses. With so many Fijians facing poverty and limited access to healthcare, Allyson reflects that visiting remote villages is a powerful reminder of the privileges we often overlook in Australia.

The Optical Dispensers Association, chaired by Allyson, leads the outreach program to Fiji. The program is now a registered charity, the South Pacific Eye Care Foundation. While most eye care charities focus on clinical roles, the Foundation is committed to using the expertise of optical dispensers and dispensing opticians to improve the quality of life for those with undiagnosed refractive errors.

Allyson said, "The SPEC foundation supports regions in the South Pacific and communities across Australia through volunteer outreach projects".

How can you help?

To support this mission, Allyson is launching a donation drive at Northam Optical. Whether you can give school supplies, sporting gear, or a financial gift in person or online, every contribution—big or small—will help change lives in Fiji.

Allyson thanks everyone in advance for their support. "I am so proud to be part of such a wonderful community living in Northam and the Wheatbelt, and I look forward to passing on our generous community spirit to the Fijian people in July."

Donations can be dropped off to Northam Optical at 206 Fitzgerald Street. Their business hours are Monday to Friday 9am—4.30pm.



northamoptical

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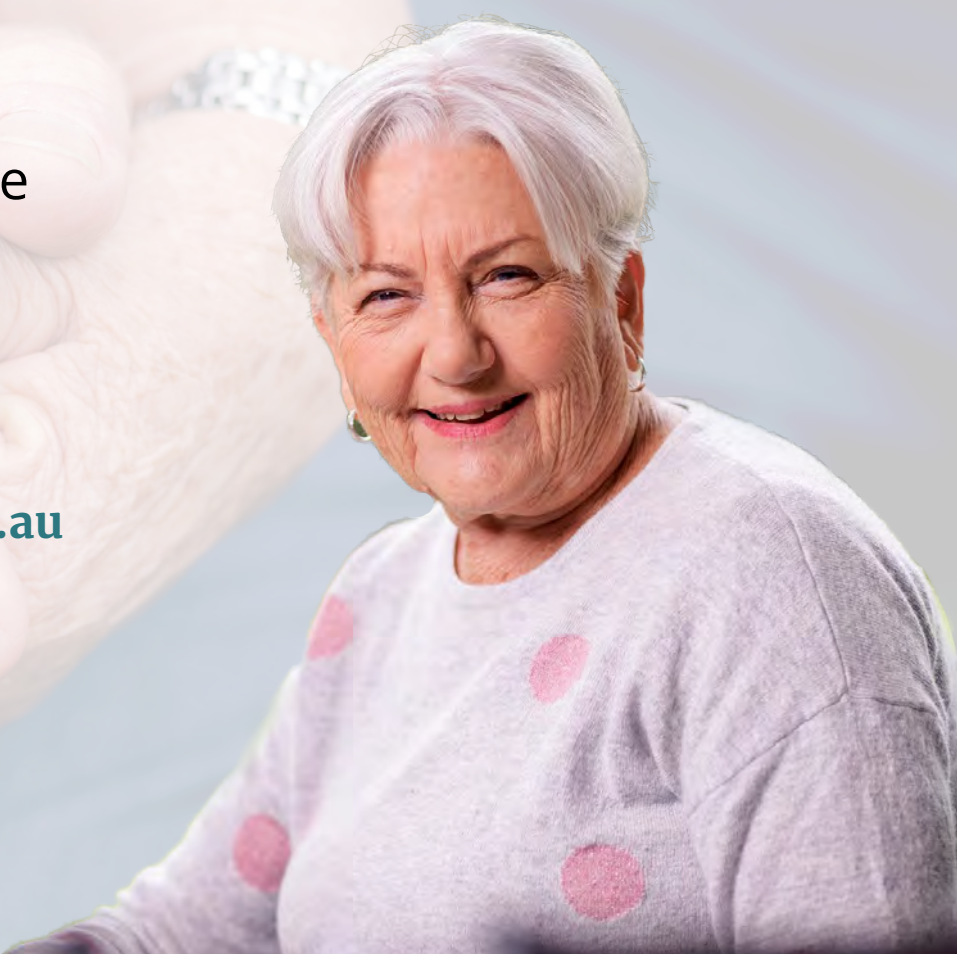
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Not Just an Electric Car - Perhaps Your Home Power Station?

by Peter Weatherly of the Avon Valley Environmental Society inc

Electric vehicles 'very close' to becoming home power stations, says Polestar boss. Polestar is an upper range European Electric Vehicle – with an upper range price to go with it.

They start by talking about the V2G (vehicle to grid) technology whereby you can sell the power in your car battery back to the grid. From where I stand that's a pretty silly thing to do at least until Synergy pays you back considerably more than the 2 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) which is their current pathetic offering. They charge their customers 28+ cents per kWh. So, for me it's a no-goer. Thankyou – but no!

There are other options and the possibility I like is the V2H (vehicle to home). Your EV becomes your home battery with the added advantage of it being very large when compared to a home battery system. Some EV batteries are over 100kWh though the average is lower at 60-80 kWh. The current maximum home battery system is 15 kWh – so a big difference.

A polestar 3 battery is 111 kWh so certainly has enough capacity to power your home for a few days – but of course there's a catch – or several of them if we are going to be honest about it.

Firstly, the battery itself. At present, it is the number of cycles (ie charge/discharge) that the battery goes through that determines its useful lifespan – not how old it is. So, you need to balance battery health and performance against the ability to power your home. Secondly, one has to be sure that usage is within the battery's maximum input and output specs, or in other words, there is a maximum rate of discharge that should not be breached if the battery is to maintain its health. Thirdly, and just as importantly is that the battery is never below its minimum charge. If you do go below



Photo: Polestar electric vehicle - starting price AUD \$118,420 - hmmm

the minimum charge you once again affect the health and life expectancy of the battery.

When an electric car is used as just that – a vehicle – it already has inbuilt defences against such a thing happening. If external software however can over-ride those defences by opening the contacts, then there is the potential for huge problems.

Those are some of the technical issues – but what about the practical ones?

By design, EVs are mobile. A lot of the time they are not at the home so how can they power it? They also need time to re-charge after their daily usage either from driving or from use by the home – but it is mostly nighttime when the car is at home so your solar panels are producing very little power or nothing at all. So, you would have to power from the grid – not what it's all about!

If you want to be independent of the grid – and I certainly do – you would still need a lot of home batteries and a lot of solar panels – perhaps well beyond the current maximum of 6kWh allowed for rooftop solar.

It's all beginning to look too hard. On the other hand,

a lot of the above problems are 'technical' and mankind has proved itself to be very adept at solving 'technical' problems so let's not be too pessimistic.

When I start looking for a system, I will want the following specifications guaranteed – the battery must have more than sufficient available power to last for a few days; the battery must be protected so it holds its minimum charge and also that it can discharge sufficiently quickly to cope with household variable usage; I must have sufficient solar panels to cope with these demands; the system must, when power is being used by the home, take power firstly from the solar output, secondly from home batteries and thirdly from the grid; when more power is being generated than used the excess is to go firstly to running the home, secondly to recharging home batteries and/or car batteries with export to the grid always coming last. Finally, under no circumstances can the provider – in my case Synergy or Western Power – be able to take power from my system whenever they feel like it – without my written consent.

I think I'll be waiting awhile, but who knows?

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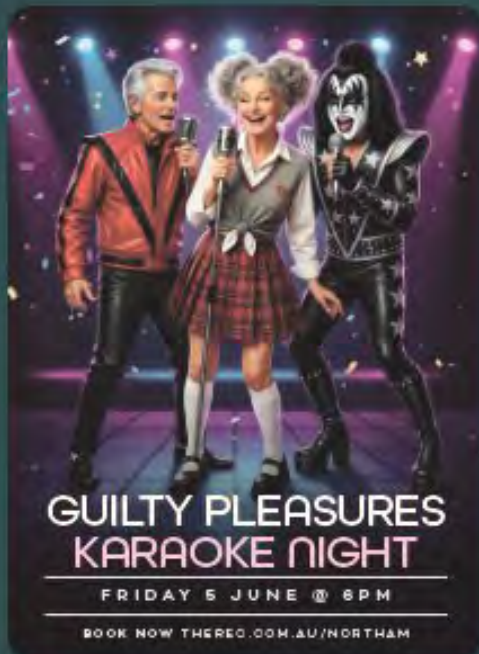
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Update from Chris Antonio, Shire of Northam President

Congratulations to all recent community event organisers, including the Northam RSL Sub-branch celebrating their 110th anniversary of the group with a black-tie event.

If you're thinking of starting or buying a business within the Shire of Northam, or if you already operate a business locally and would like some help in navigating things, the Shire has created a Business Hub Page on our website. The Hub provides hints, tips and navigation for everything from starting your business to business activation, as well as links to useful contacts such as the Northam Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Corporation. Feedback to the Shire of Northam is welcome.

Many events are listed on the Shire of Northam website. If you want your event to be included, please reach out to the Shire, or use the self-submit feature on our website. This may be another way to promote your event and is free of charge.

Fuel availability and fuel costs continue to impact the Shire and the wider community. As changes occur, we will keep you informed. Fuel costs are also impacting petroleum-based products such as road base supplies and irrigation equipment.

We are now in the unrestricted burning period. Please pay attention to current conditions before burning and as a courtesy, inform your neighbours of your burn where you can. If you see an emergency, dial Triple Zero (000) immediately. For all emergency updates, the central place of information is the Emergency WA app or website. If you want to keep up to date with what I've been up to, follow me on Instagram at @shire_of_northam_president.



2026 Bendigo Bank Bilya Festival Street Parade

On Friday 7th August, the Bilya Festival will be back so wrap up warm and join us for the biggest street party of the year!

Each year, one of the most beloved parts of the event is the Street Parade, where businesses, community groups, schools, and other organisations work together to create a float to showcase their community spirit. The theme of this year's parade is "Hollywood".



Entry into the parade is FREE, and there are prizes up for grabs for best float in three categories.

To enter your float for the 2026 Street Parade, scan the QR code, or visit the Shire of Northam website. Applications close Friday 31st July.

This year's parade is proudly sponsored by Bendigo Bank.

Become an Emergency Service Volunteer

Whatever your availability, skills, or experience, our local emergency services groups are looking for enthusiastic, reliable people to join them.

The Shire of Northam has multiple opportunities to join a volunteer emergency services group, including:

- The Volunteer Bush Fire Service
- The Northam Youth in Emergency Services Cadets
- The Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
- The State Emergency Service (SES)
- St John Ambulance

We proudly support their efforts and encourage the community to get involved.

To talk about available opportunities or to talk through how you may be able to help, email volunteer@northam.wa.gov.au to get the conversation started.

Native Plant Giveaway

Drop in to see us at one of the following sessions where we will be giving away a selection of native species to landowners within the Shire.

24th June | 10am-1pm | Wundowie Library

25th June | 10am-1pm | Bilya Koort Boodja Fire Pit

For full details of which species will be available in the 2026 giveaway, visit the Shire of Northam website.

Tree Subsidy Program

The Shire of Northam will be providing a selection of native trees and shrubs for landowners to plant on their property as part of our Native Tree Subsidy Program. This program was developed to encourage landowners to revegetate their properties to enhance biodiversity by improving the landscape quality.

Landowners within the Shire of Northam with a property size over 2000m² have the opportunity to purchase trays of native trees for the discounted price of \$30 with tree guards available for \$1. Trays available at this price will be allocated based on property size. The program will be running from the Shire of Northam Depot located at 67 Byfield street (use Oliver St entrance) on the following days:

21st, 22nd, 23rd June | 10am-1pm

Two Budgets, One Wheatbelt: What the 2026 Budgets Mean for the Avon Region

by Naomi Sherrington

From fuel security and freight infrastructure to housing, healthcare and farming pressures, both the State and Federal Governments have promised support for regional Australia this month. But how much of that investment will truly reach the Avon Valley – and do either of the 2026 Budgets fundamentally address the structural challenges facing the Wheatbelt?

For regional communities, budgets are not abstract political documents. They determine whether roads are repaired, whether hospitals can attract staff, whether housing gets built, whether freight costs rise, and whether farmers can continue operating profitably in an increasingly volatile economic and climatic environment.

Both budgets contain meaningful regional spending and reflect a growing recognition that Australia's economic resilience depends heavily on communities outside the capital cities. However, many of the Wheatbelt's core challenges remain only partially addressed.

The budgets increasingly recognise regional WA's importance – but still struggle to structurally redesign policy around regional realities.

Fuel, Freight and the Cost of Distance

Perhaps the single most important issue for the Wheatbelt emerging from this year's budgets is fuel security.

The Federal Government announced a major fuel security package focused on strategic reserves and supply resilience, while the WA Government introduced fuel relief measures and regional road spending.

For regional WA, fuel is foundational. The Wheatbelt economy depends heavily on diesel-powered transport and machinery, underpinning farming, grain haulage, freight, mining logistics, food distribution and emergency services. Communities such as Northam, York and Toodyay also experience inflation differently from metropolitan centres, where long-distance travel is unavoidable and freight costs flow directly into everyday prices.

Yet despite the emphasis on fuel security, neither Budget clearly outlines how regional fuel prioritisation would operate during a prolonged supply disruption. For agricultural regions heavily dependent on diesel during seeding and harvest, storage alone may not guarantee continuity of supply.

Housing: The Crisis Behind Many Others

Both governments committed significant funding toward housing and enabling infrastructure. The Federal Government's package aims to support developments through upgrades to power, water, sewerage and roads, while the WA Government expanded regional housing and worker accommodation initiatives.

This could benefit towns such as Northam, where housing shortages increasingly affect the ability to attract healthcare workers, teachers, police officers and tradespeople.

However, many regional towns do not lack land – they lack the infrastructure and investment needed to make developments viable. There is also concern that much of the funding will continue favouring larger regional centres and metropolitan growth corridors over mid-sized regional service hubs such as Northam.

Farming and Agriculture: Acknowledged, But Not Fully Backed

Agriculture remains central to the Wheatbelt economy, and both budgets contain measures relevant to farming.

The State Budget includes regional bridge replacement funding, upgrades to Toodyay Road, and regional water initiatives, while the Federal Budget includes broader agricultural supply-chain and fuel resilience measures.

There are positives here. Farmers avoided some anticipated taxation changes affecting family farm structures and succession planning, and there is growing recognition that food and fuel security are now national strategic issues.

However, many within agriculture will likely view the overall investment as incremental rather than transformative.

Freight rail remains one of the clearest examples. Despite ongoing advocacy from farming and regional freight groups regarding rail investment and the future of the State's rail network, neither Budget delivered a major long-term rail funding commitment for the Wheatbelt.

Healthcare and Regional Services

Healthcare remains one of the defining issues for regional WA. The Federal Budget includes expanded Medicare and urgent-care funding, while the State Government committed further investment toward regional health infrastructure and services.

But funding announcements do not automatically translate into easier access to healthcare.

Across the Wheatbelt, communities continue struggling with GP shortages, workforce burnout, aged-care pressure and geographical isolation from specialist services, including mental health care.

Regional communities have repeatedly argued that healthcare funding without parallel investment in housing and workforce retention risks addressing symptoms rather than underlying structural shortages.

Telecommunications and Connectivity

One issue receiving comparatively little attention in either Budget is telecommunications and regional connectivity, despite growing recognition that reliable communications are now essential infrastructure for regional Australia.

While both governments continue referencing existing regional connectivity programs, neither Budget announced a major new telecommunications package comparable to spending on housing, fuel security or metropolitan infrastructure.

That relative absence is particularly notable following recent moves by the ACMA to tighten how telecommunications companies define and advertise "coverage" – an issue explored by The Northam Advertiser last month.

Across the Wheatbelt, reliable mobile and internet coverage now affects everything from emergency response and healthcare access to farming operations, freight logistics, education and regional business activity.

The Bigger Picture

Neither Budget can reasonably be described as anti-regional. Both contain meaningful regional investment and acknowledge the importance of regional Australia to the national economy.

But regional WA remains economically essential while political and population pressures continue concentrating major investment around metropolitan growth centres and densely populated electorates.

The question is no longer whether regional Australia matters. It is whether governments are prepared to redesign policy around the realities of living, working and building industries outside the metropolitan centres that continue to dominate political attention.

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Where am I? Earthworks of the
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Who am I? – Phil Eaton
Winner: Leonie Knipe

Street Name Origins

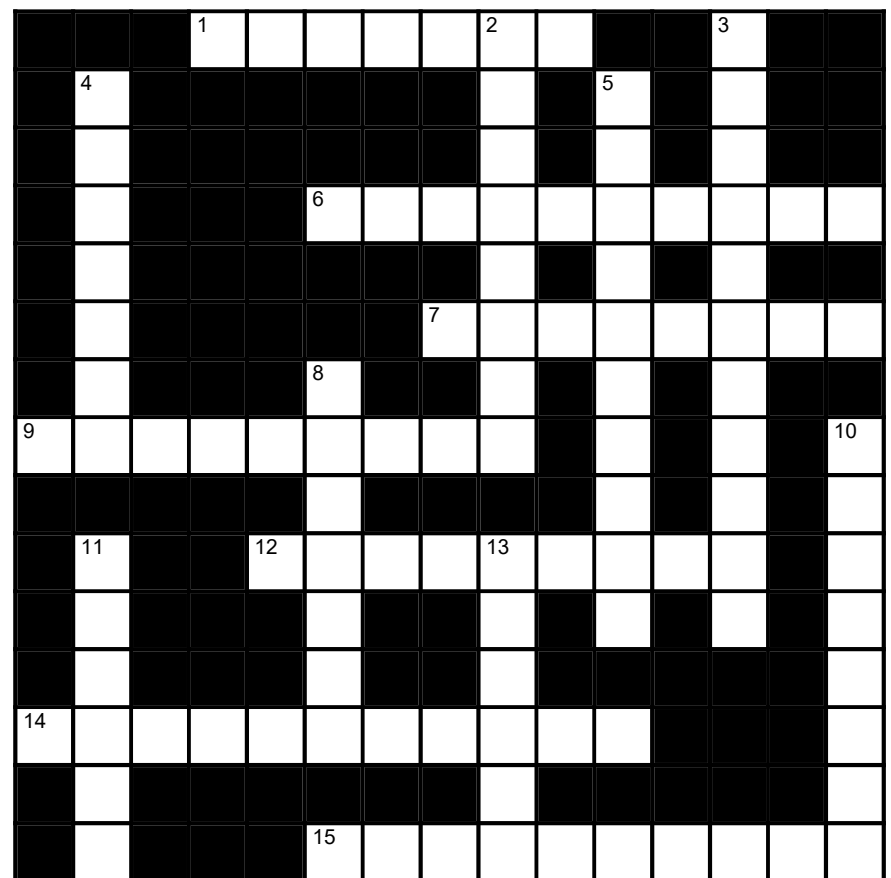
MUDALLA WAY

Mudalla Way, a small street running off Suburban Road towards Avonvale Primary School in Northam, may take its name from an Aboriginal word believed to mean “native playground”.

While the exact origins of the word mudalla are not clearly documented, it appears to have been used in this context when the street was named, reflecting the district’s strong Aboriginal heritage. The term is associated with Noongar country and is thought to describe open areas where Ballardong Noongar children gathered, played and learned beside family and community.

Like many place names throughout the Avon region, Mudalla Way preserves a connection to the Ballardong Noongar people and the long cultural history of the area.

CROSSWORD



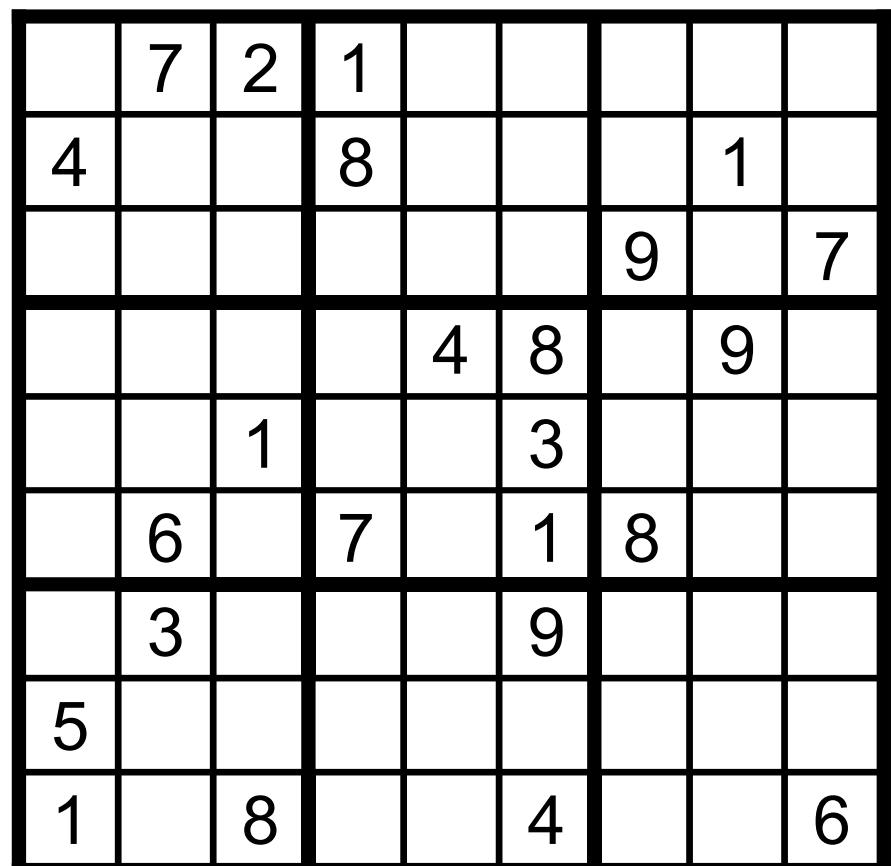
Across

- 1 Relating to winds, or a mode in music (7)
- 6 Hypothetical traveller through time (10)
- 7 Text deliberately omitting a particular letter (8)
- 9 “Pass away” for “die,” for example (9)
- 12 Emotional release through art or drama (9)
- 14 System where advancement is based on talent and effort (11)
- 15 Scientific study of pollen and spores (10)

Down

- 2 Pithy saying expressing a general truth (8)
- 3 Comic misuse of a word for a similar-sounding one (11)
- 4 Striking dramatic scene or static stage picture (7)
- 5 Challenging or overthrowing cherished beliefs or images (10)
- 8 Thick application of paint to a canvas (7)
- 10 Dominant political or cultural leadership over others (8)
- 11 Mechanical model demonstrating planetary motion (6)
- 13 Place where bees are kept in hives (6)

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York Buzzes with Heritage, History and New Beginnings

York has certainly been buzzing the past few weeks with what seems like one celebration after another.

Our York Heritage Weekend was a great success which was particularly gratifying as this was our first year when the entire event was run by a new independent team of local people determined to preserve and foster our history and heritage working towards the big bicentenary in 2031. It was agreed at our 'debrief' there is a lot of scope to make this a top-class festival attracting visitors from Perth and throughout the Avon valley.

Highlights included the 'Kid's Korner' where young ones were occupied with a selection of traditional pastimes including snakes and ladders, noughts and crosses and a great ride on tiny timber car. The music events were a great hit and voted a must for next year and why wouldn't we include them when we have so much musical talent throughout the Wheatbelt?

We also received great reviews for the bus trip to Greenhills with our bush poetry reading Syd as the bus driver and the tour guide our ever-effervescent Councillor Smythe. The tour of the beautiful property and the chance to see what the new owners have already done and to hear their plans had everyone intrigued and then there was the morning tea that sealed the deal. Thanks so much to Johanna and Greg for your time and support. Was also good to see the article about Greenhills in last month's Northam Advertiser.

Speaking of buzzing did you know May 20th is designated World Bee Day? To raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development the United Nations designated 20th May as World Bee Day several years ago. I know the day has passed but what a great idea and so very important and well worth celebrating in a big way in 2027, working on it as we speak. Just as a bit of an aside when I first heard the expression 'World Bee Day' I thought 'Why on earth are we having a celebration for a piece of bathroom furniture?' What it is about is such a much better idea. Mind you a bidet is quite useful.

One of the big surprises over the Heritage Weekend was meeting Katleen as she was leaving the Town Hall on Sunday with Damian Green (Bee aficionado extraordinaire) after his fantastic talk on the York connection with bees and the history of the McNamaras. He just happened to say in passing, 'This is Katleen, Katleen has cycled here from Belgium, she left two and a half years ago with her 3 year old son.' I took a deep



Photo: Katleen and her son on their bike arriving from Belgium

breath and said, 'She did what?' And then we finally got the whole story of a truly remarkable journey all the way from Flanders Fields to arrive in York in time for the Anzac Day service. After a quick phone call Katleen met with the team from the Historical Cycling Club. They were amazed to see her bicycle complete with buggy for the three-year-old who is now 5 ½ and speaks three languages! Katleen is staying in York for a while and has a tourist visa for three months so there will be opportunities to meet her and catch up on her amazing adventures; I think there has also been an interview so should be an article about her story in coming weeks in the West Australian. I just love this great story and it is just one of many that evolved from five years of running the York Heritage Weekend; I am sure there are many more to come.

On the 7th and 8th of May Northam held this year's WA Heritage Conference which was a very informative two days of all things heritage in the Avon Valley but with a strong emphasis on Northam. It is still galling to hear how Northam won the right to be the major railway centre thus leaving York on the outer and even more annoying when you hear the story of how it was settled over a game of cards. Dodgy dealing doesn't really cover it does it? I suppose we must forgive and forget but how I would love to see a rail service come back to York even if just for weekends when there is an event on, something along the lines of the Hotham Valley with refreshments and a general festive vibe? A dream I know.

'Dear Wife, the Harry Wood Story' at the York Residency Museum has been a terrific York story that

brought lots of locals to the museum. It also brought Harry Wood, now in his 80s, to York to see it. The curator, Annie Medley heard from Harry's daughter that it had been a great highlight for him and he has talked about it nonstop since his visit.

The next celebration of an esteemed local personality the Rev'd Peter Molds will open on the Friday 3rd July and will run until September opening Friday, Saturday and Sunday each week until then. This is an exhibition of paintings and personal objects that belonged to Rev'd Peter Molds the former Rector of the Anglican Church York. This exhibition honours Peter as a clergyman, artist and valued member of the York Community.

Last bit of exciting news is the opening of 'Bardo coffee lounge' in what was Botanicalia and Gallery 152. Always good to have new folk in town with interesting ideas and plans not to mention great coffee!

As ever, looking forward to seeing you in York soon!

The York Scribe



Photo: Winner of the main raffle prize

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IN THE garden this month

by Naomi Sherrington

Winter has properly arrived in the Wheatbelt. Mornings are crisp, the soil is damp, and the garden begins to settle into a quieter rhythm.

June is not a flashy month in the garden — but it's an incredibly important one. This is the season for root growth, soil building, planning, and appreciating some of the subtle beauty winter brings.

June To-Do List

- Keep planting natives- June is still an excellent time to establish WA natives while the soil is cool and moist.
- Watch for waterlogging - Check low spots after rain and make sure water isn't pooling around sensitive plants.
- Stay on top of weeds - Winter weeds are enthusiastic little things. Remove them before they seed.
- Mulch bare soil - Mulch helps regulate soil temperature, suppress weeds and protect soil structure during heavy rain.
- Prune lightly where needed - Remove dead or damaged growth but avoid major pruning during very cold weather.
- Protect frost-sensitive plants - Keep an eye on frost-prone pockets, especially in low-lying areas.

What's in Bloom

- Grevilleas continuing beautifully
- Early hakeas beginning to flower
- Winter-flowering wattles emerging
- Camellias and other cool-season ornamentals

Ripe for Picking

- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Silverbeet
- Herbs like parsley and coriander
- Citrus beginning to ripen in many gardens

What to Plant Now

Vegetables:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| • Garlic | • Peas |
| • Onions | • Lettuce |
| • Broad beans | • Kale |



Natives & ornamentals:

- Grevillea
- Hakea
- Banksia
- Eucalyptus
- Melaleuca

Anything planted now has the best chance of establishing before summer's heat returns.

Season Snapshot

June is a month for slowing down a little and paying attention.

There's something deeply satisfying about wandering around the garden on a cold morning with a hot cuppa, checking on new growth, watching birds move through the shrubs, and seeing the landscape begin to green up again.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 31

BENDIGO BANK AVON VALLEY ARTS TRAIL

Spread across the beautiful shires of Northam and Toodyay, the Avon Valley Arts Trail is a free, self-guided 3-day-weekend event celebrating the artists who call this remarkable region home.

JUNE 01

\$100,000 SWAN DRAUGHT WA DAY CUP

Free Entry, Chain Reaction playing music throughout the day. Sponsored by local businesses. Full Bar and Tote facilities. Oncourse cafe.

JUNE 03

FREE SCREENING MOVIE- THE DEB

The Debutante Ball hits Northam as CinefestOZ On the Road presents a FREE screening of The Deb. Northam Town Hall- Doors open 6pm.

JUNE 04

MOOVE & GROOVE

A relaxed, all-abilities music and movement group where we do sing, dance, connect, and have a whole lot of fun together. A friendly space for all ages and abilities to join in. Every Thursday at Bridgeley Community Centre, 10am-2pm

JUNE 06

ARTIC BLAST FROM THE PAST

Join us for our Arctic Blast from the Past on Past Players and Life Members Day Aat Northam Railways FC as we take on Kellerberrin Tammin! Our day is made extra special with us raising money for FightMND. Tickets at trybooking.

JUNE 07

HIT & SIP @ NORTHAM GOLF CLUB

Each Sunday from 2.30pm the golf club is running a Come & Try session. \$5 for non members. Bar opens at 4pm.

JUNE 10

TRAINING- VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Learn how to streamline the way your organisation works using automation, AI tools, recommended apps and simple systems that save time and reduce volunteer burnout. Register FREE at humanitix.

JUNE 16

ACCIDENTAL COUNSELLOR TRAINING

The course will provide individuals with basic skills and a structure to enable individuals to provide immediate support and assistance using the 'Recognise, Respond, Refer' model. Register for FREE at eventbrite.

JUNE 17

SENIORS INFORMATION DAY

In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), we are offering a free education day for the Northam community. Northam Bowling Club from 10am. FREE event- register at humanitix.

JUNE 19

OPTIMISM IN AGRICULTURE

Come join us in Northam for our annual form "Optimism in Ag" where we will cover some of the hottest topics in Ag as of recent from some of the industry's best leaders. Northam Rec Cntr 9am-9pm. Tickets at humanitix - from \$50

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Northam Stakes Day

The 2026 TABtouch Northam Stakes delivered one of the strongest fields in the race's history, with star sprinter Smooth Chino emerging victorious in the \$200,000 Group 3 feature at the Northam Race Club on Sunday 3rd May.

Trained by Indianna Weinert and ridden by Austin Galati, Smooth Chino continued an outstanding partnership with Galati, extending their unbeaten record together to six wins from six rides.

Owned by Mr K Reilly, Smooth Chino claimed the prestigious Avon Valley sprint after finishing seventh in the rich Quokka slot race at Ascot just a fortnight earlier.

The win was made even more significant for the connections after Galati was reinstated to ride the gelding following a jockey change during the Quokka

campaign earlier in the season.

Racegoers were treated to a high-quality field featuring several proven performers, including 2023 Northam Cup winner Let's Galavant, 2025 Northam Stakes winner West Star, and Magnificent Andy, who finished runner-up in last year's Northam Stakes before contesting the \$5 million Quokka at Ascot.

Off the track, the day's festivities also featured the popular Zax & Co Fashions on the Field competition. Melissa Barnes was named overall winner, with Gwapa Malitas awarded the runner-up sash. Wheatbelt local Maureen Guilo took home the Wheatbelt Winner title.

Entertainment throughout the day was provided by Refractory Road, helping create a lively atmosphere for racegoers at one of the Wheatbelt's premier racing events.



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Local Artists Celebrated at 2026 Killick Art Awards



Photo: Killick Art Award winner: Reflect by Jane Button

by Lindsay Newland

The Avon Valley Arts Society welcomed artists, sponsors and guests to the Opening Night of the 2026 Killick Art Awards on Friday 15 May at the 'Old Girls School' in Northam.

The Killick Art Awards are AVAS's annual members exhibition, celebrating the creativity and talent of local artists across a wide range of mediums including painting, sculpture, textiles, printmaking and mixed media. The exhibition continues to provide an important opportunity for artists to exhibit their work within a supportive community environment.

This year's exhibition was judged by acclaimed Western Australian artist Joanna Lamb. Joanna has been a practicing visual artist since 2005, with 27 solo exhibitions across Australia and internationally. Her work is held in major collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, TarraWarra Museum of Art and Parliament House Canberra.

The Killick Art Award was awarded to Jane Button for her print 'Reflect'. In the judge's comments, Joanna described the work as "a strong graphic double portrait with sensitive use of line and composition".

Other major awards presented on the evening included:

Killick Art Awards

- *Killick Runner-Up*: Robyn Warrener for her textile work 'Vessel'
- *Ray Head Memorial Award*: De Passey for her sculpture 'Epona'
- *Ray Head Runner-Up*: Chelle Ellery for her acrylic painting 'Dancing in the Light'
- *Highly Commended*: Lindsay Newland for her oil painting 'Salmon Gum'

Youth Award recipients

- *Senior Youth Award*: Ayla Grogan for 'Genevieve's Evil Twin'
- *Senior Youth Runner-Up*: Genevieve O'Driscoll for 'PoP!'
- *Junior Youth Award*: Blake Knight for 'Hope'
- *Junior Youth Runner-Up*: Lisa-bella Harrison for 'Matrix'

Highly Commended Youth Awards

- Pippa Smith for 'Staying Still'
- Macklin Smith for 'Landscape in Blue and Green'



Photo: Jane Button with Cr Des Hughes and Shire CEO Debbie Terelink

AVAS would like to sincerely thank the sponsors who supported this year's exhibition and prize pool, including Purslowe Tinetti Funerals as gold sponsors, silver sponsors Lachlan Hunter MP, Prompt Settlement and Conveyancing Services, and Byfields Business Advisors, along with bronze sponsors Mind Your Money and Avon Valley Contractors. Bunnings Northam also generously supported the Youth Highly Commended Awards.

A special acknowledgement was also made on the evening to long-time AVAS member and supporter Carole Anne Wescombe, who was awarded Life Membership of the Avon Valley Arts Society in recognition of her many years of dedication, contribution and ongoing support of the organisation and local arts community.

The Avon Valley Arts Society congratulates all exhibiting artists and award recipients and thanks the wider community for continuing to support local arts and creativity.

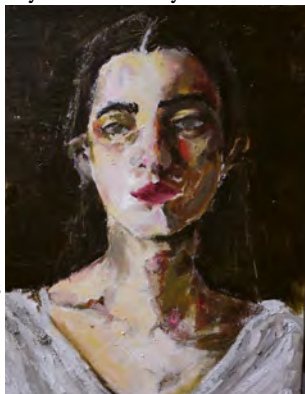


Photo: Senior Youth Award winner- Ayla Grogan with 'Genevieve's Evil Twin'

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Finding the Beat: How Drumming is Building Stronger Minds, Healthier Communities and Connected Workplaces

In a world where stress, anxiety and social disconnection are increasingly common, one Wheatbelt business is using the simple power of rhythm to help people reconnect — with themselves and with each other.

Beat It Drum Therapy, led by registered counsellor and certified Rhythm2Recovery practitioner Jacey Brown, is combining evidence-based therapy with the ancient practice of group drumming to support mental health, emotional wellbeing and workplace connection across the community.

Known as “The Beat It Difference”, the organisation offers far more than recreational drumming sessions. Through structured rhythm circles, counselling and therapeutic programs, Beat It Drum Therapy provides opportunities for healing, personal growth and meaningful human connection.

Jacey Brown said the concept was born from a passion for music, lived experience and a desire to help people move from feeling “out of rhythm” to rediscovering balance and joy.

“At its heart, drumming brings people together,” she said.

“It allows people to express themselves without needing the right words. Rhythm creates connection, safety and shared experiences, and that can be incredibly powerful in both therapeutic and workplace settings.”

One of the organisation’s flagship offerings is Rhythm2Recovery, an internationally recognised evidence-based program that combines rhythm activities with counselling techniques and experiential learning.

The Rhythm2Recovery model blends cognitive behavioural therapy with approaches influenced by acceptance and commitment therapy and positive psychology. Unlike traditional talk-based therapies, the program reduces reliance on language and instead focuses on participation, creativity and positive social interaction.

The result is a therapeutic environment that feels safe, uplifting and engaging for participants of all ages and backgrounds. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

The program is already being used in schools, Department of Justice settings, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, women’s refuges, mental health services, aged care facilities and community organisations.

Beat It Drum Therapy delivers tailored Rhythm2Recovery and DRUMBEAT programs over 10 weeks for both youth and adults, with topics including

bullying prevention, violence prevention, healthy relationships, grief and loss, drug and alcohol awareness, emotional development and healthier workplaces.

Jacey said one of the strengths of the program is its flexibility and accessibility.

“Not everyone feels comfortable sitting in a counselling room and talking,” she said.

“Drumming creates another pathway for communication and emotional release. People can participate at their own level and still feel part of something bigger.”

Research continues to highlight the mental and physical benefits of drumming in group settings. Studies have shown group drumming can reduce stress, anxiety and depression while improving attention span, confidence and emotional resilience.

Drumming also stimulates the release of endorphins — often called the body’s “feel-good” chemicals — while promoting relaxation and reducing feelings of isolation.

Beyond individual wellbeing, the shared experience of making music together encourages cooperation, trust and non-verbal communication.

“It breaks down barriers very quickly,” Jacey explained.

“When people drum together, everyone contributes equally to the rhythm. It doesn’t matter what background you come from or what role you have — everyone becomes part of the same beat.”

That same philosophy is now proving highly effective in the workplace.

Beat It Drum Therapy’s workplace team-building programs are increasingly being sought by organisations wanting to improve staff morale, communication and workplace culture in a memorable and engaging way.

The sessions use drums and percussion instruments to encourage teamwork, reflection and creative problem-solving while reinforcing company values and strategic messaging.

Participants learn basic rhythms and gradually build them together, creating a shared sense of achievement and connection.

The workshops are available in half-day and full-day formats, with modules focusing on values, trust, healthy relationships, workplace stress, communication, change and power dynamics.

Jacey said the workshops offer businesses a refreshing alternative to traditional corporate training exercises.



“People remember how they felt during the experience,” she said.

“When a team creates rhythm together, they naturally learn about listening, leadership, adaptability and trust. Those lessons transfer directly back into the workplace.”

Research into workplace wellbeing supports the approach, showing group drumming activities can increase creativity, productivity, self-esteem and confidence while reducing stress and anxiety.

Importantly, the sessions also help foster psychological safety — the ability for staff to feel comfortable contributing ideas, taking risks and communicating openly within their team.

As organisations continue searching for innovative ways to support mental health and staff wellbeing, Beat It Drum Therapy is demonstrating that sometimes the most effective solutions can be found in something as simple and universal as rhythm.

For Jacey, the mission is ultimately about creating spaces where people feel seen, heard and connected.

“In today’s busy world, so many people feel disconnected or overwhelmed,” she said.

“Drumming reminds us that we’re not alone. When people come together in rhythm, there’s something incredibly healing about that shared energy and sense of belonging.”

Through rhythm circles, counselling and evidence-based programs, Beat It Drum Therapy continues to prove that healing does not always begin with words — sometimes it begins with a beat.



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Staying Connected in Challenging Times



Things that we cannot control are our biggest stressors in life. In agriculture it is mostly weather issues followed by a multitude of other factors such as commodity prices, input costs (diesel, fertiliser availability and price), machinery breakdowns... how long is a bit of string.

Every season is not without its challenges, and the effects are always felt across the whole community (farmers, people involved in agribusiness and those in the Agri-link industries like the mechanics and the Mitre 10 store). Everybody feels the pain.

No one can change what happens with the weather and/or influence the other factors, all we can do is manage our programs and control our business as best we can which importantly includes looking after ourselves and each other (our family, mates and neighbours).

Remaining connected is one way of doing this. So, what does this mean? Rural communities have an innate capacity to reach out and organize and participate in many bottom-up activities. RMHI has been attending a lot of these events including breakfasts, sundowners and many other gatherings over the years which allow the communities to have a conversation about where they are at individually and as a collective. There are less and less of us living in regional areas, add this to the nature of modern farming as well as a challenging season and isolation becomes more prevalent. It's so important that we maintain social connection, but it takes an effort.

Isolation is the enemy of good mental wellbeing. This is both in the physical sense (less of us) and the interpersonal sense (social networks around us). Staying connected is important and something we must work on, this can be achieved in part if we are mindful of living in

the present and staying connected with others.

As blokes, we have a propensity to self-medicate. A lot of people think that is done by sex, drugs and rock and roll, however in the work we do it is mostly blokes spending more time in their cave, working harder, longer, and talking less (some ladies might find that hard to believe). It is important that we continue to talk about some of the pain and distress that as blokes we tend to suffer alone.

We describe primary care as what can we do to look after ourselves and others, invariably it is about connection. Some simple things we can do:

- Talk to a Mate® – realize that we are not alone.
- Talk to whoever needs to be informed about our situation (family, financiers, advisors).
- Keep an eye on others – drop into a neighbour and have a chat and a coffee. Take the time to ask someone “Are you okay?”
- Slow the pace of our life a little, join a group that fits in with our passions and interests. It will make a difference.
- Maintain our sense of humour, laugh at ourselves and with others.

Australians are well known for their larrikinism and humour. Edward de Bono one of the world's foremost thinkers called humour a key lubricant for life and often referred to humour as social glue and the best anti-despair device we have. I think he is right on the money, when we lose our sense of humour we are buggered.

The Regional Men's Health Initiative

P: (08) 6314 1436 | E: menshealth@4blokes.com.au

ADHD from an Ayurvedic Viewpoint

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is characterised by symptoms including inattention, hyperactive and impulsive behaviour. These symptoms are associated with learning, behavioural and emotional problems. According to Ayurveda, ADHD is a result of aggravated Vata intelligence (governed by air and ether, responsible for all movement in the body), in particular, the nervous system.

While Ayurveda offers herbal medicines and body treatments to calm and balance the nervous system, there are many routines and dietary choices that will help balance the ADHD child or adult.

1. Wake early, say 5.30 – 6am. ADHD people are often light sleepers, rather than toss and turn in bed, get up. This time of day provides more oxygen which will bring more vitality and clarity to the mind making it easier to process emotions and thoughts that can be the cause of anxiety.
2. As soon as you wake, clean teeth and scrape tongue to remove toxins that accumulate overnight.
3. Drink a warm glass of water with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp grated ginger, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp lemon juice and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp honey. This also helps flush out toxins and prevent constipation.
4. Avoid hot showers as the excess heat will impact on the pineal and pituitary glands and make them more hyperactive.
5. Food - avoid stimulating foods such as coffee, carbonated drinks, chocolate, heavy foods such as cheese, peanut butter, fish & chips, smoothies and bread.
6. A warm milk drink at night with cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, saffron, ghee and jaggery (raw sugar). This helps induce sleep and helps repair damaged and fatigued tissue and cells. Saffron is known for its rejuvenating quality and is the best antioxidant.

There are many more things that help. ADHD children are very intelligent, they have lots of questions. As a parent you should try to answer them. Computer games should be avoided as they overstimulate and lead to more Vata aggravation.

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CEO UPDATE by Theresa Lee

The Northam Chamber of Commerce has continued to build strong momentum over recent months, with several significant events and projects underway and on the horizon.

One of the highlights was undoubtedly the fourth annual Wheatbelt Futures Forum, which again brought together industry leaders, government representatives, business owners and community stakeholders to discuss the key issues and opportunities shaping the future of our region. The strong attendance and level of engagement demonstrated just how important these conversations are for the Wheatbelt. From housing and workforce challenges through to infrastructure, health services and economic diversification, the forum provided an invaluable platform for honest and productive discussion.

Importantly, the conversations do not end once the event concludes. The Chamber continues to work closely with relevant stakeholders and all levels of government to ensure the issues raised at the forum are not only heard but sufficiently addressed through practical action and long-term planning. Advocacy remains one of the Chamber's core priorities, and we are committed to ensuring the voice of regional business continues to be represented strongly and consistently.

Another exciting project currently underway is the development of the first locally produced comprehensive printed Business Directory for Northam and surrounds. We are looking forward to delivering a practical resource that better connects residents, visitors and businesses with the incredible range of local services available across our region. Importantly, the directory will also assist new-

to-town residents and businesses to settle into the community more easily, while encouraging greater support for local enterprise. We know our region is home to many outstanding businesses, and this project is a wonderful opportunity to showcase them.

Northam Women in Business hosted another successful networking event in May, hosted by Purslowe Tinetti Funerals, which included a fascinating behind-the-scenes presentation on all things funeral planning by the hosts, and valuable insights on succession planning and wills from guest speaker Matilda Lloyd. It was incredibly interesting to hear more about the operations of this successful family-owned and operated local business. Attendees certainly came away with a deeper appreciation for the professionalism, care and planning involved in an industry many of us rarely think about until needed.

Earlier in May, I had the pleasure of MCing the Regional Heritage Conference, which showcased the Avon Valley's rich cultural heritage under the theme "Our Avon: Culture, History and People". The two-day event attracted around 150 attendees. It was wonderful to see so many visitors exploring our local businesses, attractions and hospitality venues throughout their stay. Many attendees shared how impressed they were with the region and expressed their intention to return in the future with family and friends — a fantastic endorsement for Northam and the wider Avon Valley community.



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Rising land prices and the challenges of farm succession in Australia

With the Australian property market booming in the last few years, farm and agricultural land has seen a significant increase in value.

These rising land values have affected farmers, influencing business decisions and the process of generational transfer.

Impact on farm succession

Farm succession – transferring ownership and management of an agricultural enterprise from one generation to the next – is a cornerstone of sustainability in rural communities.

Rising land prices have made succession planning more complex. Higher valuations often require successors to take on more debt to purchase family farms or buy out siblings, increasing the financial pressure tied to ownership transfer.

This dynamic can:

- delay succession
- limit options for both generations
- complicate efforts to keep farms within families

High entry costs can also affect who can take over. Even capable successors may be unable or unwilling to shoulder the financial burden, meaning the most suitable candidates are sometimes ruled out by circumstance rather than skill or commitment.

Higher debt levels further heighten risk for farm businesses. Servicing larger loans can strain cashflow, particularly when agricultural returns are cyclical and commodity prices and seasonal conditions remain unpredictable. Productivity gains or cost reductions may be needed just to stay afloat, which can be difficult in an already volatile sector.

Farm viability and industry implications

Higher land prices, combined with higher borrowing, are putting some farm businesses at risk. Where farms become over-leveraged, there is a real possibility of exits or consolidation.

Such changes can have ripple effects for rural communities, including:

- reduced employment opportunities
- diminished local services

- changes in land use patterns

Beyond immediate financial pressures, these trends can also affect productivity and innovation. Smaller or financially stretched farms may defer investment in technology, infrastructure, or sustainable practices which slows adaptation to market and climate changes.

Regional economies can feel the knock-on effect as local suppliers and service providers face reduced demand. Labour availability may also be impacted, with fewer opportunities deterring skilled staff from rural areas and potentially creating a generational skills gap.

Industry stakeholders and policymakers are increasingly aware of these pressures and the implications they raise moving forward.

What's next for farm succession

What this all points to is the need for earlier, more deliberate succession planning that accounts for land values long before transition becomes urgent.

Families may need to:

- separate ownership from control
- rethink equal division models
- introduce staged transfers that reduce debt pressure on the next generation

At an industry level, better access to tailored financial advice and succession expertise is essential. Policymakers also have a role to play in shaping frameworks that recognise farm viability and cash flow, not just land value, so families aren't forced into selling productive farms purely because higher valuations make succession or ownership transfer harder.

Without action on all fronts, rising land prices could continue driving structural change across the sector in unintended and potentially irreversible ways.

For more information, please contact your local RSM agribusiness adviser.



What the 2026-27 Federal Budget means for small business- Tax-related

Instant asset write-off

The Federal Government's \$20,000 instant asset write-off will become a permanent tax scheme accessible to small business owners.

The instant-asset write off allows eligible small business owners to claim immediate deductions for new or second-hand plant and equipment asset purchases such as vehicles, tools and office equipment. The assets must first be used, or installed for use, in the income year you're claiming for.

It is designed to support small businesses to invest and keep compliance costs low.

Taxation of trust funds

A minimum tax of 30 per cent on discretionary trusts will apply from 1 July 2028 (with some exceptions). No credits will be available to corporate beneficiaries for tax paid by trustees.

A three year 'rollover relief' period will apply from 1 July 2027 to help small business owners looking to restructure.

Reintroduction of Loss Carry Back

This tax scheme would allow incorporated entities to use a loss in the current year tax to receive refunds on tax paid in the previous two tax years. The Federal Government estimates that this measure will help around 85,000 businesses, with a large amount of these being small businesses. Please note: this scheme is not available to sole traders or businesses structured as trusts.

Refundable tax losses for start ups

From the 2028-29 tax year, start ups will be able to receive refunds for tax losses. The refunds will be capped by the amount of fringe benefits tax (FBT) and withholding tax paid on employee wages.

The objective of this scheme is to provide early stage cash flow support for new businesses that are hiring staff and is expected to support 25,000 new businesses.

PAYG instalment reforms

From 1 July 2027, businesses can opt in to monthly pay as you go (PAYG) instalment payments instead of the standard quarterly cycle.

This measure is designed to help businesses with seasonal or variable income, to spread the cash flow impact evenly across the year.

Article taken from smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/blog/what-2026-27-federal-budget-means-small-business

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Changes to Pet Bonds

DMIRS has confirmed that the increase to the maximum pet bond has now passed legislation. The allowable pet bond in Western Australia has officially risen from \$260.00 to \$350.00.

- Legislated increase - The new \$350.00 cap is now in effect.
- Use of bond - It can only be used for pet-related fumigation or pest treatment.
- It remains part of the tenant's total bond held with the Bond Administrator.

This change aligns the bond amount with current fumigation and pest-control costs and provides clearer protection for owners while keeping the rules consistent for tenants. For more information head to the DMIRS website

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WA budget unveils major first-home buyer boost with stamp duty overhaul and \$375m housing push

by Hope Coumbe, Finance Editor

Homebuyers in Western Australia will pay less stamp duty under sweeping changes announced for the state, with funding also earmarked for affordable housing projects and new home developments.

The Western Australian Government unveiled its state budget on Thursday, announcing a range of housing sector initiatives including changes to stamp duty thresholds, updates to its First Home Owner Grant, and an investment into its recently announced affordable homes project.

First-home buyers in WA's fast-growing housing market are the main winners in the \$297 million tax package, which the state government says will impact around 25,000 new buyers over the next four years and increase the number of new homes being built as part of the National Housing Accord.

Under the changes, first-home buyers will not pay stamp duty on new or established homes valued up to \$600,000, up from the current \$500,000 threshold, while concessional rates will apply to homes worth up to \$800,000.

The property cap for the \$10,000 First Home Owner Grant (FHOG) will also rise from \$750,000 to \$800,000.

Vacant land buyers are also set to benefit as the state looks to ramp up its delivery of new homes, with the stamp duty exemption threshold increasing from \$350,000 to \$450,000.

Concessional rates have also been extended to blocks valued up to \$550,000.

A \$375 million investment to push forward the supply of affordable homes has also been unveiled for what is now the country's third-most expensive city to buy.

The funds are earmarked to build 500 affordable homes for first-home buyers in targeted growth corridors,

through the Keystart program.

Six different shared equity home loans form the state's Keystart Home Loans, which were established in 1989 to lower entry cost barriers into the housing market while also removing the need to pay Lenders' Mortgage Insurance.

A new Keystart commercial financing facility costing \$250 million is also set to provide low-cost finance for developments that include affordable housing.

Another \$250 million will fund a new pre-sale guarantee scheme designed to help developers get new housing projects off the ground.

It comes after a formidable 12 months for the WA housing market, with median home prices up 21.5% in Perth and 16.3% for the rest of the state.

"The measures will expand access to support at a time when Perth's housing market has experienced an extraordinary uplift in prices in recent years," REA Group senior economist Eleanor Creagh said.

Perth was the fastest-growing capital city in Australia over the last year, the PropTrack Home Price Index shows, with the median home price breaking the \$1 million mark in March for the first time.

"Perth home values have more than doubled over the past five years," Ms Creagh added. "The median home value in Perth now sits just above \$1.02 million, highlighting how rapidly affordability has deteriorated for aspiring first-home buyers.

"Lifting the stamp duty exemption and concession thresholds, alongside increasing the FHOG cap, should help improve the ability of first-home buyers to compete in a market where entry-level price points have shifted higher after a period of very strong price growth."

Article taken from realestate.com.au/news/wa-budget-unveils-major-first-home-buyer-boost-with-stamp-duty-overhaul-and-375m-housing-push/

WA government proposes sweeping rental reforms

by Mathew Williams

Property managers in Western Australia could soon face a raft of rental reforms, including the abolition of no-grounds evictions and restricting the information that can be sought from tenants as part of the approval process.

The Western Australian government has proposed reforms to the state's Residential Tenancies Act 1987, headlined by the removal of no-grounds termination.

Under the current legislation, landlords can end periodic tenancies with 60 days' notice or fixed-term tenancies at the end of the term with 30 days' notice.

Under the reformed legislation, landlords would need fair grounds to terminate a tenancy, with additional grounds added, such as having the owner or a relative occupy the premises, renovation, or repeated tenant breaches.

Additionally, other proposed reforms include introducing clear standards for rental properties and placing restrictions on the types of information that can be requested from prospective tenants.

The reforms would also require property managers to offer renters at least one payment method that does not incur an additional fee.

Premier Roger Cook said the reforms would bring Western Australian tenancy laws in line with those of other states and provide tenants with greater stability.

"Ending no-grounds terminations and replacing them with common sense reasons for landlords makes Western Australia's rental market fairer," Cook said.

Real Estate Institute of Western Australia president Suzanne Brown cautioned that there would be no long-term winners from the reforms.

"Across the state, the rental market has not fully recovered from the mass exodus of investors post-COVID-19," Brown said.

"Western Australia cannot afford to lose any more rental properties. Another drop in supply will see the vacancy rate fall, competition for available properties increase and even more upward pressure on rents."

While landlords could currently choose not to renew tenancies at the end of their fixed term, Brown said the proposed reforms would likely result in more breach notices being issued to tenants.

Article taken from realestatebusiness.com.au/industry/31762-wa-government-proposes-sweeping-rental-reforms

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Electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles outsell purely petrol and diesel cars



Photo: 2026 Toyota RAV4. Image from carsguide.com.au

by James Cleary, Deputy Editor
carsguide.com.au

Year-to-date registration data from the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) and the Electric Vehicle Council (EVC) show ‘electrified’ passenger and light commercial vehicles have crossed a significant tipping point to become a more popular choice than traditional diesel and purely petrol-powered internal combustion engine (ICE) options in Australia.

To the end of April, sales of battery electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles stood at 50,976 units, a 79.2 per cent increase on the same four-month period in 2025 (28,448 units).

At the same time, sales of ICE vehicles (including light

commercials but not heavy trucks) have dropped 35.9 per cent from 64,991 in 2025 to 47,813 units this year.

Tellingly, sales of pure battery electric vehicles (BEVs) have grown by just over 100 per cent, with key players BYD up 110.8 per cent (25,243 vs 11,974) and Tesla 49.9 per cent year-on-year (8485 vs 5660).

Individual (higher volume) stand-out BEV models include the BYD Sealion 7 and Dolphin, Geely EX5, Kia EV3, Tesla Model Y and Toyota bZ4X.

And when it comes to hybrids, thanks to better supply of the new-generation version, the ever-popular Toyota RAV4 has come up to its more usual monthly sales rate and has been joined by its big-brother LandCruiser 300 Hybrid.

	2026	2025	Percentage +/-
Diesel	22,414	28,639	-9.1
Electric	23,186	11,559	+100.6
Hybrid	18,162	14,288	+6.2
PHEV	9628	2601	+76.9
Petrol	25,399	36,352	-20.7
Electrified	50,976	28,448	+79.2
ICE	47,813	64,991	-35.9

Add in other relatively recent hybrid arrivals like the Chery Tiggo 4 Hybrid joining now established disrupters like the BYD Shark 6 and GWM Cannon Alpha and hybrid sales are set to expand even further.

Clearly, April 2024 marked a historical moment in time for the Aussie new vehicle market.

Article taken from carsguide.com.au/car-news/hybrid-and-electric-vehicles-sales-are-close-to-overtaking-petrol-new-cars-sales-in



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OUR COMMUNITY, YOUR STORIES

EV tax changes coming

by AAP & CBA Newsroom

The take-up of electric vehicles will not be affected despite a winding back of tax discounts on more expensive models, the energy minister has predicted.

From April 2027, the full tax discount will only apply to EVs costing \$75,000 or less, while vehicles above \$75,000 but below the luxury tax threshold will only receive a 25 per cent discount.

Also from April 2027, all EVs below the luxury tax threshold will only receive the 25 per cent discount.

The luxury tax threshold is \$91,387 but rises each year with inflation.

Mr Bowen said the changes would encourage car manufacturers to focus on more affordable models of EVs.

"We certainly expected EV take-up to remain very, very strong. It's been increasing, obviously, particularly in recent months," he told ABC Radio.

"It may be that some Australians, particularly from 2027 onwards, choose to buy a slightly more affordable EV, below \$75,000 instead of below \$91,000 but they believe that the take-up will continue at pretty close to current rates."

The cost of the tax break to the federal budget has increased in recent years from an initial \$90 million to \$1.35 billion in 2025/26 and had been expected to rise to \$3 billion by 2028/29.

But a phased tightening of the incentive will save taxpayers \$1.7 billion over four years from the 2026/27 budget.

EVs eligible for the discount will continue to be exempt from import tariffs.

Article taken from commbank.com.au/articles/newsroom/2026/05/ev-demand-expected-to-remain-strong-despite-tax-changes.html

The safest affordable electric cars in Australia for 2026

Are you looking for a cheap, and safe, new EV? RACV can reveal the safest electric cars and SUVs on sale in Australia under \$50,000 drive-away.

Interest in electric vehicles is at an all-time high in Australia, with more people than ever considering an EV for the first time. Much attention is focused on the cheapest electric cars available as new Chinese brands enter the market, but are the most affordable EVs the safest?

The Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) has provided RACV with a full list of EVs it has tested over the past three years with weighted results that place a high emphasis on physical crash protection across its four key pillars of assessment – Adult Occupant Protection, Child Occupant Protection, Vulnerable Road User Protection and 'Safety Assist' (advanced driver assistance systems).

We have categorised these as EVs priced below \$50,000, covering the cheapest electric passenger cars and SUVs available in new car showrooms.

These are the safest affordable EVs, based on ANCAP testing, available in Australia, ranked according to their performance to separate the best from the best.

Top 10 safest EVs in Australia priced below \$50,000

Here are the top 10 safest EVs in Australia that start below \$50,000 (current national or Victorian private buyer drive-away prices). All have achieved a maximum five-star safety rating under ANCAP's 2023-2025 testing regime, results for which are still rolling out in 2026 until the first cars come online later this year based on the new 2026-2028 protocols.

1. **Leapmotor B10 small SUV** – from \$45,714 drive-away
2. **Zeekr X small SUV** – from \$48,900 drive-away
3. eq. **Geely EX5 medium SUV** – from \$45,893 drive-away
4. eq. **MG S5 EV small SUV** – from \$40,990 drive-away
5. **BYD Dolphin hatchback** – from \$33,415 drive-away
6. **GAC Aion V medium SUV** – from \$46,180 drive-away
7. eq. **Deepal S07 medium SUV** – from \$46,990 drive-away
8. eq. **Leapmotor C10 medium SUV** – from \$49,892 drive-away
9. **Kia EV5 medium SUV** – from \$49,990 drive-away
10. **Kia EV3 small SUV** – from \$46,990 drive-away

The Leapmotor B10 is the clear standout with an overall score above 90%, with impressive results for adult occupant protection and child occupant protection, the latter (95%) equal to the highest achieved to date under ANCAP's 2023-2025 testing criteria. For sheer value, the BYD Dolphin hatchback is also hard to overlook \$33,415 drive-away and an 85.2% weighted score.

For the record, the cheapest electric car in Australia, the BYD Atto 1 hatchback (priced from \$27,163 drive-away) finished in 11th position with an 81.0 per cent weighted score. The BYD Atto 2 small SUV (from \$35,499 drive-away) has not yet been rated by ANCAP.

Article taken from racv.com.au/royalauto/transport/electric-vehicles/safest-electric-vehicles-australia.html

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Focus on Farming

by Chris Antonio

With the focus having recently been on finalising seeding, most seeding programmes have been completed, if not yet finalised. Whilst fuel supply has been steady, prices, particularly diesel, have remained volatile, but still high. I know all businesses will be keeping a close eye on this issue for the remainder of the season and beyond.

Fertiliser supply and security have been, and are, challenges and concerns for many growers. Decisions about types of fertilisers, prices, supply remain at top of mind. I wonder if risk management strategies for future season will include additional on-farm fertiliser storage.

The recent federal budget has raised questions closely related to agribusinesses. One that comes to front of mind is taxation of trusts, and changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax (CGT). As this is a new announcement, my suggestion is to engage with your professional business partners to assist in making prudent and wise decisions, especially your accountant in this instance.

According to the Bureau of Meteorology, the unfortunate outlook for June to August rainfall is below average. In the shorter term, there may be some forecast rain toward the end of May – but, as we all know from forecasting it's best described as "really just a lottery at this stage".

Prices for our main commodities have remained relatively high but have not been following the same percentage increases that we have been experiencing with increased costs associated with inputs, particularly fuel, fertiliser and herbicides. An area to watch, particularly with reports of varied growing conditions in the Northern Hemisphere.

Farmland prices set for continued "modest" growth in year ahead

Australian farmland prices are expected to grow modestly in 2026, continuing the trend seen over the past year, Rabobank says in its latest annual Australian Farmland Price Outlook.

The report, by the specialist agribusiness bank's RaboResearch division, says the outlook for agricultural land prices in 2026 points to "moderated" growth, with the median price per hectare set to increase by approximately two per cent in its "base case" forecast.

This expectation is driven by the combination of a mixed outlook for agricultural commodity prices, elevated farm input costs exacerbated by the Iran war and the prospect of further interest rate increases.

It follows similarly constrained growth in Australian farmland values last year, the bank says, with the median price per hectare of all agricultural land types nationally increasing by 0.4 per cent in 2025. While this was a turnaround from a 2.6 per cent decline seen in 2024, it was considerably below the averaged annual growth rate of approximately 11 per cent over the past decade.

Report lead author, RaboResearch commodity analyst Paul Joules said the bank's view was that the market had now transitioned into a new phase, characterised by more moderate growth and that this cycle was likely to persist over the coming years.

"Our base case forecast expects Australian agricultural land values to continue rising in 2026, with the median price per hectare projected to increase by around two per cent year-on-year," he said. "And the expectation is for similarly moderate growth in land values from 2026 to 2031, with the market having firmly entered a weaker growth cycle, driven by higher interest rates and softer

commodity pricing."

The report said the bank's analysis found Australian agricultural land values had "held firm" in 2025. This was despite a complex environment for agricultural commodities across the course of the year, RaboResearch said.

2026 – challenging farm budget conditions

Looking ahead, the report said, conditions for farm budgets are challenging in 2026, with farmers under significant pressure from rising input costs and a mixed income outlook across commodity sectors.

"Taken together, these dynamics imply only modest support for further land-price appreciation and underpin RaboResearch's view that (farmland) sale activity may slow from current levels," the report said.

Mr Joules said elevated farm input costs amid the Iran war – combined with rising interest rates – underpinned RaboResearch's more subdued outlook on farmland price growth in 2026.

"A key challenge, and one likely to remain a recurring theme in 2026, is the supply shock stemming from the Iran war," he said. "The conflict has already driven fertiliser and diesel prices to exceptionally high levels, which are expected to have a material impact on margin potential across the sector."

Added to this, Mr Joules said, there are signs the RBA could raise interest rates further in 2026, following two hikes at the beginning of the year.

Article taken from [rabobank.com.au/news/media-releases/2026/farmland-prices-set-for-continued-modest-growth-in-year-ahead](https://www.rabobank.com.au/news/media-releases/2026/farmland-prices-set-for-continued-modest-growth-in-year-ahead)

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NAB Forecasts Record Diesel Prices for Australia

Australian motorists and businesses could face another major cost blowout, with new modelling from NAB warning diesel prices may surge above \$4 a litre by the June quarter under a severe worst-case scenario linked to escalating tensions in the Middle East.

Despite the Federal Government's temporary halving of the fuel excise tax until the end of June, NAB economists say ongoing instability in the region could still drive diesel prices to record highs, placing further pressure on household budgets, freight costs and food prices.

The warning comes as concerns continue over global oil supply disruptions, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz — a critical shipping route for international crude oil supplies. While former US President Donald Trump has again suggested a possible peace agreement with Iran, NAB analysts remain cautious about the outlook.

In its latest modelling, NAB outlined several possible scenarios, including a "severe" case where wholesale diesel prices reach \$4 a litre during the second quarter of 2026. If this occurred, retail diesel prices could climb to around \$4.30 a litre once service station margins are added.

Such prices would heavily impact motorists, particularly owners of four-wheel drives, transport operators and farmers who rely on diesel-powered vehicles and machinery. Economists also warn higher diesel costs would likely flow through to supermarket prices due to rising transport and fertiliser expenses.

"Australia is highly exposed to Middle East supply disruptions," NAB said in its report.

"While most of Australia's diesel imports are sourced from Asia, those refineries rely heavily on crude oil from

the Middle East."

Australia currently refines less than 20 per cent of the diesel it consumes each year, making the nation particularly vulnerable to overseas supply shocks. Compounding the issue, a recent fire at Viva Energy's Geelong refinery has reduced domestic diesel refining capacity by a further 20 per cent.

Before the fuel excise was cut on April 1, diesel prices in capital cities had already climbed to approximately \$3.06 a litre at the height of the conflict.

Under NAB's severe scenario, supply disruptions would continue throughout 2026, with Iran potentially targeting energy infrastructure across Gulf states and maintaining blockades in the Strait of Hormuz. This could keep diesel prices elevated well beyond the June quarter.

Even NAB's more optimistic "baseline" forecast predicts wholesale diesel prices averaging \$2.55 a litre by June before gradually easing as shipping routes reopen and global oil supply stabilises.

However, economists say recent developments suggest prices are currently tracking closer to the bank's "adverse" scenario rather than the baseline outlook.

That adverse case would see wholesale diesel prices peak around \$3.15 a litre before slowly normalising as global shipping resumes.

With diesel playing a critical role across freight, agriculture and mining, any prolonged spike in prices is expected to have widespread economic impacts across Australia in the months ahead.

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Over three years, the Green Sheep Project will partner with Natural Resource Management organisations and supply chain-bodies to equip producers with user-friendly tools for demonstrating their environmental credentials, support improved grazing and pasture management, document natural capital and make data-driven decisions.

Sheep Producers Australia Chief Executive Officer Bonnie Skinner said the Green Sheep Project supports important capacity building for long-term industry success.

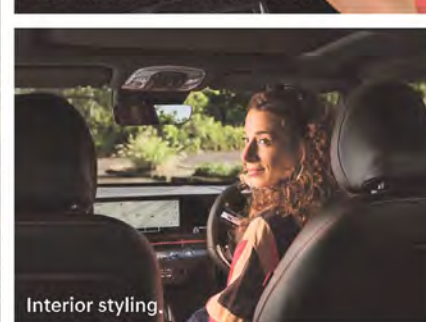
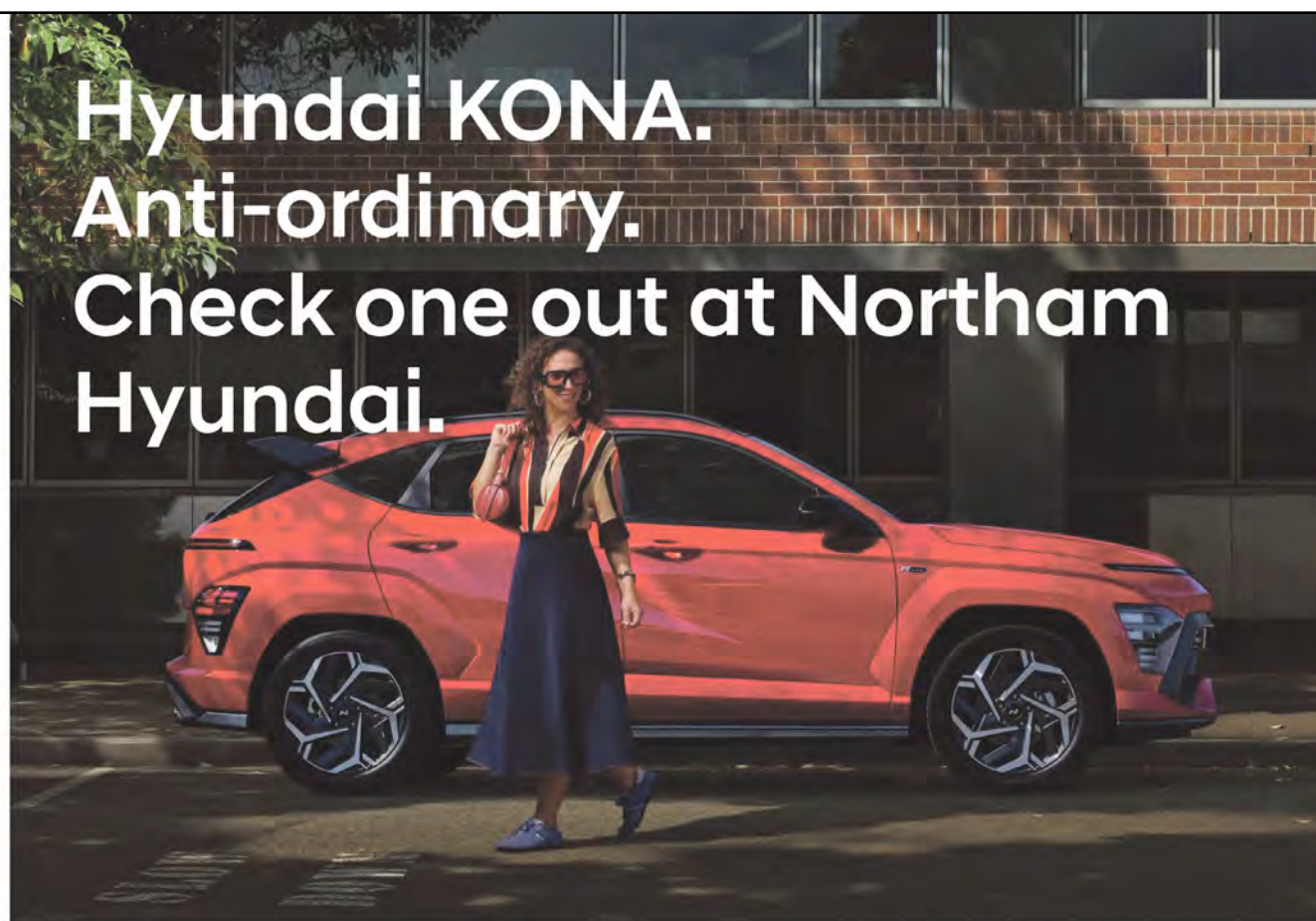
"This project is an investment in our world-leading industry," she said.

"Equipping sheep producers with the skills and knowledge to support climate-smart practices and the uptake of practical tools to that verify their sustainability credentials to their customers."

Supported across the supply chain stakeholders and the Australian Government, this work will include on-farm trials in Victoria, Western Australia, NSW and Tasmania.

Sheep Producers Australia Sustainability Policy Advisor Carolyn Cameron said it's important for the entire industry to meet today's challenges while shaping tomorrow's opportunities.

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TENDER FOR DISPOSAL OF LAND BY SALE

TENDER NO. PR03 of 2026

**Sale of Lot 340 Diagram 35964 (also known as 60
Stirling Street), Northam - Vacant land**

The Shire of Northam is seeking to dispose of land for sale by
public tender, in accordance with the requirements of Section
3.58 of the Local Government Act 1995.

The proposed sale area can be seen in the area highlighted in
red on the map below.

Mandatory conditions of sale

Please note that Lot 340 Diagram 35964 (also known as 60 Stirling
Street) currently has no vehicle access from Stirling Street;

- The property is sold without vehicle access. As a
mandatory condition of sale, the purchaser must, at their
sole cost, design, obtain approvals for, and construct
compliant vehicular access from Stirling Street. No
development approval will be granted until compliant
access is constructed. All associated verge, drainage,
kerbing, earthworks, crossover construction, and
service relocation costs are the full responsibility of the
purchaser; or
- If the successful tenderer is an adjoining landowner
and seeks amalgamation, all costs associated with
amalgamation, including survey, subdivision/
amalgamation applications, WAPC fees, Landgate
lodgement, and any other statutory or professional fees,
are entirely the responsibility of the purchaser.

Requirements

- Offered purchase price (exclusive of GST)
- Proposed use and development of the land
- Demonstrated financial capacity to complete the purchase
- Proposed timeframe for settlement and development
commencement
- Access to the property from Stirling Street must be
addressed by the buyer, and how they plan on modifying
the adjacent land to comply with requirements of access
- Any conditions associated with the offer
- Tenderers must address the following criteria:
 - o Purchase Price (40%)

- o Land Use and access modifications proposal (25%)
- o Financial Capacity (25%)
- o Settlement timeframes (10%)

The sale will be subject to the provisions of Section 3.58 of the
Local Government Act 1995 and any other statutory requirements.

The successful tenderer will be required to enter into a Contract
of Sale and may be subject to development conditions.

Obtaining Documents

Documentation must be obtained via the Shire of Northam's
website at <https://www.northam.wa.gov.au/tenders/>.

Tender Process Enquiries

Please direct all enquiries to Nicholas King, Manager Operations
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Deadline

Tenders close at 4:00pm on Wednesday 10 June 2026.

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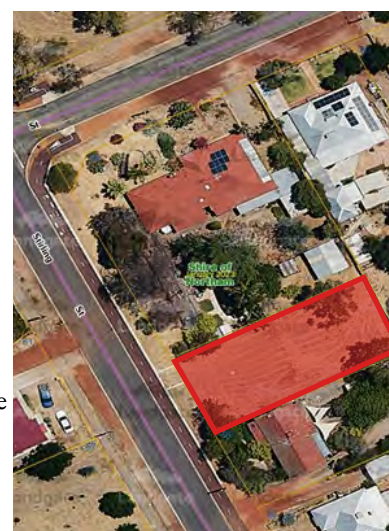
Tenders must be lodged electronically to the Shire of Northam
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Trailblazing appliances to bolster regional emergency services



Photo: Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm AFSM with Northam VFRS volunteers

The State Government has delivered two of the first appliances from its new cutting-edge model that will boost the emergency response for key regional communities.

Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) brigades in Northam and Busselton have each received a Volvo Urban Pump Type 2 appliance to help protect families

and businesses in and around the two centres.

The new appliances are groundbreaking for the brigades with state-of-the art equipment and features that will enhance their emergency response capabilities.

“The new Urban Pumps will not only enhance the response of our wonderful volunteers but will

also provide greater protection when they go into dangerous situations,” said Emergency Services Minister Paul Papalia.

More regional and outer metropolitan brigades will soon receive the new model.

Volunteers involved in trials of the Volvo Urban Pumps have been strong in their praise of the appliances and their ability to enhance their work before, during and after emergencies.

“The appliance is leaps and bounds above the old model. It is a far better vehicle to drive and provides additional airbags and a better braking system that enhances safety for crews responding to incidents.

With six volunteers able to be carried in the cab we can now provide a more effective response,” said Northam VFRS Captain Scott Horlin.

Each Volvo Urban Pump Type 2 is valued at \$950,000 and boosts crew capability by increasing capacity to six personnel while also providing improved protection for volunteers.

The additional response numbers will enhance firefighting operations and allow fatigue to be managed more effectively.

Volunteer and career firefighters, including members of the Northam and Busselton brigades, were involved in the design and construction of the appliances, which was undertaken by locally-based company Paull and Warner Resources with some components assembled in Collie.

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Northam Netball Leads the Way with Umpire Appreciation Round

The Northam Netball Association has celebrated a strong start to the season, highlighted by a successful Umpire Appreciation Round held in support of Netball WA's new Netball Respects the Whistle initiative.

The round, designed to promote respect and support for umpires at every level of the game, brought the local netball community together in a positive and inclusive show of appreciation for the association's dedicated officiating team.

Players formed guard-of-honour style lines before matches, offering high fives to umpires ahead of the first whistle in a gesture that set the tone for the day. A rules knowledge quiz also proved popular, with more than 30 participants testing their understanding of the game in a friendly but competitive challenge.

Northam Netball Association president said the initiative reinforced the message that creating a respectful sporting culture is a shared responsibility among players, coaches, parents and spectators.

The round was coordinated by Association Umpire Development Office Asha O'Driscoll, with support from volunteers across the association. Umpires were thanked

with cookies made by Yvette's Cakes, Catering and Coffee, while Vice President Lauren Stone produced a social media reel highlighting the association's umpiring group, from experienced officials to those developing their skills through the Green Shirt Program.

The appreciation round forms part of a busy and successful opening to the season for the association, which has also seen strong volunteer involvement and increased local business support.

This year the association has welcomed a strong group of 12 volunteers on the General Committee, 9 junior committee members, as well as the full Executive Committee, an Association Development Officer and Association Umpire Development Officer.

The association also recently hosted its annual Pink Round, which featured raffle prizes and fundraising activities including a "guess the Maltesers jar" competition. Over \$500 was raised and donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. The association would like to thank Jacqui O'Driscoll and Jenny Jones who donated prizes to the raffle and helped make the event another success.



Successful Two Day Event at Northam Equestrian Park

by Angela Herzer

Avon Valley Showjumping and Pony Club recently hosted a highly successful two-day event at Northam Equestrian Park, attracting a strong field of riders and supporters from across Western Australia.

A total of 62 competitors attended, travelling from throughout the Wheatbelt and the metropolitan area, with one committed competitor making the journey all the way from Boulder. The excellent turnout was a wonderful reflection of the continued enthusiasm for equestrian sport in the region.

Competitors were treated to a beautifully prepared cross-country course, expertly designed by Erin Baker and prepared by Marc Fraser. The presentation and preparation of the course were made possible thanks to the generous support of major sponsors Yarramony Grazing, Coldpoint Refrigeration and Marley's Transport, whose funding contributed significantly to the success of the event. A special thank you must go to the Shire of Northam, whose team assisted with mowing and whipper snipping the cross country course and camping areas to perfection before the event.

The club was also delighted to unveil new

showjumping poles, purchased courtesy of a grant received from Chalice Mining. These will be a valuable asset for future competitions.

Entry costs were kept at an affordable level for riders thanks to a further grant from Bendigo Bank, which covered the essential first aid services for the weekend, ensuring a safe and accessible event for all competitors.

Local riders and Avon Valley Showjumping and Pony Club members Tayah Joy, Emily Carpenter and Tahlia Burke proudly represented the club, with all three placing in their respective classes. A special congratulations goes to Tayah Joy, who secured a win in the 65cm class.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all class sponsors, whose support enabled the club to provide beautiful prizes and rosettes to place getters. These sponsors included Lucy's Tearooms, SLR Agriculture, Burke Cleaning Services, Wheatbelt Caravan Services, O'Driscoll Produce, Horseland Midland, Luana Park Equestrian Services, Neptune Water Suppliers and Westate Embroidery.

The club would also like to extend a special thank you to Floats WA, Bunnings and Coles for their generous donation of vouchers, which were used as raffle prizes



Photo: Local riders Tayah Joy and Emily Carpenter receiving their prizes from Lucy's Tearooms sponsor Jess Joy

and were greatly appreciated.

Avon Valley Showjumping and Pony Club sincerely thanks all sponsors, volunteers, officials, riders and families who contributed to making the event such a positive and memorable event.

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Northam Golf News

The ladies commenced their season on the 5th of March with a 9 hole stableford competition. Congratulations to the winner Linda Neale and Runner up Wendy Richards. On Saturday the 25th of March, following a short ANZAC service, an 18 hole Stableford event was held with Dot Glass, Michael Spadacinni and Kristy McEvoy winning the ANZAC Memorial Shield, on a count back from Gus and Nate Forbes. Thank you to Northam's RSL President Mrs Denette Bernard who attended presentations to present the trophies and Angus who played the bag pipes during our service. A huge congratulations to Dave Jezierski (Jezza) for his hole in one on the day, making it his second hole in one at the club. Nate O'Driscoll and Xavier Sibley continue to shine in the Saturday competition. Well done boys!

The club is now hosting 'Hit and Sip' on Sundays. Come and have a hit on the golf course. It is open to all abilities and skill levels and commences at 2.30pm, with the bar opening at 4pm. Families and children (they must be accompanied by an adult) are welcome. Members and children are free and non-members are \$5. Come and have some fun on the course followed by a social drink in the clubhouse.



Photo: ANZAC service prior to the event



Photo: Anzac Memorial Shield Winners- Michael Spadacinni, Dot Glass, Kristy McEvoy, RSL President



Photo: Winner Xavier Sibley and Runner up Nate O'Driscoll in the Avon Service Specialist Stableford Day



Photo: Dave Jezierski - Hole in one

Over 35's Social AFL Training

Social football training is proving a hit for locals looking to stay active, meet new people and enjoy some light-hearted exercise in a relaxed environment.

Held every Thursday evening from 6pm, the sessions are open to everyone, regardless of age, fitness level or football experience. Organisers say the aim is simple — to get people off the couch, moving and having fun while improving their health and wellbeing.

The training sessions include light running, short kicking drills and handball practice, with participants completing no more than five laps over the hour.



The evening also provides an opportunity for social connection and fellowship after training.

Organisers say the program is designed to be welcoming and enjoyable, encouraging people to stay active without the pressure of competitive sport. "It sure beats sitting on the couch," they said.

Northam Linedancers

More than 50 dancers from across the Wheatbelt and beyond gathered in Northam earlier this month for the Annual International Flash Mob Linedance event, joining thousands of participants worldwide in celebrating the global dance phenomenon.

Held on May 2, the event formed part of the worldwide International Flash Mob Linedance celebration, which continues to grow in popularity each year.

Participants travelled from Narrogin, Parkerville, Bolgart, York and Toodyay to take part in the lively community event, which was hosted at the Northam Lions Markets.

Three featured dances — Everybody Dance, Heel Toe Rodeo and Hoedown — were performed during the flash mob, with routines selected from leading choreographers from around the world.

The atmosphere at the markets was filled with music, colour and energy as dancers entertained visitors and shoppers throughout the day.

Following the markets, participants gathered at the



Riverside Hotel for lunch and an afternoon of social dancing, continuing the celebrations well into the day.

Organisers said the event was another successful showcase of community spirit and friendship, with many visitors praising the warm hospitality shown by the Northam community.

Many dancers have already expressed interest in returning next year as the international event continues to attract growing numbers of participants worldwide.



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

Nate O'Driscoll Northam Golf Club

Nate is a very courteous young golfer who is always striving to improve his game and always willing to help out the club when asked.



HON STEVE MARTIN MLC
MEMBER FOR AGRICULTURAL REGION



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Railways Football Club Season Update

by Cameron Watson

It's been an exciting start to the season for the Northam Railways Football and Netball Club, with our League, Reserves, and Fast Tarts Netball teams all delivering strong performances and having contributors across the board.

Our League side is flying, currently sitting on top of the ladder with six consecutive wins. Each game has been a fierce contest, but the fitness and endurance of our group has allowed us to run over opposition sides late. Toby Verney has been our standout performer, featuring in our best players in every game so far. Tarkyn Narrier and Ashton Cox have been dangerous up forward, kicking a majority of our goals, with Cox currently leading the association with 17 majors. Captain Bailey O'Driscoll has continued his Morris Medal form from last season, winning plenty of the ball across half-back and leading from the front.

Our Reserves side has also had a strong start to the season, sitting in the top half of the ladder with four wins and two losses. We began the year in outstanding form, winning our first four games by an average margin of 80 points, before narrow losses to York and Federals in recent weeks. The squad has been a great mix of experience and youth, with over six juniors making their debut in the first half of the season. Josh Miller has been a standout across half-back, while Jasiah Lyndon and Dale Fernandez have featured among the best players each week. Up forward, Glen Podmore and Jermaine "Mainy" Davis have led the way with 14 and 13 goals respectively. The Resses are playing exciting football and are pushing to qualify for finals for the first time since 2022.

Our Fast Tarts Netball team has continued to build on recent seasons, showing great improvement and strong continuity across the court. The girls currently sit mid-table with two wins and four losses. The defensive end has been strong each week, led by Lily Parker and Felicity Oliver, who are regularly among the team's best. Kass Emery and Amber Gorbis have been consistent contributors in the shooting circle. The Tarts are working hard toward a finals berth for the first time since 2018.

First Derby Recap

On Saturday 9th May, we played our first local derby of the season, with Railways retaining the Harris Hicks Shield. Bailey O'Driscoll was awarded the Hunter Medal for best on ground in a standout performance.

This season, both Federals and Railways have come together to introduce best-on-ground medallions, awarded by the umpires.



Photo: Bailey O'Driscoll - Hunter Medalist with Ross Hunter



Photo: Kass Emery - Leeder/Simmons Medalist with Katie Leeder

The Reserves medal is named the Robinson/Taylor Medal. The Robinson family has been a key pillar of the Federals Football Club for decades, while the late Jamie Taylor was a valued member of the Railways Football Club throughout the 1990s and 2000s—coaching the Reserves for many years and playing over 150 games. The inaugural Robinson/Taylor Medal was awarded to Federals' Tevin Nickels.

The Netball medal is named the Leeder/Simmons Medal. Adele Simmons has been a pivotal figure in Northam netball and was instrumental in the introduction of netball within football clubs over 20 years ago. Carol and her daughter Katie Leeder have been long-standing contributors to the Railways Fast Tarts. Katie is a five-time O'Driscoll Medallist and multiple premiership player, while Mrs Leeder has been the number one supporter of the Tarts since their inception—serving as scorer, supporter, sponsor, and longtime canteen volunteer. Carol's service to the club was recognised last year when she became the 25th life member. The inaugural Leeder/Simmons Medal was awarded to Kass Emery.

Christmas in July Quiz Night

Friday 3rd July – Quiz Night @ Northam Hospitality Room

Get into the spirit with our "Christmas in July" themed quiz night. Start organising your tables now for what promises to be the biggest and best quiz night in Northam.

Tickets are \$10 per person, with plenty of prizes to be won throughout the night, including a major prize of \$500. Please BYO food, with drinks available at the bar. To secure your table, contact Kylie Gorbis on 0418 138 616.

Arctic Blast from the Past

Join us for our Arctic Blast from the Past, on Past Players and Life Members Day as we take on Kellerberrin Tammin on Saturday 6th June. The day will celebrate the history of the club, including the Fast Tarts Netball team's 20-year reunion.

We are also proud to be raising funds for FightMND, headlined by two-time Essendon premiership captain and AFL Hall of Famer Terry Daniher, who will take the plunge down our slide. Terry will be joined by other special guests, who will be announced closer to the date.

Terry will be accompanied by former Australian Test cricketer Rodney Hogg, who played 38 Tests and took 123 wickets. Both will feature in a Sportsman's Night from 7:00pm at the Northam Hospitality Room at the Rec Centre. Tickets are \$30 via TryBooking, or \$15 for RFC members. Members can contact Kylie Gorbis to secure tickets. All tickets include dinner, with drinks available for purchase at the bar.

The Arctic Blast from the Past

SATURDAY, 6TH JUNE
@HENRY STREET OVAL
AND NORTHAM HOSPITALITY ROOM

PAST PLAYERS & LIFE MEMBERS DAY:
12PM TO 10.30PM

THE ARCTIC SLIDE FOR MND - 3PM
WITH TERRY DANIHER AND SPECIAL GUESTS SLIDING

SPORTSMAN'S NIGHT - 7PM
WITH TERRY DANIHER AND RODNEY HOGG
\$30 TICKETS AND \$15 RFC MEMBERS WITH DINNER PROVIDED

GATES OPEN - 10AM
NETBALL - 12PM
RESERVES - 12PM
LEAGUE - 2PM

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TERRY DANIHER
ESSENDON AND AFL LEGEND

RODNEY HOGG
Australian Test cricketer

Sportsman Night
Tickets

A FIGHT MND EVENT
RFC Members to contact Kylie Gorbis for tickets to the Sportsman's Night Event 0418 138 616



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Thurs 5.40pm - 6.30pm
Wheatbelt Health Network
25 Holfreter St

Avon Valley Shotokan Returns from Japan with Medals and Pride

Term two of the karate year begins and the students representing Avon Valley Shotokan have returned triumphant from the 2026 USKU Championships in Japan, ready to share what they learned with the whole club.

Our students brought home one silver medal, one bronze medal and a bronze trophy for the adult team kata event, along with knowledge and improved skills, new friendships and unforgettable experiences.

After many seminars and training sessions with world class teachers, it was time to put what they had learned into practice at the USKU karate tournament.

Sensei Kylie showed students how it was done, winning a silver medal in her kata event before joining Sensei Camden and Sensei Ashton in a team kata event.

Their beautiful team katas earned our senseis a place on the podium and a shiny bronze trophy to display in the dojo.

Later in the sparring (kumite) events Maciej fought through to a bronze medal (and a lovely split eyebrow for his efforts) and then competed as part of the team composed of students from around the world for a fun 'Japan vs the World' event.

A huge shout out to Eli and Helena who both won their first rounds in kata with three flags which is an awesome

achievement in itself.

Congratulations everyone for all of your efforts in the tournament, seminars and also in your commitment to training in the lead up to the trip.

The feedback on the trip has been extremely positive.

Every single event of the trip, from the tournament to homestay, seminars, cultural experiences and sightseeing has come up in conversation as a favourite experience and this reflects the amount of time and effort that Sensei Kylie gave to make this trip a huge success.

Thank you to Sensei Kylie and to Shihan for all you give to support and guide our students, we are so thankful.

In other news, many volunteers sacrificed their Sunday sleep ins for a long day and late evening frying up onions and sausages at The Northam Motorsport Festival on the 26th of April.

It was an exhausting (but very fun) day, and we will update members on the final fundraising results soon.

A huge thank you to the Toodyay IGA, who donated the rolls and sausages, we are extremely grateful for your support.

Earlier in the month, the committee meeting proved to be a creative success with some exciting new ideas in the pipeline for our club.

For those attending the Toodyay Farmers Markets, keep an eye out for our stall as there are some interesting changes to look forward (no hints here, you will have to come see for yourselves).

Lastly, there are a more congratulations in order.

Sensei Kylie participated in a gruelling grading session while in Japan and earned her 3rd dan black belt which is an enormous and well-deserved achievement.

Rayna has been selected for the 2026 State Team to travel to Hobart in July for the National Karate Championships and she has been hard at work training in Perth.

And while many students were away in Japan, Liam was hard at work training with Sensei Lincoln, where he practiced and succeeded in breaking boards barehanded.

Well done to you all, the whole club is proud of what you have achieved.

Until next month, train hard and keep upholding the *dojo kun* (values) of karate.

If you are keen to learn more about Shotokan Karate, please contact AVS on avonvalleyshotokan@gmail.com or drop your shoes at the door and come and visit us at the dojo in Toodyay or at Hombu in Clackline.

Everyone is welcome and we hope to see you there soon.



Photo: The team in Japan



Photo: Sensei Kylie, Sensei Ashton and Sensei Camden smashing the team kata event



Photo: Three fabulous sensei and their bronze trophy for the dojo



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Riders, grit and hoofbeats through the Wheatbelt

Endurance riding comes to York



by Naomi Sherrington

Long before sunrise, while most of York was still asleep, horse floats rolled into town, campfires flickered awake and riders quietly prepared for one of the toughest – yet most welcoming – sports in the country.

At the recent Wheatbelt Endurance Riders Inc. (WERI) York Ride, competitors from across Western Australia gathered to test themselves, and their horses, over distances ranging from introductory social rides through to the gruelling 80km endurance event.

But endurance riding is about far more than simply racing.

It is a sport built on horsemanship, partnership, patience and welfare – where the condition of the horse matters more than the clock.

Unlike traditional racing disciplines, endurance riding requires horses to regularly pass veterinary inspections throughout the event and again upon completion. Riders whose horses show signs of fatigue, dehydration or distress are immediately removed from competition – although it is often the riders themselves who first notice a problem and voluntarily withdraw in the interests of their horse's welfare.

In other words, you cannot simply push harder and hope for the best. The horse always comes first.

That philosophy was on full display throughout the York ride, where competitors navigated scenic Wheatbelt terrain

while carefully managing pace, hydration and recovery.

A sport for ordinary people

To outsiders, the idea of riding 80 kilometres can sound intimidating. But endurance riders are quick to point out that the sport is surprisingly accessible.

Many riders begin with introductory distances of around 12–20km before gradually building confidence and conditioning in both horse and rider.

There is no requirement to own an elite horse worth tens of thousands of dollars.

I was fortunate enough to spend time at one of the checkpoints servicing riders competing across the 20km to 80km distances. It provided a rare opportunity to speak with competitors as they tended to their horses, checked hydration and prepared for the next leg of the ride.

While Arabian horses – long regarded as the benchmark endurance breed because of their stamina and recovery ability – were well represented, there were also a surprising number of Standardbreds competing successfully. Riders explained the breed is particularly suited to endurance riding due to its toughness, calm temperament and soundness.

Another unexpected sight were the Gypsy Cobs. Pony-sized yet built like miniature draught horses, the striking breed drew plenty of attention around the grounds. Riders said they are exceptionally capable over longer social rides,

able to travel for miles at a steady walk or trot.

Endurance riding also spans generations, with junior riders competing alongside seasoned veterans and entire families often involved in rides and support crews.

WERI flying the flag for the Wheatbelt

WERI has become a major force in promoting endurance riding throughout the Wheatbelt.

The ride network developed organically over time through a small but dedicated core group of riders and organisers determined to keep the sport alive in regional Western Australia.

Today, many of those original founders – along with local volunteers – still run individual rides.

This year's calendar includes Merredin, York and Bakers Hill/Peel, while previous years also featured rides at Greenhills and Talbot.

Historically, the network has hosted FEI qualifier rides and major 160km endurance events. But organisers say the sport faces increasing logistical pressures.

Trail access, approvals, volunteer numbers and checkpoint staffing have all become more difficult, while entry fees alone rarely cover operational costs. Clubs instead rely heavily on grants, sponsorship and volunteers donating enormous amounts of unpaid labour.

Despite those challenges, the sport continues through passion and community spirit.

Results and achievements

The York ride featured distances ranging from the 12km social ride through to the full 80km endurance event.

Sixteen competitors tackled the 80km distance, with ten completing the ride. Around 50 others competed across the 60km, 40km, 20km and 12km events.

Congratulations to Mick Leach on Jabeila Leif, who won the Heavyweight 80km in 6:57:04; Jeanette Denham on Murungah Leto, who won the Middleweight 80km in 7:54:01; and Helen Davey on Cruiser, who recorded a time of 6:41:00.

An invitation to try

One of the strongest messages from participants is that endurance riding is not reserved for elite equestrians.

People curious about the sport are encouraged to attend rides, speak to competitors and try introductory distances.

It is ordinary people, ordinary horses and extraordinary determination.

WORLD MENU HEIST

Available for a limited time at participating restaurants after 10:30am. Packaging for display purposes only.