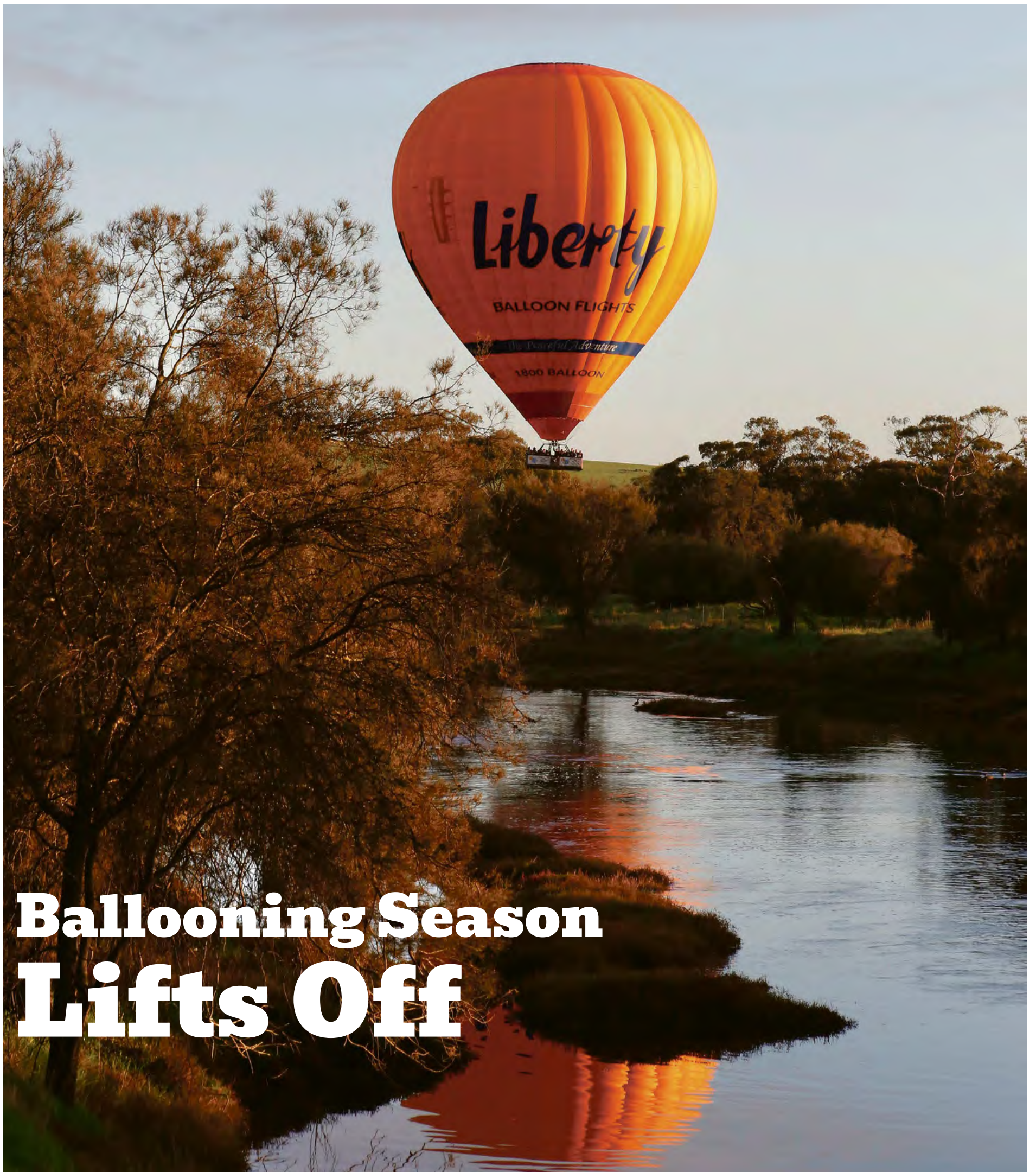




Ballooning Season Lifts Off

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Editorial

With Mother's Day approaching, many of us take a moment to think about the women who have shaped us – not only through what they taught us, but through how they lived. Strength, compassion, resilience, and an ability to keep going even when life asked too much.

I have been incredibly fortunate in that regard. I grew up guided not only by my own wonderful mother, but by two grandmothers of the same spirit – strong, steady, and deeply kind women whose influence continues to shape me, even after their passing. That kind of legacy does not fade. It informs how you endeavour to move through the world.

It's a reminder, too, that influence is not always loud. Often, it is quiet, consistent, and enduring.

That same idea – of quiet influence and lived experience – sits at the heart of a small but important step forward for The Northam Advertiser. This edition introduces a new feature: Regional Lens.

Its purpose is simple – to bring into focus how major issues are experienced across the Wheatbelt, and to ensure the realities of life in our region are seen, understood, and part of the wider conversation.

Whether it is fuel security, telecommunications, cost pressures, or broader policy decisions, these issues do not land evenly across the country. Their impact here is often different – and often greater.

Some stories move too quickly for a monthly print cycle. Recent fuel supply concerns are a clear example – where developments can unfold in days, not weeks. The same is true of policy changes, such as those affecting mobile coverage, which have real and immediate implications for regional communities.

An increased online presence through our Facebook page will allow us to cover these fast-moving issues in real time, while also creating more opportunities for community engagement – hopefully leading to even more community stories.

Importantly, this is not a shift away from print – far from it. Our print edition remains the heart of what we do: a place for considered reporting, local stories, and deeper reflection. The online platform simply allows us to complement that – to respond quickly where needed, and to ensure our community stays informed between editions.

You may also notice a new voice in this edition. We are pleased to welcome Ross Louthean, who has contributed a piece on the Gonville Project. Ross brings extensive experience in resources journalism and will contribute from time to time on mining and development issues relevant to our region.

Finally, this paper has always been, at its core, a community publication. So if you have a story, a perspective, or an issue you believe deserves attention, I encourage you to get in touch. The strength of a regional paper lies in the voices it represents – and there is always room for more of them.

You can contact me directly at editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au.

Our Cover



Our cover this month features a hot air balloon from Liberty Balloons over the Avon River. This month brings with it the start of hot air balloons in sky of the Avon Valley.

This image was captured by Thor Wrigglesworth who is crew/private pilot for Liberty Balloons. A big thank you to Liberty Balloons and Thor for allowing us to print this image.



**Missed out on seeing your business in this issue?
Book in time for the next issue and be seen by locals!**



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For advertising contact:

jodie@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au

For editorial contact:

editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au
before 15 May.

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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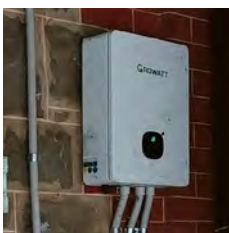
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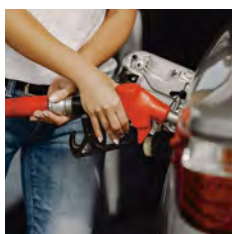
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Northam businesses recognised on regional stage at Business Excellence Awards



Photo: left to right: Sabrina Cook, Jo Hill and Rylee Chiffings - Zax & Co, Sarah Hurrell and Shahe Toutikian - Roam Distillery, Hannah Norrish - The Wheatbelt Celebrant, Theresa Lee NCC CEO. Image taken by Charismatic Photography

by Naomi Sherrington

Three standout Northam businesses took centre stage on 18 April as finalists in the WA Regional Business Excellence Awards, celebrating innovation, resilience and community impact across regional Western Australia.

Roam Distillery, The Wheatbelt Celebrant and Zax & Co each earned recognition from the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry WA (RCCIWA), placing Northam firmly on the map as a hub of entrepreneurial energy and local pride. While the top honours went elsewhere, all three finalists showcased the strength of Northam's business community.

Each of Northam's finalists represents a different facet

of regional enterprise: a farm-based distillery redefining sustainable production; a deeply personal, community-focused celebrancy service; and a vibrant retail and hospitality space bringing people together. At the heart of all three businesses is a common thread: connection.

Roam Distillery has transformed a multi-generational family farm into a destination that blends craftsmanship, sustainability and hospitality.

The Wheatbelt Celebrant has redefined ceremonies in the region, offering deeply personal experiences grounded in empathy and storytelling.

Zax & Co has created a space where coffee, retail and community meet - a place designed as much for

connection as for commerce.

These are not just businesses. They are community anchors, and a reflection of a broader story - that regional businesses are not just surviving, but leading.

In a regional town like Northam, small business plays a critical role, not just economically, but socially. These are the places people gather, celebrate, grieve and reflect, connect and build relationships. And increasingly, they are also places of innovation.

Being named a finalist in the awards is no small feat, with businesses assessed on innovation, sustainability, community contribution and long-term vision. To reflect this sense of pride, the Northam Advertiser will be profiling each of the finalists in this edition's Our Great Northam feature, sharing the stories behind the businesses and the people who built them.

Because behind every successful regional business is something more than strategy - there is risk, resilience, and a deep belief in community. And now that belief has been recognised on a state stage.

Roam Distillery: Crafting spirit from land, legacy and sustainability

Set on a 50-acre family farm in Morangup, Roam Distillery is more than a business - it is a continuation of four generations of land stewardship, with sustainability at its core.

Founded by Sarah Hurrell and Shahe Toutikian, Roam Distillery brings together certified organic and biodynamic farming with small-batch spirit production, creating a truly paddock-to-glass experience.

The distillery was born from a desire to breathe new life into a working family farm, transforming its produce into something expressive and enduring.

After travelling to Tasmania, Scotland and Ireland to learn from master distillers, the founders returned home with a clear vision: to create spirits that reflect the unique character of Western Australia.





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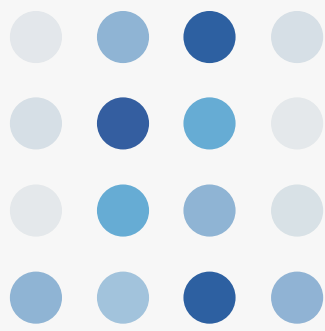
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Today, that vision includes gin, vodka, limoncello and small-batch whisky - all shaped by the seasons and the land itself.

Roam operates as a closed-loop system, where vineyards, orchards, animals and crops work together in a regenerative cycle.

Solar power, reclaimed building materials and sustainable farming practices underpin every aspect of the business, reflecting a commitment not just to production, but to legacy.

Beyond distilling, Roam has become a destination.

Its cellar door and café invite visitors to experience the connection between land and product - through seasonal cocktails, local produce and a shared appreciation for craftsmanship.

For the founders, the goal has always been simple: to create something authentic, meaningful and deeply rooted in place.

The Wheatbelt Celebrant: Telling life's most important stories

For Hannah Norrish, being a celebrant is all about people - and it shows.

As the sole force behind The Wheatbelt Celebrant, Hannah has built a reputation across the region for ceremonies that are deeply personal, authentic and grounded in connection.



Photo: Hannah Norrish with husband Ziggy at the awards

The business began with a clear purpose: to bring a fresh, modern approach to weddings in the Wheatbelt.

Hannah saw the need for ceremonies that felt real - not formulaic - and leaned into her strengths: empathy, storytelling and a natural ability to connect with people.

Then in 2022, after she experienced the devastating loss of her younger brother, Hannah reshaped her services to include funerals. Enduring such deeply personal grief allowed Hannah to add a more profound layer of compassion and perspective to her work.

The same skills used to celebrate romantic bonds became tools to support families through grief - a transition that now defines the heart of her service.

Operating as a one-woman business, Hannah has built The Wheatbelt Celebrant into a trusted name across the region.

Her approach is simple but powerful: listen deeply, tell the story well, and create moments that feel genuine. Because at the centre of every ceremony - whether joyful or shaped by loss - is connection.

Zax & Co: A space where community comes together

When Jo Hill opened Zax & Co in April 2023, she wasn't just launching a café - she was creating a place to meet, to browse, to connect. And Northam responded.

Zax & Co combines hospitality and retail in a way that is unique to the town, offering fresh, homemade food



Photo: Zax & Co Finalist award. Image taken by Charismatic Photography



Photo: Lachlan Hunter MP at the awards with some of the finalists

alongside a boutique selection of gifts and homewares. Customers can enjoy a coffee while exploring locally inspired products, creating an experience that blends social connection with small business support.

The name itself is deeply personal, drawn from Jo's children, whose support helped bring the business to life. That same sense of family extends to the space itself, designed to feel warm, welcoming and inclusive.

Zax & Co was created to fill a gap - a community hub where locals could gather and proudly bring visitors, showcasing local artisans and small businesses... all over excellent coffee.

At its core, Zax & Co is about simple things done well: great coffee, fresh food, and genuine hospitality. But its impact runs deeper - offering a space where people come together, and where community is built one conversation at a time.



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Music Through the Ages Delights Northam Audiences



Northam's Link Theatre was filled with the sounds of six decades of popular music last weekend, with the Northam Theatre Group's latest production, *The Decade Revue*. This musical production had toes tapping in what proved to be a hugely entertaining celebration of music through the ages.

Directed by Brittney Davidson, lead singer of local indie band 'Sorry Molly', the show featured a talented ensemble of local musicians performing beloved favourites spanning the 1950s through to the 2000s, with the audience singing along enthusiastically throughout 3 performances across Friday and Saturday.

Gerard Sermon kept the energy high as MC while the carefully curated setlist took audiences on a joyful nostalgic journey, and the response from the crowd made clear just how deeply the music resonated.

Much of the praise following the weekend centred on the remarkable depth of musical talent right here in the Wheatbelt. Among the performers were members of established local acts including Sorry Molly, Maple Row Duo, and The Paddock Surfers, while Purple Gas Music appeared together on stage. Brittney brought together a fantastic lineup, with both familiar and fresh faces on the Link Theatre stage.

From the opening notes of *You Don't Own Me*, the night was packed with memorable moments and a little something for everyone. Deanna Robillard charmed

early with a rendition of *Will you Still Love Me Tomorrow* with her ukulele. Les Smith brought a quiet authenticity to *You've Got to Hide Your Love Away* and Brittney Davidson and Chris Sharples offered up a tender version of *Feels Like Home*.

In contrast to these softer moments, Rebecca Lennox sparked in sequins with *These Boots are Made for Walking* (while Ashley Wheeler walked a mean double bass). Purple Gas Music delighted audiences not only with their harmonies but with fun costume changes. Damian Wensing kept things together on the drums and cajon. Rhys Byfield had the crowd roaring with an irresistible performance of *Don't Cha* - easily one of the most talked-about moments of the set. It was the talented Kitt Byfield who brought the show to a close, leading cast and audience alike through a spine-tingling performance of *The Scientist* - a moment that perfectly captured the joy and community spirit of the night.

The production was supported by a dedicated volunteer tech crew including Ashley Wheeler, Paul Marwood, Travis Schelfhout and Grant Arthur.

The *Decade Revue* was another proud moment for the Northam Theatre Group and a reminder of the vibrant musical talent that calls the Wheatbelt home.

See northamtheatregroup.org.au for news on upcoming productions including comedic play 'Last Tango in Little Grimley' coming to the Link Theatre in June.

Students Tour Fair Maiden Printing



On Friday, March 27, a group of students from the 2026 St Joseph's School Year 9 Career Taster Program (CTP) visited Fair Maiden Printing, the printing company responsible for producing *The Northam Advertiser* newspaper.

The excursion provided students with a valuable behind-the-scenes look at the production of a community newspaper, from initial design and pre-press preparation through to printing, finishing, and final distribution. Staff at Fair Maiden Printing guided the students through each stage of the process, explaining the history of printing, modern production techniques, and the wide range of job roles involved in bringing a newspaper to life.

Students observed the transformation of digital pages into printed product as the presses rolled, gaining insight into how content is assembled, printed, folded, and bundled into delivery batches ready for distribution across the region. The visit highlighted the teamwork and precision required in the print industry, as well as the technology that supports fast and high-quality production.

This excursion was made possible through funding from the 2026 Year 9 Career Taster Program (CTP) - Funding for Students with Disability (SWD), provided by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The program aims to support students to become "career curious" by engaging them in real-world learning experiences and helping them make informed decisions about future subject selections aligned with potential career pathways.

Teachers involved in the excursion noted the value of hands-on learning opportunities like this, which allow students to see industries in action and better understand the skills required in different workplaces.

The visit to Fair Maiden Printing was an eye-opening experience for students, reinforcing the importance of community partnerships in education and career development.

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Rise, Radiate and Revel: A Fashion Soiree by Rotary Club of Northam 2026

There is something quietly powerful about a community coming together—not just to celebrate, but to change lives. On the evening of 1 May at 6pm, the Northam Country Club will transform into a space of colour, creativity, and compassion as the Rotary Club of Northam presents Rise, Radiate and Revel: A Fashion Soirée. More than a showcase of style, this event carries a deeper purpose: to rise for a cause, radiate in style, and revel in magic, all while supporting a life-changing mission.

For the past two years, the Rotary Club of Northam has been sponsoring ten students in the Philippines, spanning Year 1 through to Year 10. These are not just numbers - they are young lives filled with potential. Thanks to access to free education, these students have begun to flourish. Some have earned honours awards, others have excelled in sports, and all have gained something even more valuable: confidence, dignity, and

hope for a brighter future. Education has opened doors that once seemed firmly closed, and with continued support, those doors can lead even further.

This upcoming fashion soiree is both a celebration and a call to action. By attending, community members are not only enjoying an elegant and uplifting evening—they are directly contributing to the continuation of these scholarships. For those unable to attend, tax deductible donations can also be made through the Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS), copy and paste this link, donations.rawcs.com.au/Default.aspx?ProjectID=2810 ensuring everyone has a chance to be part of this meaningful impact. Whether you take a seat at the runway or lend your support from afar, your involvement helps ensure that these young students can keep learning, growing, and dreaming. Northam has always been a community

that cares—this is another chance to show just how powerful that care can be, by joining the event at the Northam Country Club on May 1st.





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1

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Northam Country Club

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PROJECT NUMBER: 7-2025-26

SPONSOR CLUB:
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(DISTRICT 9423)

DESCRIPTION:
The OzPhil Advancement Education Project is a collaborative initiative between the Rotary Club of Northam and OzPhil College of Cavite in Philippines. The program is dedicated to supporting underprivileged children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The program focuses on enabling educational advancement that prepares students for entry into university or vocational training, in line with long-term personal and community development goals in improving their social and economic prospects.

Tax Deductibility

Rotary Australia Overseas Aid Fund (Managed by RAWCS) has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) registration and has been listed as a Charitable Fund so we can accept tax deductible donations.

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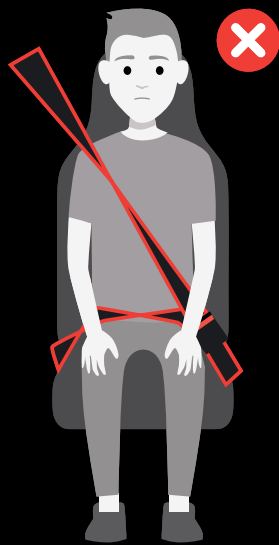
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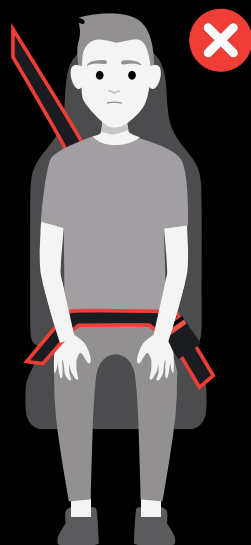


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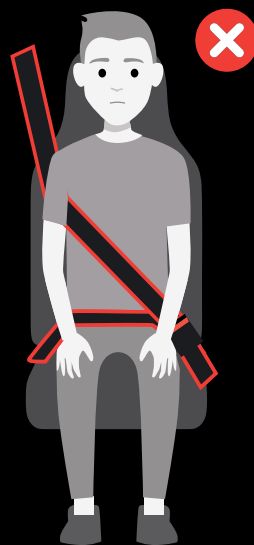
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Northam Town Team May Update

Northam's much-loved comedy night is making a highly anticipated return in 2026, after last year's event sold out in just four days.

This year's event, titled "Fast & Hilarious 2: Volunteer Drift", will once again celebrate the vital contribution volunteers make to the Northam community. Organisers have confirmed new funding success, with thanks to VolunteeringWA and Lotterywest for supporting the initiative.

The comedy night is a collaboration between AVAS, Northam Town Team, Northam Theatre Group and Northam Regional Gym, continuing a strong partnership that has successfully delivered community events in recent years.

The 2026 event will take place on Saturday, 23 May, with two performances scheduled at 6pm and 8pm to meet expected demand. Building on the overwhelming response in 2025, organisers are encouraging residents to plan ahead to avoid missing out.

Designed as both a celebration and a thank you, the event will bring together volunteers from a wide range of local organisations for an evening of connection and entertainment.

To ensure fair access, an early ticket release will be offered to those on the Northam Town Team mailing list. Community members are encouraged to register their interest by emailing northamtownteam@gmail.com to receive notification when tickets become available.

With strong demand already anticipated, Fast & Hilarious 2: Volunteer Drift is expected to once again be one of Northam's standout community events.



Obituary: John Charles Wood

by Mike Whittington

On the office desk in my home in Northam is a framed certificate announcing an outstanding achievement. It does not belong to me. Rather, it belongs to a small band of locals, inspired and guided by a leader who recently passed away. Leaderless, the band of brothers (and sisters) has now disbanded.

In the ten years of their existence, they gathered without fail every Saturday to socialise over a few drinks and food, a bit of pool and the usual tall stories. Some of each day's cash turnover was put aside for their favoured charity: the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

That framed certificate is from PCFA; the total contribution shown is \$45,556.00. In ten years.

This story started in May, 2016 when well-known Northam identity John Charles Wood ("Woodsie") suggested to some mates a more productive use for the dusty pool table in his backyard shed. What has come to be known as the Croke Avenue Retreat grew from there. They did raffles and functions; Christmas in July... Christmas at Christmas. A small contribution from each drink consumed went into the kitty. Woodsie kept track of the cashflow, making regular visits to the bank to ensure donations were forwarded to PCFA. Over the years, PCFA executives were guests at Croke Avenue functions; Croke office-bearers were invited to Government House for PCFA's official events. In March this year, it all came to a sudden end: Woodsie died in Northam Hospital on March 1, aged 88 years.

He was born at Subiaco on 3 February 1938. His family moved to Northam, and he worked in the district and across the State all his life. Woodsie is remembered as a leading member of the Northam Workers' Club, serving from the age of 21 and playing a primary role in the Club's resurrection earlier this century.

He was a member of premiership football teams when he played for Unions, and then for Railways. In later years he was responsible for memorable reunion functions with former colleagues, held under his patronage at the Workers' Club, where he also organised similar events for his former workmates from his years at the Department of Main Roads.



Picture: John Wood (centre) at one of his many functions at Northam Workers' Club

John was educated at the original West Northam Primary School in Duke Street, and Northam High School, before joining his father on W.A. Government Railways where he worked in traffic. He became a driver for Caltex in the 1950s, delivering fuel and oil in drums to farmers across the Wheatbelt, where he was well known on all the major properties and smaller farms.

His driving experience led him into transport operations as an owner-driver, including long-haul produce and commodity delivery to and from the eastern states, and eventually carting cattle and fertilizer for remote pastoralists in the northwest of WA. He returned to Main Roads briefly before secondment to a career at Northam's high-rise hospital, working as an orderly.

John married Yvonne Keep, a telephonist at the Northam exchange, and they had two daughters, Noelene and Sharon, who attended Northam schools before marrying and leaving Northam. John's second marriage was to local nurse Rosalyn Budd. They moved to a house in Duke Street where they remained for 46 years, raising two children, Karen and Graham.

John will be remembered as a sociable local identity with a wide circle of friends, always keen to add newcomers to his list. In recent years he played a leading part in organising the financial rescue of Northam Workers' Club and its restoration as a popular local venue.

And then there was his inspirational 'baby'... Croke Avenue Retreat – originally named a "gentlemen's retreat but modified under certain irresistible pressure!

John is survived by first wife, Yvonne and two adult children; second wife Rosalyn and two adult children; eleven grandchildren, and eight grandchildren.

monthly meets

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Street Name Origins

AGETT WAY

Agett Way is a small street running off Parker Street in the West Northam area.

Early Avon Valley settler Du Bois Agett is recognised locally through Agett Way in Northam.

Agett arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830 and was among those who moved inland as settlement extended beyond the coast. He spent time in the Avon district during the early 1830s, particularly around York, which at the time served as the main inland centre for the region.

During this period, Agett was involved in exploration and early land occupation along the Avon River. This activity formed part of the broader effort to establish farming and open up the district that would later include Northam. Like many early settlers, he faced difficulties in establishing a successful agricultural enterprise.

Agett did not remain a prominent landholder in the district and later moved into government employment. Despite this, his presence during the early years of inland settlement places him among those who contributed to the initial European development of the Avon Valley.

The naming of Agett Way provides a straightforward link to that period. While limited detailed records exist about his direct involvement in Northam, his association with the early exploration and settlement of the Avon region is recognised through the retention of his name in the local area.

You're invited to join Share & Care to taste test nutritious meals from SecondBite



Share & Care Community Services Group has extended an open invitation to our community to drop in and taste test some nutritious meals that will now be available to people in need in our community thanks to a partnership with SecondBite.

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SecondBite ensure surplus food is rescued and distributed to charities like Share & Care, making sure good food never goes to waste while people go hungry.

SecondBite (and FareShare) is a national food relief charity operating for more than 20 years and they are now providing food relief for our communities through these three aspects:

Rescuing food to feed Aussies in need. SecondBite rescues nutritious, surplus food from farmers, retailers and manufacturers. This includes fruit, vegetables, pantry items, protein and dairy.

Distributing food for free. SecondBite provides this rescued food free of charge to Share & Care and other charity partners and not-for-profits across the country.

Cooking and preparing nutritious meals. At FareShare's state-of-the-art kitchens in Melbourne and Brisbane, they transform rescued food into healthy, delicious meals. These meals are distributed to Share & Care and other charities, soup vans, homeless shelters and more.

"Share & Care was pleased to receive our first delivery of nutritious frozen meals in April," Share & Care CEO Sarah Mensheli said. "We look forward to sharing them with members of our communities who need our support."

If you work in a community service agency or role, or you're just interested in a taste test of these delicious meals, please drop in to Share & Care (88 Wellington Street in Northam) on:

Thursday, 14 May from 12:00pm-12:30pm.

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CinefestOZ Goes 'On The Road' With Free Films And Filmmaking Workshops 2026

Communities across regional Western Australia will soon gain greater access to Australian films and filmmaking experiences through CinefestOZ On the Road, a first-of-its-kind initiative in WA launching today.

On the Road will deliver free film screenings and creative education opportunities, helping bridge the gap in regional access to screen culture and engagement with the creative industries.

CinefestOZ CEO Cassandra Jordan said the program reflects the organisation's commitment to inclusivity and regional engagement.

"We believe that living in regional WA shouldn't mean having less access to new Australian stories, cinematic experiences or screen education," Ms Jordan said.

"On the Road is about connecting communities, inspiring creativity and ensuring regional audiences can share the magic of Australian film."

The program will deliver high-quality free screenings of Australian feature films and award-winning short films in locations without traditional cinema facilities. The following day, local schools will take part in Cinesnaps,

the successful education program that CinefestOZ has run for 13 years designed to spark creativity and inspire the next generation of storytellers.

The inaugural On the Road 2026 program features a vibrant and family-friendly line-up, including new musical comedy *The Deb*, from actress and director Rebel Wilson; family favourite *Kangaroo*; toe-tapping documentary *Live It Up*, celebrating the iconic 1980s band *Mental As Anything*; plus a curated selection of Australia's best short films including six shot in WA.

On The Road will visit six regional centres across May and June in 2026, and with 4000 people expected to participate in the program in its first year, plans are already underway to engage additional regional communities in the future.

CinefestOZ On the Road will be in Northam on Wednesday June 3rd. Free tickets for the film sessions and more info via: cinefestoz.com/on-the-road/.

Schools interested in the student film workshops can contact CinefestOZ's education team via emailing community@cinefestoz.com.



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Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre Launches Road Safety Education Project Across Regional WA

A major road safety education initiative is set to roll out across the Wheatbelt this May and June, aiming to improve understanding of Western Australia's road laws and promote safer driving and road use among local communities.

The Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre, based in Northam, will deliver the Wheatbelt Road Safety Project through a series of free community sessions designed to support young people, schools, Aboriginal communities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, and farming families across the region.

Funded by the Road Safety Commission, the initiative responds to ongoing concerns about road safety in regional Western Australia, where long travel distances, rural road conditions, and limited access to services can increase risks for road users.

The program will provide practical, accessible legal education on a range of key topics relevant to everyday driving and road use. These include Western Australian mobile phone laws, seatbelt and child restraint requirements, speeding penalties and demerit points, pedestrian safety, and specific requirements for P-plate drivers.

The sessions will also cover more complex areas such as international driver's licence rules, suspended licences, and the Work and Development Permit (WDP) scheme, which provides vulnerable individuals with an alternative pathway to manage fines through approved activities. General traffic offences and their consequences will also be discussed, ensuring participants have a clearer understanding of their legal responsibilities on the road.

Organisers say the sessions are designed not only to inform, but also to engage community members in open discussion about real-life driving challenges faced in the Wheatbelt.

A spokesperson for the Wheatbelt Community Legal

Centre said the project aims to break down barriers to legal knowledge, particularly in rural and remote areas.

"Many people in regional communities don't have easy access to up-to-date legal information about road rules, penalties, or their rights and responsibilities," the spokesperson said. "This project is about making that information clear, practical, and accessible so people can make safer choices on the road."

The sessions are free to attend and will be delivered in partnership with local shires and community resource centres across the Wheatbelt.

A series of six confirmed sessions will take place across May and June 2026, with each session running from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

The schedule includes:

- **Shire of Pingelly – Pingelly Recreation and Cultural Centre, 12 May 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**
- **Shire of Wagin – Wagin Community Resource Centre, 14 May 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**
- **Shire of Wandering – Wandering Community Resource Centre, 19 May 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**
- **Shire of Nungarin – Nungarin Community Resource Centre, 20 May 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**
- **Shire of West Arthur – West Arthur Community Resource Centre, 21 May 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**
- **Shire of Wongan Hills – Wongan Hills Resource Centre, 4 June 2026, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

Each session will be tailored to the needs of local participants, with presenters encouraging questions and discussion to ensure the information is relevant and easy to understand. Community members will also be able to raise specific concerns about licensing issues, fines, or road safety challenges in their area.

Road safety remains a significant issue across regional Western Australia, where vehicle use is essential for work, education, and accessing services. Authorities continue to stress the importance of education and awareness in reducing crashes and improving outcomes for drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

The Wheatbelt Road Safety Project also places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, recognising that different community groups may face additional barriers in accessing legal information. In particular, sessions aim to support Aboriginal communities and CaLD communities by providing clear explanations and culturally appropriate engagement.

Young drivers and learners are also a key focus, with topics such as P-plate restrictions, mobile phone use while driving, and speeding penalties expected to be of particular relevance.

Organisers hope the project will not only increase knowledge of road rules, but also encourage long-term behaviour change that leads to safer roads across the Wheatbelt.

By delivering the sessions locally, the Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre aims to ensure that even small and remote towns have access to the same level of legal education and road safety awareness as metropolitan areas.

With strong community partnerships and targeted education, the Wheatbelt Road Safety Project is set to play an important role in reducing risk and improving safety outcomes for road users across the region.

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Wheatbelt Futures Forum Launches New Jobs Expo to Strengthen Local Workforce

The Wheatbelt Futures Forum returns on Friday 1 May 2026 with a renewed focus on one of the region's most pressing priorities: building and sustaining a strong local workforce. This year, organisers are proud to introduce a new "Jobs Expo" component within the Exhibitor Space – an initiative designed to create direct, meaningful connections between employers, workforce agencies, and local jobseekers.

The Expo will bring together a wide range of the Wheatbelt's key workforce agencies for a dedicated morning of engagement with employers and industry stakeholders. This early session will provide an important opportunity for businesses to discuss their workforce needs, skills shortages, and future opportunities with agencies that specialise in recruitment, training, and employment support.

From 2:00pm to 4:00pm, the focus in this exhibitor space will shift to jobseekers, who are strongly encouraged to attend and take advantage of this unique opportunity. Attendees will be able to meet directly with organisations including Training Alliance Group, Apprenticeship Support Australia, atWork Australia, Skill Hire WA, and SMYL, alongside a host of other sponsor exhibitors. These agencies offer a broad spectrum of services – from apprenticeships and traineeships to employment placement and career guidance – making the Expo a one-stop destination for those looking to start, change, or advance their careers.

The introduction of the Jobs Expo component of the Forum's Exhibitor Space comes at a critical time for the Wheatbelt. Like many regional areas across Australia, the region is experiencing the impacts of a housing

shortage, which has made it increasingly important to grow and retain a local workforce. Encouraging young people who already live in the Wheatbelt to pursue rewarding career pathways close to home is a key part of addressing this challenge.

By connecting local jobseekers with employers and support services in one place, the Expo aims to highlight the breadth of opportunities available within the region. From agriculture and transport to health, construction, and community services, the Wheatbelt continues to offer diverse and fulfilling career paths that allow individuals to build their futures without needing to leave their communities.

The Wheatbelt Futures Forum itself is recognised as a cornerstone event for the region. Each year, it brings together thought leaders, regional business owners, industry stakeholders, and government representatives to explore the challenges and opportunities shaping the Wheatbelt over the coming year and beyond. Topics being explored this year are economic development, infrastructure, construction and housing, renewable energy, and health – but underpinning all of these discussions is the critical importance of a skilled and sustainable workforce.

This year's addition of the Jobs Expo reinforces that message. A strong workforce is not just one topic among many; it is a foundational element that influences every aspect of regional growth and resilience. Without the right people in the right roles, businesses struggle to expand, services become harder to deliver, and communities face increasing pressure.

For jobseekers, the Expo offers more than just

information – it provides real, tangible pathways. Attendees can have face-to-face conversations with experts who understand the local job market, gain insights into industries experiencing growth, and learn about training and support options tailored to their needs. Whether someone is entering the workforce for the first time, considering a career change, or looking to upskill, there will be valuable guidance available.

For employers and industry stakeholders, the morning session presents an equally important opportunity. By engaging directly with workforce agencies, businesses can help shape the support and training programs needed to meet their current and future staffing requirements. This collaborative approach ensures that solutions are grounded in the realities of the local economy.

Ultimately, the Jobs Expo is about strengthening connections – between people, businesses, and opportunities. It reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that the Wheatbelt remains not only a great place to live, but also a place where individuals can build meaningful and sustainable careers.

Community members, particularly jobseekers, are encouraged to attend the Forum in the afternoon session and make the most of this new initiative. With a wide range of organisations ready to assist, it is an opportunity not to be missed.

For more information about the Wheatbelt Futures Forum and the Jobs Expo, visit wheatbeltfuturesforum.com.au or contact Theresa at the Northam Chamber of Commerce on 0427 472 729.



Wheatbelt Futures Forum



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Silent discos hit local aged care homes



by Esther Bliss

“Juniper The Residency” and Bethavon is not the latest music festival however the local aged care home of the same name did host a musical experience recently — Juniper The Residency bringing music, memories and movement to its residents via a Silent Disco run by the Northam Town Team (NTT).

From the moment the first notes came through the headsets, it was clear the event was going to be a hit with a Neil Diamond classic sparking a singalong immediately. Residents tapped their feet, they sang, they were sharing smiles, ‘touching hands, reaching out’.

NTT Chief Shenanigator Esther Bliss, as DJ Bliss for the day curated a playlist that resonated with residents and staff resulting in participation from everyone; each listening via their own headset but connecting through the power of music.

DJ Bliss said “Our primary focus was bringing the Silent Disco to those who might experience fewer opportunities to connect and participate in mainstream community events. The headsets bring music to those more vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. They have

provided such positive experiences for everyone involved today, we can’t wait to come back.”

The silent disco equipment was purchased by the Northam Town Team through funding from the Shire of Northam. The group has also brought the benefits of music and movement to the wider community at various community events and entertained groups via the Bridgeley Youth Group and PCYC.

Juniper The Residency and Bethavon are home to over 70 residents and supported by a dedicated team of over 100 employees. The homes already offer a wide range of activities including bingo, visiting entertainers, arts and crafts, and gardening - but the silent disco added a fresh and engaging dimension.

For residents at Juniper, it was a simple reminder of the enduring power of music bringing people together - ‘Good times never seemed so good.’



Photo: Juniper residents enjoying the silent disco



Photo: Juniper residents and staff enjoying the silent disco



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Where Am I? - April: Flying 50 Cnr Grey & Chidlow Sts



This well-known image captures the excitement of a 1950s Northam "Flying 50" street race, though the exact year remains uncertain. The scene shows an FJ Holden swinging left from Chidlow Street into Grey Street, driven by local identity and motor dealer Aubrey Badger of Badgers Motors, once located on Fitzgerald Street - now the site of InBalance Physiotherapy.

The photograph became something of a local icon, proudly displayed in shops across town and, most notably, in the Badgers Motors showroom. Today, it lives on in a different form, reproduced as a full-scale mural on the Avon Service Specialists building in Wellington Street.

As with many tales from that era, a few colourful stories have followed. One suggests Badger routinely kept two bags of cement in the boot to improve balance through the corners. Another recounts an attempt by the Jaguar Car Club to have him barred from competition, claiming he lacked proper control of the vehicle. Badger's reported response? "Of course I was in control - I still had one wheel on the ground."

A snapshot not just of a race, but of a spirited time in Northam's motoring history.

Bernard Park Comes Alive for Northam Youth Festival

Bernard Park was buzzing with energy and excitement as young people from across the region gathered to celebrate the 2026 Northam Youth Festival, a highlight of this year's Youth Week WA festivities.

Held in the heart of Northam, the festival transformed the popular community space into a vibrant hub of activity, drawing families, friends and visitors for a day dedicated to fun, creativity and connection. The event showcased the spirit and talent of local youth, offering something for everyone to enjoy.

From the moment the festival kicked off at 10am, Bernard Park was filled with the sounds of live music from local performers, giving young artists the chance to take to the stage and share their talents with the community.

A wide range of activities kept festivalgoers engaged throughout the day including a bucking bull and face painting. Interactive art stations encouraged creativity, while amusement rides and games added an element of excitement for younger attendees.

The team from Northam PCYC kept festivalgoers well-fed with a free sausage sizzle, adding to the welcoming and community-focused atmosphere of the day.

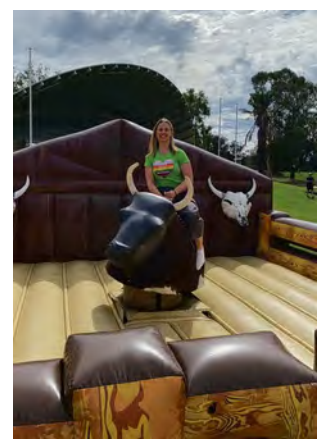


Workshops and hands-on activities were also a key feature of the festival, giving young people the opportunity to learn new skills, express themselves and connect with others who share similar interests. Community organisations including Headspace Northam were on hand to provide information and support services, reinforcing the festival's role in not only entertaining, but also empowering local youth.

Event organisers, Headspace Northam, praised the strong turnout and positive atmosphere, noting that the festival continues to grow each year. The success of the event reflects the importance of providing inclusive, accessible opportunities for young people in regional communities.

The Northam Youth Festival is part of Youth Week WA, an annual celebration that recognises the contributions of young people aged 10 to 25. While the festival is a day of fun, it also carries a deeper purpose—encouraging young people to feel valued, heard and connected within their community.

For many attendees, the event was more than just a day out. It was a chance to build friendships, gain confidence and celebrate what it means to be a young person in Northam.



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Avon Community Services Seeks Specialist Leader to Strengthen Youth Support Across the Wheatbelt

Avon Youth Community and Family Services Inc. is a Wheatbelt-based charity that has been supporting local communities for almost 40 years. Known for many years as Avon Youth, the organisation rebranded to Avon Community Services to better reflect the scope of its across youth, family and community support.

While the organisation has evolved over time, its core has remained consistent: supporting young people to stay connected, safe, and engaged in their communities.

Today, Avon Community Services operates youth centres in Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin. These centres provide a mix of drop-in spaces, structured programs and mentoring opportunities for young people across the region. In Northam, the organisation also runs a supported accommodation service for young people aged 15–25 experiencing or at risk of homelessness, along with a school bus service aimed at supporting young people who are at risk of disengaging from education.

For many, this work is deeply rewarding. It offers the chance to build strong relationships with young people and see real change in their lives. But it is also complex and, at times, confronting.

The Wheatbelt continues to experience high levels of disadvantage. Many young people present with multiple and overlapping challenges, including homelessness, significant mental health concerns, alcohol and other drug use, and experiences of self-harm and suicide. These are not isolated issues — they are often interconnected and require skilled, consistent and trauma-informed responses.

What makes this work even more challenging is the context in which it occurs. The Wheatbelt covers a vast geographic area, and services are often limited or difficult to access. For young people, this can mean long wait times, travel barriers, or simply going without the support they need. For organisations, it means operating in a service system that is stretched and, at times, fragmented.

Layered over this is a workforce challenge that continues to affect the entire community services sector in regional areas: attracting and retaining skilled, qualified staff.

“Our staff are what make our organisation,” said Dayane Mardesich, CEO of Avon Community Services. “Their ability to engage young people, build trust and respond to complex needs is critical to the positive outcomes we’re working towards.”

“During my time as CEO, the workforce challenges have felt persistent and, at times, systemic. It’s not just about filling positions — it’s about finding people with the right skills, values and commitment to work in a child-safe, trauma-informed and culturally responsive way.”

In response, Avon Community Services has taken a proactive approach to workforce development. This has included becoming a visa-sponsoring organisation to attract skilled workers from overseas, creating traineeship pathways for local young people to enter the sector, and partnering with TAFE and universities to host student placements.

The organisation also supports staff to gain formal qualifications in youth work and community services, recognising that growing the local workforce is essential for long-term sustainability.

A key part of this strategy has been the creation of a senior Practice Lead role. This position is designed to strengthen practice across the organisation by providing coaching, guidance and leadership to frontline youth workers.

“The Practice Lead role is pivotal,” Ms Mardesich said. “It’s about ensuring our team is well-supported to do this complex work safely and effectively, and that we are continuously improving the way we respond to young people.”

Despite its importance, the organisation has found it difficult to recruit the right person for the role — someone with both the technical expertise and the ability to lead, mentor and inspire others in a regional context.

“We know that person is out there,” she said. “We’re looking for someone who is passionate about developing others, who understands trauma-informed practice, and who wants to make a genuine difference in regional communities.”

The role offers a unique opportunity to shape practice across multiple sites and programs, while contributing to a service that is deeply embedded in the Wheatbelt community.

For those with experience in youth work, social work or related fields — particularly those seeking meaningful work outside metropolitan areas — it presents a chance to be part of a committed and values-driven organisation tackling some of the region’s most pressing challenges.

To view the position description and apply for the Practice Lead role, visit [Ethical Jobs](https://ethicaljobs.org.au) or contact ceo@avoncs.org.au for more information.



Lead change for Wheatbelt Young

At Avon Community Services, we offer:

- A dedicated, supportive, values driven team
- Ongoing learning and development
- The chance to make a real difference in your local community

Practice Lead - Youth Services

Northam | Full time | Above Award | Leadership Role

We’re seeking an experienced youth or community services leader to guide youth workers in their practice with disadvantaged young people across the Wheatbelt.

In this role, you will:

- Support and provide supervision to youth workers on the ground
- Strengthen trauma informed and culturally safe practice
- Help shape and deliver youth services across Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin

You’ll bring:

- A tertiary qualification (Social Work, Youth Work, Psychology or similar)
- Experience leading teams and supporting complex needs
- A strong commitment to child safe and community led practice

Residential Youth Worker

Northam | Part time (day & evening/night shifts) | Above Award | Real Impact

Join our team supporting young people aged 15–25 experiencing homelessness to feel safe, build life skills and take steps toward independence.

In this role, you will:

- Support young people to develop life skills, confidence, and pathways toward independence.
- Provide trauma informed and culturally safe practice in a residential setting
- Assist young people to reach their goals.

You’ll bring:

- Experience supporting young people with compassion and respect
- A strengths based, trauma informed approach
- Relevant youth or community services qualification
- Ability to work independently, including overnight shifts

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply for all roles.

Find out more on [SEEK](https://seek.com.au) or contact: ceo@avoncs.org.au

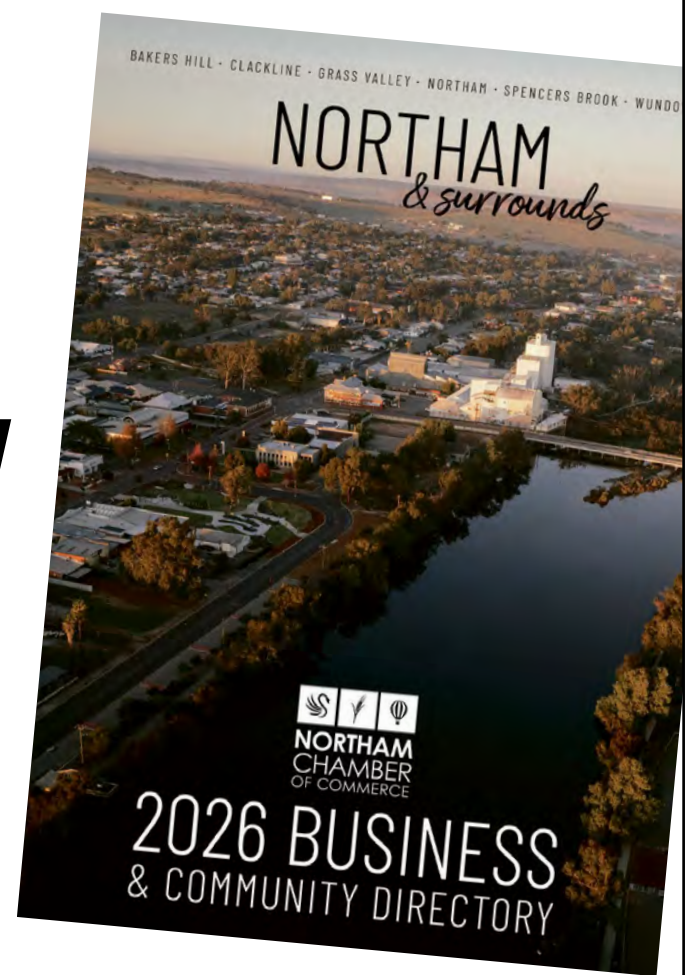


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From Country Pub to Creative Haven: A New Chapter for Greenhills

by Naomi Sherrington

A familiar Wheatbelt landmark has entered a new chapter – not by leaving its past behind, but by building on it in a new and thoughtful way.

The former Greenhills Inn, a heritage-listed building just outside York, has been transformed into the Greenhills Art Centre – a working artist residency, retreat and workshop space that is already drawing visitors from across Western Australia and beyond.

For generations, the building served as a social hub shaped by the rhythms of rural life. Today, it continues that tradition of bringing people together, but with a different focus – creativity, learning and connection.

At the heart of the transformation is a simple but ambitious idea: to create a place where people can step away from the pace of everyday life and immerse themselves in art.

The Greenhills Art Centre offers a combination of on-site accommodation, studio space and structured workshops, allowing participants to live and work in one place. A large, light-filled studio anchors the property, complemented by shared living areas and a program of visiting tutors across a wide range of artistic disciplines.

Workshops span everything from still life and portraiture to printmaking, watercolour and contemporary techniques, with artists travelling from interstate and overseas to teach. Alongside these sessions, residency programs give participants the time and space to focus on their own work in a quiet, rural setting.

For co-owner Johanna Larkin, the vision extends beyond simply creating an exhibition space.

“This isn’t just somewhere to hang paintings,” she said. “It’s about giving people the time, space and environment to really immerse themselves – to create, to learn, and to connect with others.”

That sense of immersion is central to the experience. Guests stay on site, share meals in the beautiful dining room, and work alongside one another, creating a collaborative and supportive atmosphere. It is, in many ways, a modern reinterpretation of what the building has always been – a place where people come together.

The impact of the project is already being felt beyond the property itself.

By attracting visitors from outside the region, the centre is helping bring new energy into the local economy. Guests explore York and surrounding towns, visit galleries and shops, and dine at local venues – extending the benefits of the project across the wider Wheatbelt community.

It also fills a gap in the region’s arts landscape.

While there are creative pockets throughout the Wheatbelt, dedicated spaces where artists can stay, learn and develop their practice are rare. The Greenhills Art Centre is positioning itself as a hub for that kind of experience – one that blends regional character with a broader creative network.

Importantly, the transformation has been carried out with a strong respect for the building itself.

Rather than altering its identity, the project has embraced its history and character, allowing past and present to sit alongside one another. Original features remain part of the experience, offering continuity while supporting a new purpose.



Photo: Greenhills Arts Centre co-owner Johanna Larkin

In a region where heritage buildings can be vulnerable to decline, this kind of adaptive reuse carries particular significance.

What stands at Greenhills today is more than an art space. It is an example of how regional assets can be reimaged in ways that are both sustainable and forward-looking.

For visitors, it offers something unique: the chance to create in a place shaped by history, surrounded by the quiet beauty of the Wheatbelt.

And for the community, it represents a new kind of gathering place – one that continues a long tradition, just in a different form.

New advisers to help advance Gonneville mine

by Ross Louthean

Two leading Australian mining identities who have run some of the world’s largest mining companies will now play important backroom roles to help support the development of a major mining project near Toodyay.

Strategic adviser roles have been given by Chalice Mining to Mark Cutifani, who until recently was chief executive of one of the globe’s biggest miners Anglo American, and that company’s former technical director Tony O’Neill.

Both began their mining careers in Australia, with Cutifani earlier running then leading Canadian-based nickel miner Inco. This writer first met Cutifani when he was overseeing Western Mining Corporation’s change to open cut mining on Kalgoorlie’s network of underground gold mines. He later took over as head of nickel mining operations at Kambalda.

Both appointees are linked to Odin Partnership Ltd, a global advisory group founded by Cutifani, who more

recently ran base metals company Vale for two years after running Anglo American for eight years. They are now also on the board of Australia’s gas giant Woodside Energy.

Prior to those appointments, Mark Cutifani managed the big South African-based gold miner AngloGold Ashanti.

The stockmarket undoubtedly welcomes these appointments, as investors have been closely monitoring the progress of this project following Chalice’s platinum group metals and nickel-copper-cobalt discovery in the farming area of Gonneville between Toodyay and Muchea.

The principal challenge has been the need to progress through detailed regulatory, environmental and technical assessment processes required for a project of this scale.

Chalice has a pre-feasibility study with a model for two-stage open pit development and process plant to become a large-scale producer of palladium, nickel and copper over 23 years, with valuable by-product recovery

of platinum, gold and cobalt.

Annualised production is projected at 220,000 ounces of three-element metals (palladium, platinum and gold), along with 7,000 tonnes of nickel, 8,000 tonnes of copper and 700 tonnes of cobalt.

Chalice Mining’s pre-feasibility study (PFS) predicts the Gonneville project will be one of the lowest cost platinum group metals mines in the Western world and the lowest cost of any undeveloped project, with an average of \$US370/oz 3E all-in sustaining costs over the first 23 years of open pit mining.

In 2024, the WA Government and Commonwealth Government awarded both Strategic Project and Major Project status to Gonneville, recognising its importance to Australia’s critical minerals sector.

Chalice said Gonneville should employ 1,200 at its peak construction phase and that it has been “significantly de-risked” through the investment of \$250 million since discovery and that it should be ready for a final investment decision in the first half of calendar 2028.

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Battery Breakthrough - Perhaps!

by Peter Weatherly of the Avon Valley Environmental Society Inc.

In this whole 'rush to renewables', governments have either under-played or ignored the on-ground reality for both home solar batteries and electric vehicles – namely that they are very expensive, heavy, use rare minerals that can only be extracted at huge environmental cost, have low energy intensity, take a long time to fully charge and most important of all perhaps, they don't last very long. They have to be replaced in a relatively short time and it's going to cost an arm and a leg.

In the case of electric vehicles, only very few of them run on renewables. They get their power from the grid. The grid gets most of its power from fossil fuels. Sort of defeats the purpose.

It is possible to run on solar but you need your own solar system in order to do it and that only works in sunshine. Output drops off dramatically on cloudy days, completely at night and lessens in winter.

This problem has been brought home dramatically by the Iran war and the closure of the Straits of Hormuz through which flows 20% of the world's oil. It has bought us back to reality and forced us to acknowledge that relying on renewables is a joke – and an expensive one at that.

Experience over the centuries has demonstrated that new sources of power – read renewables – do not replace the old sources, they simply supplement them. The world uses just as much wood, oil, coal and gas as it ever has (in fact it is growing). People are hungry for power. Nuclear power stations are re-opening and many more are planned.

Enter left stage – a small Finnish technology company claims to have perfected a new battery type. It can be



Photo: My home 15kWh solar battery system

fully charged within minutes and for practically infinite cycles. (Note – it generally is the number of cycles that determines the life of a battery, not the age). It is engineered for a life span of up to 50 years – about the same as a coal fired power station.

In practical terms, this means that an electric car battery would last for millions of kilometres and home batteries for five decades. No more planned obsolescence.

It is also claimed to be cheaper to manufacture and be made from readily available materials that are abundant, affordable and geopolitically safe. It is further claimed that the technology is safe and will not ever burst into flames.

Take a step further and consider the possibility of using the electric car battery to run your home. Most home battery systems have a capacity of up to 15 kWh and will not run your home nor can you draw down on them in a hurry. A car battery is more like 80kWh. This is made possible by V2G (vehicle to grid) bi-directional technology that is available today. I'll be looking into this further as I would just love to be independent of the government-owned grid.

The technology is amazing and if true represents a watershed in renewables.

Let's keep our fingers crossed. Perhaps I invested in my lithium home batteries too early – or maybe not. Please excuse my cynicism but there may still a long way to go.

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Laura Mendez Santander
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Isabel Coutinho
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What Counts as Coverage?

New Rules Could Change the Map for Regional WA

by Naomi Sherrington

A significant change is underway in how mobile coverage is defined across Australia - and it's already drawing pushback from major telecommunications providers, including Telstra. More importantly, it could have real implications for regional communities like those in the Wheatbelt.

The change centres on new national standards being finalised by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), which will require telecommunications providers to more accurately represent where mobile coverage actually exists.

At its core, the change is about what should - and should not - be counted as coverage; put simply, the change is about honesty.

Under the proposed rules, areas where signal is too weak to reliably make a call or use data may no longer be classified as having coverage at all. While this does not mean that networks are being removed or reduced, it does mean that the official maps many Australians rely on could look very different.

Concerns surrounding weak and "patchy" coverage were raised by The Northam Advertiser during recent discussions with Federal MPs Trish Cook and Patrick Gorman, where the importance of reliable mobile

coverage in regional areas was emphasised.

For Wheatbelt communities, this is not a theoretical concern. Farming work is often carried out in isolated conditions, with heavy machinery, long distances, and limited immediate support. In those environments, the ability to contact emergency services at any time is not simply convenient - it is essential.

While government programs such as the Mobile Black Spot Program have invested heavily in improving regional coverage, gaps remain. Many areas that appear "covered" on paper are, in reality, unreliable - particularly at the fringes of service.

The proposed ACMA changes bring that issue into focus. They have also prompted debate within the telecommunications sector about how strict those definitions should be - and how much of regional Australia may ultimately be reclassified.

If implemented in their current form, the changes could see large areas of Australia reclassified as having no reliable coverage, simply because the signal is not strong enough to be depended on. In doing so, they may expose the true extent of coverage gaps - and increase pressure on both telecommunications providers and government to address them.

These changes are still being finalised, with

telecommunications providers and regulators continuing to debate how strict the new definitions should be. The final outcome will determine how much of regional Australia is officially recognised as being without reliable service.

For communities like those in the Wheatbelt, the issue is clear. Reliable mobile coverage is not a luxury - it is a fundamental part of safety, productivity, and everyday life.

And for many, it remains unreliable when it matters most.

Have your say

The Northam Advertiser is seeking to better understand where mobile coverage is falling short across the Wheatbelt.

If you experience black spots on your property, along local roads, or in town — or if you've had a near miss or incident made worse by a lack of coverage — we want to hear from you.

Your experiences will help inform ongoing conversations with government and ensure local realities are properly represented.

Contact Naomi Sherrington at editor@thenorthamadvertiser.com.au.

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When the Fuel Runs Thin, the Economic Impacts are Felt by Everyone

by Naomi Sherrington

In Western Australia's Wheatbelt, diesel is not simply a cost input. It underpins every stage of agricultural production – from seeding to harvest and transport. When access becomes uncertain, the effects extend well beyond individual farms and into the broader economy.

Agriculture in Western Australia is highly export-oriented. Grain production alone contributes more than \$7 billion annually to the state economy, with around 80 per cent of output typically shipped overseas. Wheat, canola and barley are not produced primarily for domestic consumption, but for global markets.

That structure is efficient in stable conditions, but leaves little margin for disruption.

Seeding windows are narrow, and delays of even a few days can affect yield and crop quality. The economic effects of those delays are not immediate. They emerge months later in reduced harvest volumes and diminished throughput across storage, freight and export systems. In that sense, a fuel disruption does not end when supply stabilises; its consequences are deferred.

Early signs of that process are already visible. Demand for agricultural lime has reportedly fallen by 30 to 40 per cent. At the same time, growers are facing higher application costs, with some reporting increases of

around \$10 per hectare. This is not a case of weak demand lowering prices, but the reverse: rising costs are suppressing demand.

That distinction matters because it shows how quickly behaviour adjusts under pressure. Farmers are deferring inputs not because they are unnecessary, but because uncertainty and cost make them harder to justify. Those decisions are rational at the individual level, but collectively signal a contraction that begins well before harvest.

Fuel is not the only constraint. Fertilisers, particularly nitrogen-based products, depend on globally traded energy inputs, including gas, that move through the same supply chains as fuel. Disruptions to those flows therefore affect both diesel and the inputs required to produce and deliver fertiliser. At a critical point in the growing season, uncertainty around availability and cost places additional pressure on growers. Reduced or delayed application does not simply alter input decisions; it directly affects yield and crop quality. The risk therefore extends beyond operational disruption to the productive capacity of the season itself.

The effects do not remain within agriculture. Each tonne of grain supports a chain of activity – storage, transport, processing, maintenance and regional employment. When production is reduced, that entire system feels it. Lower volumes translate into less freight, fewer working

hours and reduced income across regional economies. Beyond that, higher fuel and transport costs feed into broader price pressures, extending into manufacturing, construction and consumer goods.

Australia's surplus production does not insulate it from these dynamics. While most grain consumed domestically is locally grown, pricing and availability are shaped by global markets. When production tightens, the effects flow through to domestic supply and cost.

Recent disruption in fuel shipments has reinforced this point. Even a relatively small interruption, at a time when agricultural demand is highly time-sensitive, can expose how dependent the system is on continuity of supply.

What follows is not a question of short-term crisis management, but of resilience. Ensuring reliable fuel access for agricultural regions during critical periods is not simply support for a single sector. It is a means of protecting export income, regional employment and supply chains that underpin the wider economy.

Two points follow from this. First, disruptions in global energy markets do not remain confined to their point of origin. Second, the impacts now being felt in the Wheatbelt will not remain there. They will move outward — through production and supply chains, into markets, and ultimately into the cost of living borne by all Australians.



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Winner: Tracey Mitchell

Who am I? – Pete Byfield
Winner: Luke Brennan

SUDOKU

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

MOTHER'S DAY

WORD SEARCH

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

WORD LIST

BALLOON

BEAUTIFUL

CAKE

CANDY

CARING

COMFORT

DEVOTED

FAMILY

FLOWERS

GIFT

HAPPY

HOLIDAY

HONOR

HUG

KIDS

LOVING

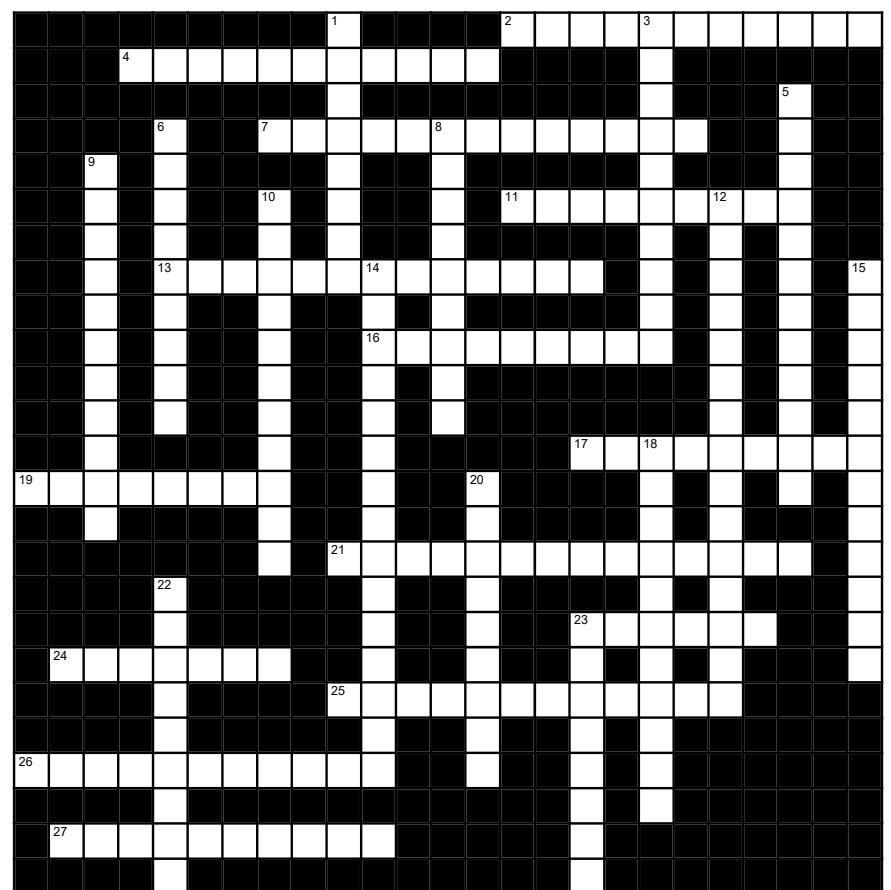
MOTHER

MUFFINS

PARENT

SMART

CROSSWORD



Across

- Seurat's technique of painting with tiny dots of colour (11)
- Difficulty identifying and describing one's own emotions (11)
- Water loss through plant pores (13)
- Word that is its own opposite, like "sanction" (9)
- Art movement prioritising emotional experience over physical reality (13)
- Rule by a small, privileged elite (9)
- Collection of dried, pressed plant specimens (9)
- Theoretical tunnel through spacetime (8)
- Ethical doctrine seeking the greatest good for the greatest number (14)
- Picture assembled from small pieces of coloured tile or glass (6)
- Prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall (7)
- Government dominated by the elderly (12)
- Collector or student of coins and medals (11)
- Philosophical view that knowledge derives from sensory experience (10)

Down

- Rhetorical reversal, as in "live to eat, not eat to live" (8)
- Study of the physical features of a landscape (10)
- Formation of words that imitate the sounds they describe (12)
- Linguistic term coined for a single occasion (5,4)
- Traditional Christmas theatrical show with audience participation (9)
- Lowest layer of Earth's atmosphere (11)
- Word blending two others, like "brunch" (11)
- Brain's ability to reorganise itself by forming new connections (15)
- Cognitive bias of overestimating how much others notice you (9,6)
- Organism thriving in harsh environmental conditions (12)
- European cultural rebirth of the 14th to 17th centuries (11)
- Continuous slide between musical notes (9)
- Problem-solving approach using practical, trial-and-error methods (9)
- Scientific study of fungi (8)



Mother's Day Boggled Puzzle

Boggled puzzles are very easy to play. You need to find as many 3 or more letter words as you can. You form words by starting anywhere on the grid and moving to adjoining letters. You can move horizontally, vertically and diagonally in any direction. Write down your words and score as follows:

- 3 letters = 1 point
- 4 letters = 2 points
- 5 letters = 3 points

- 6 letters = 4 points
- 7 letters = 5 points
- 8 or more letters = 6 points

Any Mum related words get double points! Why not Challenge your friends?



O	T	H	R
M	P	E	V
S	I	C	O
T	A	L	K

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Saturday 23 May

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Tickets \$30











Some performances contain coarse language, adult themes and may offend.
Not suitable for children under 18yrs.

Mother’s Day Celebration at Northam Railway Football Club

The Northam Railway Football Club is inviting the community to come together and celebrate Mum in style this Mother’s Day, with a special afternoon event designed to bring families together for good food, entertainment and plenty of laughter.

A spokesperson for the club said the event reflects the strong community values of the Northam Railway Football Club, which continues to play an important role beyond the football field by hosting events that bring people together.

Seats for the celebration are limited, and interest is expected to be strong. Community members are encouraged to secure their booking early to avoid missing out.

The event reinforces the club’s role as a hub for community connection in Northam. With good company, a welcoming atmosphere, and a focus on celebrating mums, the afternoon promises to be a memorable occasion for all who attend.

MOTHER’S DAY

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UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 01

WHEATBELT FUTURES FORUM

The event is industry-focused, with presentations from delegates representing a range of Wheatbelt industries, extended panel discussions and networking. Northam Rec Centre from 8am. Tickets online.

MAY 02

DEATH & DYING FOR BEGINNERS

This workshop series will help you engage with end of life planning in a practical and supported way. 10am-12pm at Northam Library. Book on eventbrite. FREE event.

MAY 03

G3 TABTOUCH NORTHAM STAKES

Experience the pinnacle of regional racing at Tabtouch Stakes Day. Entry is FREE, gates open 11am. Includes Zax & Co Fashions on the Field.

MAY 03

MOONDYNE FESTIVAL

Come join us on Sunday May 3rd from 9-4 for this FREE entry great fun family festival and watch the two trials of the capture of the elusive Moondyne Joe. Stirling Terrace Toodyay.

MAY 07

REGIONAL HERITAGE CONFERENCE

Join us in Northam on 7-8 May 2026 for a two-day conference delving into the Avon region’s rich cultural heritage and diverse history. Free event. Northam Rec Centre from 9am-4pm.

MAY 09

NORTHAM RSL BLACK TIE EVENT

Celebrating the sub branch’s 110th Birthday. Held at Northam Memorial Hall from 6.30pm. Tickets from Northam Florist, \$65pp

MAY 10

MOTHERS DAY MOVIES & MARKETS

Celebrate Mother’s Day with a relaxed evening out at the Bernard Park Soundshell for the Mother’s Day Movie and Markets Community Event hosted by the Shire of Northam. FREE event from 5pm-9pm.

MAY 11

THE SHAKA PROJECT

This event is for anyone who cares about mental wellbeing, and is open to everyone in our community. Uner 18s must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Held at Northam Rec Centre from 6-9pm.

MAY 14

AWARD WINNING APPLICATIONS

The Why and How of Award-Winning Applications will show you how to turn everyday work into standout submissions and make the most of the opportunities awards provide. Free event at Farmers Home Hotel, 5.30pm. Register at humanitix.

MAY 23

FAST & HILARIOUS COMEDY SHOW

Perth’s funniest comedians come to Northam for 2 shows at 6.30pm and 8pm at the Link Theatre. Tickets \$30 each through trybooking.

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Mothers in Business – Hannah Norrish

by Naomi Sherrington

For Hannah Norrish, the path to building her own business began less with a business plan, and more with a shift in perspective.

While on maternity leave, Hannah faced with a decision many working mothers are forced to grapple with: how can I be present for my family, and still pursue meaningful, gratifying work. “I didn’t ever want to be at work wishing I was somewhere else,” she said.

That realisation led to the creation of The Wheatbelt Celebrant – now a well-known name across the region for both weddings and funerals. But the business she built is a far cry from what she initially imagined. “I thought it would be pretty dresses, a few nice words and a glass of champagne,” she laughed. “I was very, very misled.”

What she found instead was a role grounded in core strengths of emotional intelligence, storytelling, and ability to connect with people on a deeply personal level – one that draws on her ability to listen, understand, and translate people’s experiences into something meaningful.

“There was a clear gap in the Wheatbelt for someone who could bring warmth and authenticity to ceremonies,” she said. “Someone who didn’t just show up and do the paperwork, but actually told a story.”

That focus on connection has become the cornerstone of her work. Whether planning a wedding or a funeral, Hannah begins with the same question: how do you want to feel? It’s a question that cuts through the noise of expectation – and one that reflects a broader shift in how she views both life and work.

With four children, Hannah has made a conscious decision to prioritise presence over income, accepting the trade-offs that come with that choice. “We’re lucky



Photo: Hannah with her daughter. Photography by KC

to be a two-income family, but there are still sacrifices,” she said. “The value of being present for my kids is worth far more than another full-time pay.”

Like many mothers running their own business, the reality behind the scenes is far from polished. Work is often done late at night, squeezed in between family responsibilities, sometimes without clear separation between the two. When I spoke with Hannah over the phone, she was feeding her 18 month old son – and the soft little sounds of contentment that came through the phone speaker as he snuggled in for a post-feed snooze were an absolutely delightful back-drop to a chat about motherhood and business.

It’s a balancing act familiar to many women, and one that brings with it both flexibility and pressure – and

like many women, much of the pressure is self-imposed. “Some days I get two solid hours of work done and feel amazing,” she said. “Other days I get three minutes and feel like I’m failing everyone.”

Hannah’s work took on a deeper dimension in 2022, following the devastating loss of her younger brother. What began as a wedding-focused business expanded into funerals, shaped by her own experience of grief and the challenge of finding someone who could do justice to his story. “That changed everything for me,” she said. “Grief gave me a different level of empathy.”

Now, she sees her role in funerals not simply as a service provider, but as something more profound. “As a funeral celebrant, you’re a facilitator of healing – you’re the first step,” she said.

That perspective has also reshaped how she approaches life more broadly. “It’s made me less shallow,” she said. “You see things differently. You realise how lucky you are – to have your family, your health, your time.”

It’s a sentiment that carries through to her approach to parenting. Kindness, inclusion, and curiosity are values she actively models for her children – not just in what she says, but in how she shows up. “It’s not just the words you use,” she said. “It’s how you make people feel.”

In an era where weddings are often driven by aesthetics and social media, Hannah remains grounded in what she sees as the true purpose of ceremony. “If everything goes wrong on the day but you still marry your best friend, it’s a success,” she said.

For Hannah, success – in business and in life – is no longer defined by titles or income, but by something far simpler: connection, presence, and meaning. And in that sense, The Wheatbelt Celebrant is not just a business – it’s a reflection of the life she has chosen to build.

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The Mother Eternal

There was no door, no waiting room,
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or if there was, it could not shine
as brightly as the life in mine

you filled with love, so fierce, so true—
that light was always born of you.

I did not drift, I did not roam,
I only felt I'd come back home—

to hands I'd known but could not see,
now laid, at last, so clear on me.

My darling girl, close up your eyes,
be still beneath the quiet skies—

and feel them there, both mine and more,
as they have held you all before.

I met them all—I knew each face,
my mother's love, her mother's grace,

and hers before, a woven thread,
through all the living and the dead.

And then I knew what must be true:
the love I gave was not just mine—
it flowed through me to pass to you,
a living, endless, ancient line.

So when you ache, and I feel far,
Know we sit here on the edge of time
not lost, not gone, not torn apart,
Still watching over you, daughter of mine

For those missing their mother this Mother's Day.

*Written for my own mum, in the voice I imagine
her mother might use to reach her still.*

*For the newly grieving, and for those who carry it
year after year –*

I hope this brings some comfort.

Naomi Sherrington x



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IN THE garden

By May, autumn has properly settled in. The soil is cooling, rain (hopefully) is becoming more consistent, and gardens across the Avon Valley start to shift from survival mode into steady growth.

If April was about getting started, May is about consolidating and continuing.

May To-Do List:

- Keep planting: this is still prime planting time — especially for natives and cool-season vegetables.
- Reduce watering further: rainfall should begin to do more of the work, but keep an eye on dry spells.
- Top up mulch: maintain a 5–10 cm layer to retain moisture and regulate soil temperature.
- Stay on top of weeding: weeds love autumn conditions — remove them early before they establish.
- Protect young plants: watch for slugs, snails and early frost in colder pockets.
- Check drainage: ensure water isn't pooling around new plants after rain, and take action where necessary — many of our native plants are far more likely to suffer from water sitting around their roots than even the hottest summer.

What's in Bloom?

- Grevilleas (many gorgeous varieties in full swing — the diversity of colour, form and size in this genus continues to astound me!)
- Banksias beginning to show (if you're managing to grow these around Northam or York — please share your wisdom... or your magic! I've yet to succeed on this front.)
- Kangaroo paws continuing.
- Early winter-flowering natives emerging — I'm especially excited about some of my hakeas. My Burrendong Beauty is starting to show signs of life, and I'm hanging out to see her very first blooms!

One important thing I've learned (the hard way) with hakeas is not to overdo it — as the weather cools, ease off the watering, make sure drainage is excellent, and avoid fertilising (especially anything containing phosphorus). If they're happy now, you've done the hard part — they should reward you later in winter. And when they do flower, they're absolutely spectacular... definitely worth the wait.

Ripe for Picking

- Final tomatoes and capsicums
- Pumpkins (if not already harvested)
- Herbs like parsley and chives
- Early leafy greens

What to Plant Now

May is an excellent planting window, so get out there!

Vegetables:

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Spinach
- Silverbeet
- Peas
- Broad beans

Herbs:

- Parsley
- Coriander
- Dill

Natives & ornamentals:

- Grevillea
- Banksia
- Hakea
- Eucalyptus
- Bottlebrush (Callistemon)

Anything planted now has time to establish strong roots before next summer — and that's about the best thing you can do for any plant.

Season Snapshot

May is about consistency. Keep planting, keep mulching, and let the season work its magic — I'm already seeing so much new growth after a bit of April rainfall, and one of my favourite morning rituals is to wander around with a cuppa, checking out all the new baby leaves emerging.

If you've been meaning to plant, don't wait too much longer — this is your window!



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Choosing the Right Native Plants for Your Soil

by Naomi Sherrington

One of the biggest gardening mistakes we make is trying to change our soil to suit the plant. Avoid the heartache and hits to your wallet, and choose the plants that suit the soil you already have.

Soils across Northam and the wider Wheatbelt vary enormously - often within the same property. I have planted natives across about one acre, and I have beautiful drainage in one spot, my purple patch, which is the highest point of the garden I've planted - but not ten metres away, heavy clay has claimed the lives of countless unwitting plants.

It's important to understand the soil you have and resist the urge to change it too drastically. If you only improve the planting hole, roots will eventually grow beyond that area into very different conditions - and that sudden shift can stress the plant and affect its long-term growth.

So, what soil do you have?

You might have:

- Sandy, free-draining soil
- Heavy clay
- Gravelly or lateritic ground
- Pockets of better loam

Each of these supports different plants. It is worth properly considering this question, before deciding which plants to grow, and then matching plants to soil types.

Plants that thrive in sandy soils (which are well-draining but low in nutrients) include:

- Grevillea
- Kangaroo paw

- Eremophila
- Some hakeas

Add mulch and organic matter to sandy soils, but exercise restraint and avoid over-fertilising, especially phosphorous!

Plants that cope well in clay (which holds moisture but can become waterlogged) include:

- Melaleuca
- Some callistemons
- Certain eucalypts, like the western flooded gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*)
- Saltbush

Focus on improving drainage and avoid planting in really waterlogged areas.

Hint: If you're dealing with heavy clay, try mounding up your planting area rather than digging down.

Building up a gentle mound (even 20–30 cm can make a difference) allows water to drain away from the roots, which is critical for many WA natives. Just be careful not to create a "pot" of rich soil sitting in clay — keep the transition gradual, and avoid over-improving the soil by ensuring you are mixing in plenty of the existing soil. Most of our native plants are far more likely to struggle with wet feet than dry ones.

Plants that thrive in gravelly / lateritic soils (which have low nutrients, but excellent drainage) include:

- Banksia
- Hakea
- Dry-climate natives

These soils are often perfect for natives — resist the urge to "improve" them too much.

A Quick Word on Fertiliser

Many WA natives are phosphorus-sensitive, particularly:

- Banksia
- Grevillea
- Hakea

Avoid:

- High-phosphorus fertilisers
- Rich manures
- Overly compost-heavy soils

When in doubt, less is more.

Work With Nature, Not Against It

The most successful gardens in the Wheatbelt aren't the most modified - they're the ones that reflect the natural landscape.

Instead of asking, "How do I fix this soil?" ask "What wants to grow here?"

Don't try to fight Mother Nature - she'll always win. Work with her, and you'll be richly rewarded.

If you match the right plant to the right place, everything becomes easier - less water, less maintenance, and far fewer losses. In a climate like ours, that's not just good gardening - it's smart gardening.

Have fun out there! Winter in the Wheatbelt is a wonderful time, especially in the garden - and honestly, I can't think of a nicer way to spend these cooler days.



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Young Artists Shine at Inaugural YAYA Exhibition

by Lindsay Newland, AVAS

The inaugural YAYA (Young Avon Youth Art) Exhibition has delivered an inspiring celebration of youth creativity across the Avon Valley, with more than 80 entries submitted by young artists from Goomalling, York, Northam and Toodyay.

Presented by the Avon Valley Arts Society Inc., the exhibition was developed as a Youth Week initiative supported by the Department of Communities. The program focused on engaging young people aged 10–25 across the Avon Valley, supporting emerging artists and encouraging them to take the step from creating at home to exhibiting their work in a gallery environment. It placed a strong emphasis on building confidence, developing skills, and providing real-world exhibition experience.

The Avon Valley Arts Society was honoured to have Kaye Devlin as the exhibition judge. A life member and long-time supporter of the organisation, Kaye brought extensive experience and thoughtful consideration to the judging process. With such a strong and varied field of entries, selecting award recipients proved to be no easy task.

Awards were presented across four age categories: 5–7 years, 8–9 years, 10–12 years, and 13–18 years.



Photo: Corbin accepting award with YAYA coordinator Jess Edwards Parker and prize sponsor Judith from Art and Craft World

Award of Excellence recipients were:

5–7 years:

Piedra for Owl, and Telissa for Chicken at Sunset

8–9 years:

Daisy for The Flower Birds, and Brylee for Sunny World

10–12 years:

Ahil for Joyful Panda, and Cooper for Cooper's Boring Old Artwork

13–18 years:

Ayla for Genevieve's Evil Twin, and Corbin for Van Gone

Highly Commended awards:

Liam for Can I Eat Dat?, and Cayden for Leopard

The exhibition also saw strong community support, with multiple artworks sold throughout the week, an exciting milestone for many young artists experiencing their first gallery sale.

The Avon Valley Arts Society would also like to acknowledge and thank businesses for their support, including Lucy's Tea Rooms and Art and Craft World, who generously donated prize packs to help celebrate and encourage participating young artists.

Organisers have described the exhibition as a significant milestone for youth arts in the region, noting both the strong level of participation and the enthusiasm shown by young artists and their families. The exhibition has not only provided a platform for creative expression, but has also strengthened connections between communities across the Avon Valley.

With such a successful first year, YAYA is expected to become an ongoing feature of the local arts calendar, continuing to support, inspire and celebrate the next generation of artists in the region.

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. Bring your own sketchbook or purchase one from AVAS. 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 in faces, figures, animals, still life, shading and tonal value, while supporting creativity and confidence.

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.

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Update from Chris Antonio, Shire of Northam President

Thank you to our local RSL Sub-Branches, Progress Associations, local Schools and community groups who held events remembering all servicemen and women, fallen and returned over the ANZAC Day period.

The 2026 Northam Motorsport Festival has been another successful event. Held over the ANZAC Day long weekend, we were treated to many eye-capturing races and views around the centre of Northam and Mount Ommaney. Some upcoming events in May include many local winter sports games, the Killick Art Prize, the Wheatbelt Futures Forum and the WA State Heritage Forum to name a few. There are many events listed on the Shire of Northam website. If you want your event to be included, please reach out to the Shire of Northam.

Fuel availability and fuel costs continue to impact the Shire and the wider community. If anything major changes, we will keep you informed along the way.

We are heading into an open burning period. Please pay attention to current weather conditions before burning. As a courtesy, inform your neighbours if you are planning a burn. If you see an emergency, dial Triple Zero (000) in the first instance. For all emergencies and updates, the central place of information is the Emergency WA App.

If you want to keep up to date with recent events, follow me on Instagram at the shire_of_northam_president page.



Northam Motor Sport Festival

Thank you to everyone who came out to join us for the Northam Motor Sport Festival this Anzac Day long weekend. If you attended this year's event, please take 5 minutes to fill in the post-event survey to help us improve in future years. You can find a link to the survey on the Shire of Northam Facebook and website, or you can complete a physical copy at the Northam or Wundowie libraries.

Northam Visitor Centre: Temporary Relocation

The Northam Visitor Centre will remain closed at its usual location until 31 May 2026, but our team is still here to help you explore the very best of our region. During this period, we have relocated our visitor services to the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for Nyoongar Culture and Environmental Knowledge. The visitor servicing team continues to provide expert advice on local attractions and activities throughout the Shire of Northam. All essential services, including TransWA train and road coach ticket sales, remain fully available at this temporary site.

While you stop by to see us, we encourage you to take the opportunity to experience the immersive cultural exhibition at Bilya Koort Boodja, which offers a unique look into the rich history and culture of the Ballardong region.

We appreciate your patience and support during this temporary move and look forward to welcoming you at our interim home.

Mother's Day Markets & Movies

Celebrate your loved ones with a relaxed evening at our Mother's Day Movie and Markets Community Event:

Sunday, 10 May | Bernard Park (Northam)
"Ladies in Black" starts at 5pm, followed by "A League of Their Own"

This event is free to attend.

Heritage Conference 2026

Northam will serve as the centrepiece for Western Australian history this May as it hosts the 2026 Northam Regional Heritage Conference. The two-day event explores the "epic stories" of movement, ingenuity, and culture that shaped the region.

Event Details

- When: 7–8 May 2026 (Networking begins 6 May).
- Where: Northam Recreation Centre.

Program Highlights

- Diverse Histories: from Ballardong Noongar cultural stewardship and "truth-telling" to the arrival of thousands of post-war migrants in the 1940s and 50s.
- Local Lore: Discover the story of May Gibbs' Northam honeymoon or the engineering feats of the Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme.
- Interactive Site Visits: Guided tours of Morby Cottage, the Bilya Koort Boodja centre, and historic CBD walking tours.

Networking & Special Events

- Stargazing (Wednesday, 6 May): A pre-conference cultural journey at the Sound Shell.
- History Slam (Thursday, 7 May): Join the Professional Historians Association for a networking event in The Rec Hotel.

For more information or to register, contact the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage at 08 6551 8002.

Open Burning Period

Open Burning Period will soon be here, and although no permits are required for burning, it is still important to ensure that any burns conducted are done under the following conditions:

- Ensure you have the right equipment on hand.
- Contact DFES Communication Centre before burning - 9395 9209.
- Implement a bare earth firebreak around the piles being burnt.
- Respect the Fire Danger Ratings.
- Burns should be monitored by at least 1 adult.
- Manage the smoke around surrounding properties and over the road.

For more information, visit our website.

FluMist: a needle-free influenza vaccine for children



Photo: from healthywa.wa.gov.au

For the first time, WA Health has introduced the WA Influenza nasal spray vaccination program. Children aged 2 to 11 years can now get a needle-free influenza vaccine called FluMist.

This painless nasal spray is a great option for children who feel anxious about needles.

FluMist offers the same protection against influenza A and B as the standard flu vaccination.

Eligible children can access FluMist at:

- GPs
- pharmacies
- community health clinics
- Aboriginal Health Services.

Nasal spray vaccine is not suitable for people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised. Needle-based influenza vaccines remain available for children who are not eligible for the nasal spray influenza vaccine or when the nasal spray influenza vaccine is not suitable.

Speak to your healthcare provider to see if FluMist is right for your child. Children who aren't eligible for FluMist can still get the standard flu injection.

Influenza can cause serious illness in children, even those who are otherwise healthy.

The flu vaccine is recommended annually for everyone aged 6 months and up, and is the best protection against serious illness from influenza.

Autism expert set to transform child care in WA

A world-class health researcher has relocated to Perth to transform how autism is researched and clinically supported, thanks to a \$3.4 million fellowship.

Professor Mirko Uljarević has been awarded the 2024-25 Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Distinguished Fellowship, which is jointly funded by the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation.

Professor Uljarević, who comes from Stanford University's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences in California, will be based at The Kids Research Institute Australia and The University of Western Australia.

He is a medically-trained researcher working at the intersection of clinical and big data science to improve outcomes for individuals with autism.

Professor Uljarević will focus on transforming the clinical pathway for autistic children using big data to improve outcomes, including building a computerised adaptive assessment tool using data from 3500 children to map each autistic child's unique strengths and needs to match them with the most effective evidence-based clinical support.

"Despite considerable research efforts and substantial investment, the mechanisms underlying autism and predictors of support remained poorly understood," Professor Uljarević said.

"As a result, clinicians lack critical information to guide their decision-making, leaving families to navigate a costly and emotionally taxing trial and-error process that may entrench lifelong disability.

"A paradigm shift is urgently overdue combining cutting-edge developmental science, community co-production, and human-computer collaboration, to bring personalised supports to autism care."

Professor Andrew Whitehouse, the Angela Wright Bennett Professor of Autism Research at The Kids and Professor of Autism Research at UWA, said "This bold research program will bring transformational change for WA, using a foundation of science to deliver a new approach that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of clinical practice and quality of life for autistic children and their families."

Top 5 tips to Manage Stress

1. Try to reduce some of your physical symptoms.

To give yourself the best chance at feeling better, don't neglect the basics such as sleep, diet and exercise. Common side effects of stress include lack of sleep and poor diet, which can be tackled while you work on the other aspects of your stress. Learn how to improve your sleep routine. This needs to start before you switch off the light at your preferred bedtime. Practice mindfulness when making food choices, keeping in mind that choosing nutritious, balanced meals will serve us best rather than processed, fast alternatives.

2. Get a move on! Exercise is a proven stress reliever. You don't need to buy a whole heap of new lycra to get into action. Start by wearing your trackies or comfortable clothes as you walk around the block. Start small and build from there.

3. Take control of your notifications. These pesky dings on your phone are constantly taking your attention away and stealing the opportunity to be immersed in the here and now. Checking emails and notifications less regularly is shown to reduce your stress. Unless you are responding to life or death situations (I don't think anyone is going to be emailing you in this case!) there is no need to have notifications constantly popping up on your screen. Choose your own timetable for checking notifications and stick to it.

4. Try a mood journal. Try tracking your moods for a week, noting what you are doing when feeling your worst and when you are feeling your best. This will help raise awareness as to when you need to integrate rest and relaxation into your weekly routine. This needs to be a regular thing, not just when your body is yelling and screaming at you for overdue rest. Recognise that trying to use band-aid responses is not going to work long-term. Deliberately scheduling feel-good activities for you to engage in each week.

5. Lean on your friends. A strong social circle of friends can have an incredibly positive impact on your health and mortality! While we may be tempted to retreat when life feels stressful, sometimes talking it over with a friend is just what we need to gain a different perspective.

If you are concerned about the levels of stress you are experiencing or believe you are in a state of burnout, it is important to seek help. Your GP is a great starting place so that they can have a discussion about your health. They can also assist with a referral to a psychologist who can help you implement healthy habits and exercises to help manage your stress levels.

Article taken from: healthpartners.com.au/health/manage-stress-sarah-davies

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Men & Cancer

by The Regional Men's Health Initiative

Men in Australia are much more likely to be diagnosed with and die from cancer than women. In fact, according to the Cancer Council of WA the lifetime cancer risk is 1 in 2 for men and 1 in 3 for women.

Men are over represented in all gender shared cancers including the most common – lung, bowel and skin. The experience of cancer in one form or another is never good, but it does beg the question, why the gender disparity? There is no simple answer, but we do know that men in general are less likely to visit their GP to report or act on any unusual symptoms or changes.

Cancer is a disease driven by changes in our DNA (or genes) which causes a group of abnormal cells to divide and grow out of control. It usually occurs in a specific spot but can spread to other parts of the body. We are still some ways from finding a cure, but we do know that finding cancer early improves our chances of successful treatment and long-term survival. For the average bloke, general things that warrant a chat with a GP could include:

- unusual lumps or a sore that isn't healing properly;
- unusual changes in our testicles – changes in shape, consistency or a lump;
- a persistent cough or hoarseness, coughing up blood;
- unexplained weight loss;
- moles that have changed shape, size or colour, or bleed, or an inflamed skin sore that hasn't healed;
- blood in a bowel motion;
- persistent changes in toilet habits or urinary problems or changes.

It is important to note that these symptoms are likely to be related to more common, less serious health problems. However, we still need to discuss them to ease our concerns or pick up something early rather than later.

Unfortunately, it is often only when blokes find they are progressed with cancer that they actually start to think about modifying their behaviour and making healthy changes. So, what can us men do to prevent or lessen our chances of developing cancer?

- Stop smoking – lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australian men
- Be SunSmart – protect our self in the sun and take care not to burn
- Stay in shape – aim for a healthy body weight, watch our waistline
- Move more – be physically active for at least 30 minutes on most or all days
- Eat for health – A varied diet with lots of fruit/vegetables and limit red meat
- Limit alcohol – no more than two standard drinks a day and try to have one or two alcohol-free days a week
- Have a chat with our GP about our prostate especially if we are over 45 years
- Use our bowel screen kit when you get it
- Get to know our family history of cancer

Remember it's our health, if we have any concerns or questions, we need to go and chat with a GP, don't wait and leave it till it's too late.

The Regional Men's Health Initiative, Ph 08 6314 1436 | regionalmenshealth.com.au

The Herb Which Removes Fear

I thought I would focus on one particular herb in this article. Haritaki, has been advertised lately as a herb that will decalcify the pineal gland, which is not strictly accurate. All the same, it is a very useful herb in balancing our bodily systems.

Haritaki (Sanskrit name Abhaya, which means "that which removes fear") is one of a group of herbs that will support longevity, resilience, and vitality. Over time Haritaki will support digestion and regular elimination, it contains a range of antioxidants and helps protect against oxidative stress (causing cellular, protein and DNA damage). It also has gentle neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory effects, supporting brain health over time.

Haritaki works by helping to clear ama (accumulated metabolic waste that the body has not been able to fully process or eliminate). This ama accumulates and diminishes the proper functioning of our various systems. Generally, ama settles in the weakest parts of our body and marks beginning of disease. This includes the mind and nervous system.

You may notice feelings of heaviness, foggy, or a lack of clarity. There is emerging research suggesting that Haritaki may influence the production of melatonin which supports the natural rhythm of sleep and wakefulness. When sleep is regular and the nervous system is supported, other aspects of health begin to improve.

In summary, Haritaki will help:

- * Support the body in clearing what it no longer needs
- * Strengthen digestion and elimination
- * Reduce oxidative stress
- * Regulate natural rhythms

The result of these actions, the body, brain and nervous system can function with greater clarity.

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York Yarns May

It has been very tricky planning events in the current climate of high cost of living pressures and the seemingly ongoing fuel drama. Despite these hurdles out here in the regions we have, overall, fared pretty well - seems city folk still enjoy their trips to the country especially if it's not too far, there is a good family vibe, easy parking and it doesn't break the bank!

So, York moves on from one of the year's busiest months and now we have a couple of weeks to recharge the batteries; that should see everyone ready for the next exciting programme of events over the coming weeks.

Thinking of cooler days could get your thoughts turning to some craft projects, the idea of a nice warm knitted scarf perhaps or a patchwork quilt? If so, you need visit to Carol, owner of Patchwork on Avon, in her fantastic new premises. She has lots more space and great plans to run workshops and demonstrations covering all aspects of sewing, knitting etc. Call in, she would love to show you round. This is the only shop of its kind in the Wheatbelt and well worth a visit.

Thinking of more leisurely pursuits for the cooler days and evenings, what about a jigsaw puzzle? Now available in York are these gorgeous jigsaws of our iconic Town Hall and also the fantastic Spring colours of canola with endless blue skies. What a great souvenir idea for visitors or simply for all dedicated puzzlers. Bonus is they are traditional wood puzzles infused with bushland essential oils and made in WA, plus the photographer lives in York. Doesn't get more local than that. For details call 0418 936 214.



The fuel issues have proved a bit of a bonus for our local bike technician, Jamie, who now stocks e-bikes! He has sold several over the last few weeks & was offering a very successful come and try at the recent Heritage Weekend! Ideal for just popping to the shops with the bonus of helping you to keep fit. Just proves the adage, "Every cloud has a silver lining"!

The June long weekend, actually 30th-31st May, sees the return of YORKids. Step into a lively wonderland where farm animals are waiting for pats and photos and brave explorers can get up close with some fascinating critters. Let your imagination run wild with face painting and be amazed by our wandering balloon artist's delightful creations.

Mingle with Darth Vader, Storm Troopers and Jedi for some amazing selfies as you make your way to some Lego building fun. Try croquet in the park or test your athletic skills on the Ninja Run. The littlies and the young at heart will love the 'Drip, Drop, Play' interactive installation where creativity and curiosity take centre stage.



Need to catch your breath? Our cosy quiet reading corner is the perfect spot, then, head out for stacks more fun.

With plenty of activities and surprises throughout the weekend there is something for everyone to enjoy. Bring your family, bring your friends and join us for a joyful, memory making experience you won't want to miss.

Contact the York Visitor Centre for more details and accommodation options.

If you fancy something a bit more cerebral, pick up a copy of the Heritage Quiz from the visitor centre while out and about to learn more about York.

York continues to build its reputation as a vibrant cultural destination with a series of upcoming events presented by Wheatbelt Arts and Events.



In June, audiences can experience Catalpa, Flight to Freedom, a presentation by Theatre 180 and WA Museum. This powerful live performance tells the remarkable true story of one of Australia's most daring prison escapes. Presented at York Town Hall the production combines storytelling, music and theatre bringing this historic event to life. Tickets at yorkfestival.com.au or phone 0411 287 944.

June also sees the launch of 'Paper & Thread' a new programme of hands-on creative workshops delivered through the Wheatbelt Arts Hub. This exciting new venture brings experienced artists to York to lead small group masterclasses in textiles, natural dyeing, felt making and more.

Designed for adults with an interest in creativity, 'Paper & Thread' offers a unique opportunity to learn new skills in a welcoming environment within the charm of the heritage setting of York and surrounding areas.

These two events reflect the growing momentum of arts and cultural activity offering locals & visitors more reasons than ever to learn and connect in the fine town of York.

Information and bookings at yorkfestival.com.au.

As ever, looking forward to seeing you in York.

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Northam Chamber of Commerce May Update

by Theresa Lee, CEO NCC

As we move further into autumn, the Avon Valley begins its familiar transformation and reminds us why we choose to live and work in the region. A special mention and my sincere thanks to Liberty Balloon Flights (featured on our front cover), who hosted me for my very first flight along with my daughter for a peacefully low and slow flight across the Avon Valley as the ballooning season opened recently – a very special early Mother's Day treat! Best wishes to both Liberty and Windward Ballooning for a safe and full season ahead. It truly is a time when the Wheatbelt comes alive again, bringing with it renewed energy for our community, our visitors, and importantly, our local businesses.

However, this seasonal optimism is currently tempered by growing global uncertainty. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is having very real and immediate consequences here at home. Rising fuel costs, disruptions to global supply chains, and increasing freight expenses are placing mounting pressure on businesses across our region. For many small and medium enterprises, these impacts are not abstract – they are being felt daily through higher operating costs, delayed deliveries, and tighter margins.

The NCC is actively monitoring these developments and advocating on behalf of our members. We recognise that these challenges are complex and largely outside local control, but that does not diminish their impact on our business community. We encourage all members to stay informed and to make use of available resources. Resources such as the CCIWA's 'Middle East Crisis:

CCIWA Hub' (visit cciwa.com/middle-east-crisis-hub) provide timely updates and resources around the continuously evolving situation.

Closer to home, it is important to reiterate that support is available. The Chamber continues to work closely with the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) Regional to ensure that Wheatbelt businesses have access to practical advice and assistance. Whether it's navigating cash flow pressures, understanding supply chain risks, or planning for resilience, these fee-free services are there to support you through uncertain times.

On a more positive note, it was a privilege to attend the 3rd Annual WA Regional Business Excellence Awards, hosted by the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry WA. These awards shine a spotlight on the innovation, resilience, and leadership that define regional businesses across the state. We were particularly proud to see three of our 2025 Avon Valley Business Awards winners recognised as finalists at the state level – congratulations to Zax & Co (Tourism & Hospitality Finalist), The Wheatbelt Celebrant (Sole Trader Finalist) and Roam Distillery (Start-Up Finalist). This is a significant achievement and a testament to the strength and quality of businesses operating in our region.

Equally encouraging was the continued success of our local networking initiatives. The recent Monthly Meets event hosted by Northam Women in Business was a standout evening. Held in partnership with member businesses Shear Elegance for Hair and Lume Brassiere, the event brought together a diverse group



Photo: Shirleen Toovey from Shear Elegance presenting her story

of local professionals for an engaging and supportive networking experience. Opportunities like this are vital – they strengthen connections, foster collaboration, and reinforce the sense of community that underpins our local economy.

We are excited to see Northam come alive over the ANZAC Day long weekend with the return of the Northam Motorsports Festival for 2026. Events of this scale play a crucial role in driving visitation and injecting economic activity into our town. It is always encouraging to see our streets, cafes, accommodation providers, and retailers bustling with visitors enjoying everything our region has to offer.

May opens with our 4th annual Wheatbelt Futures Forum in Northam as we gather with representatives from across the region and government to discuss the economic challenges and opportunities ahead, particularly around infrastructure, construction and housing, renewable energy and health. We look forward to welcoming delegates from far and wide for another engaging forum.

As always, we encourage you to reach out, stay connected, and continue supporting one another.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When an Airbnb looks like an investment property:

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

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

Example 1: Liam owns 12 residential units across three locations. A professional property manager handles all bookings, cleaning, rent collection, guest issues and maintenance. Liam reviews monthly reports and approves major expenses but has little day-to-day involvement.

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

When Airbnb start to look like a business:

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

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

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

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

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

How does this impact Airbnb owners?

There is compliance risk and consequences for getting it wrong. Misclassification of Airbnb and short-term accommodation income is an area the ATO regularly

reviews, and owners can face penalties and back taxes.

For individual operators receiving rental income:

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

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

To reduce risk:

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

For Airbnb business owners:

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

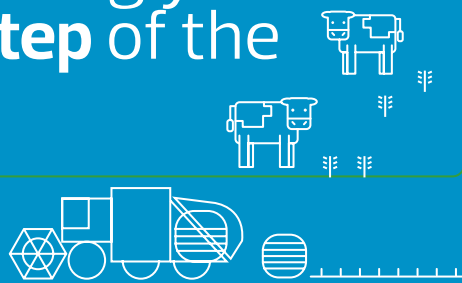
How RSM can help

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

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

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Timeframes, Family Businesses and Communication

by Dr Catherine Bowen, Family Business Consultant

Family Businesses (FBs) don't just drive economies – they safeguard generational security. Across the globe, FBs underpin national wealth and stability. In Australia alone, 70% of the nation's 2 million plus businesses are family-owned. About 30% of these will pass ownership to the 2nd Gen., and of those approximately 35% will pass to a third generation. Whilst percentages reduce further with each generation, FBs understand the legacy that is associated with a family business and the responsibilities that come with protecting and transferring the FB to a succeeding generation. One of the most defining challenges of this process however, is to manage the security needs of the different generations within the FB matrix. It is one of the conundrums of the FB world – strategy, profit, decision making – tangled up with meeting the needs of the people we love.

Over time, I have consistently witnessed FBs living with ongoing tensions and anxieties, with family members unwilling or unable to fully identify, let alone describe the matrix of issues involved. However, if these issues are viewed from the point of view of security needs, things very often take perspective.

The reality is that each generation in a FB exists within their own generational timeframe – and with those parameters, come specific security needs. Founders / seniors (Gen 1) may prioritise legacy, capital protection,

and financial security for retirement. Successors (Gen 2) seek ownership clarity, management stability and secure risk management. Younger members (Gen3) look for a sign or guarantee of future opportunity.

For FBs, these security issues are what shape decision-making, risk tolerance and ultimately, the future direction of the business. However, if these needs go unspoken or unacknowledged, other family members are left guessing and assuming; tensions increase, relationships suffer – the business can lose direction and purpose. Sadly, the ensuring frustrations too often see people seeking legal advice.

It is essential that FBs build into their governance structures, communication processes that allow family members to speak openly, to have permission to voice concerns free of blame, guilt or accusation. When a FB permits and encourages these important discussions – especially concerning succession – potential hot spots can be confronted and options tossed around before tensions rise and anxieties blur vision.

Identifying and aligning decisions that recognise generational timeframes and associated security needs of family members and the business acts to strengthen the family whilst enhancing opportunity for the longevity of the business.

Dr Catherine Bowen – Generation to Generation : The People Factor. Family Business Consultant.
www.gentogen.com.au

Fuel crisis drives collapse in consumer confidence

Consumer confidence in Western Australian has collapsed to levels lower than during the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by the Middle East conflict and its impact on fuel supply and prices.

CCIWA conducted a snap survey of more than 1,000 WA households between March 24th and March 29th to determine what impact the conflict is having on spending habits and Easter holiday plans.

An overwhelming 82% of consumers plan to reduce spending in at least one discretionary spending category in the coming six months.

CCIWA Chief Executive, Will Golsby, said the results sent a worrying signal to WA businesses.

"This represents another challenge for WA businesses, who are being directly hit by the increase in their own fuel prices and operating costs, and will also feel the impact of weakening demand and lower consumer spending," he said.

"To see consumer confidence drop to lower levels than COVID will be alarming for many businesses, but we saw during that crisis that businesses were resilient and able to adapt, with appropriate support from Government.

"We urge all levels of Government – Federal, State and Local councils – to look at what fees, charges and taxes could be reduced or suspended during this crisis."

Around one in three (31%) WA households said they had cancelled or significantly changed their Easter travel plans because of high fuel costs.

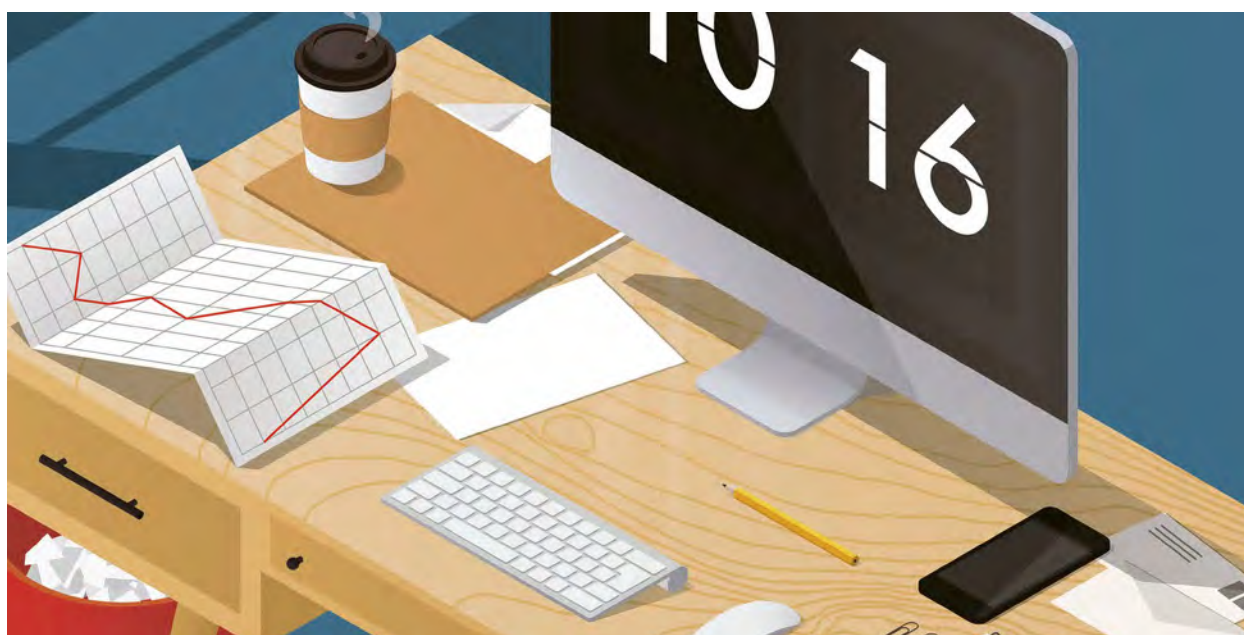
Mr Golsby said it will be a blow for businesses in tourism and hospitality, particularly in regional WA.

"We're also continuing to monitor fuel supply challenges in regional WA, as well as the impact of fertilizer shortages on the agricultural sector as seeding season gets underway."

The survey found Western Australians were broadly supportive of robust measures to ensure fuel supplies are maintained. Two in three respondents (67%) said they would support purchase limits on fuel if shortages worsened.

CCIWA Chief Economist, Dr Daniel Kiely, said while measures like the Federal fuel excise cut and suspension of the Road User Charge would help businesses in the short-term, other measures to help business should be on the table.

"We don't know how long this conflict will continue so it's vital every measure is on the table to keep businesses operating, employing WA workers and driving the economy."



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Australia's best project home for 2026 annouced

The Rural Building Co. has added to its award-winning track record, claiming the 2026 Australian Project Home of the Year at this year's HIA Australian Housing Awards.

Announced at the HIA Australian Housing Awards on Saturday 18 April on the Gold Coast, this is the fourth consecutive year this national award has been bestowed to The Rural Building Co. and its affiliated brand, WA Country Builders.

The home, built in the picturesque suburb of Oldbury in Western Australia's Peel region is a beautifully crafted residence offering a private sanctuary that reflects a considered balance of comfort, functionality and timeless Australian style.

New Home Consultant Brook Leber said the home draws inspiration from classic rural design, with a thoughtful layout and charming features that create a true sense of sanctuary.

"The Oldbury home demonstrates how thoughtful design can elevate everyday living - pairing striking architectural features like gabled windows and vaulted ceilings with practical inclusions such as a concealed scullery and seamless alfresco integration," he said.

The elevation blends traditional bush pole supports with corrugated steel and custom cladding, creating a distinctly Australian character. Inside, the abundance of natural light enhances the openness of the central living area, with a kitchen designed for both practicality and connection.

General Manager Tony Harvie said these achievements are a demonstration of the continual commitment to excellence and quality in both craftsmanship and customer experience The Rural Building Co. offers its clients across the state.

"This home is a true reflection of our company's ethos, 'We Understand'," he said.

"We understand that our clients want a home that reflects their lifestyle. For decades, we've been designing unique, rural homes people love to live in, entertain in, relax and escape to."

Housing market activity is slowing as interest rates rise

by Megan Lieu, Senior Economic Analyst at REA Group

Following two consecutive rate hikes and ongoing inflationary pressures, the housing market is showing early signs of slowing down.

In both February and March, the Reserve Bank of Australia lifted rates by 25 basis points. Currently, the cash rate is at 4.1% but the ASX futures market points to the possibility of two further hikes this year.

That would take it to 4.6%, a level not seen for 15 years.

Interest rates increases have been implemented to curb inflation, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rising by 3.7% and 3.8% annually in January and February respectively. This is well above the RBA's target range of 2-3%.

In 2025, there was an uplift in buyer activity as a result of three interest rate cuts. More first-home buyers entered the market with the introduction of the 5% Deposit Scheme and the Help to Buy Scheme, while investors become increasingly active due to the tightness of the rental market and strong rental returns.

New loans to investor and first-home buyer loans respectively rose by 24% and 9% from the December 2024 to December 2025 quarters and home prices rose by 9.0% throughout the year.

However, the recent rate rises have reduced borrowing capacities and raised mortgage repayments for prospective buyers.

If two additional rate rises occur, interest rates will be at their highest level since late 2011. This will further weigh on housing demand, which already appears to be easing.

Monthly growth in home prices has started decelerating

According to PropTrack's March Home Price Index, home prices rose by 0.3% nationally over the month. This was the lowest monthly growth recorded since November 2024, excluding December when growth is typically softer due to seasonality.

A similar trend was evident across combined capital cities and regional areas.

Analysis of March home price data also shows that growth was below the average recorded over the past year, nationally and in all capital cities. In addition,

monthly growth slowed relative to February across all these markets.

At a more granular level, this deceleration in growth compared to February was seen in close to 80% of SA4 regions. This indicates that the recent moderation in prices is more broad-based rather than region-specific, impacting most areas within the country.

SA4 regions are statistical areas defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and generally have populations between 100,000 and 500,000 people.

Although interest rate hikes tend to take affect with a slight lag, the initial signs are becoming apparent in these price movements which suggest that demand may be softening.

Recent auction clearance rates are reinforcing the easing of buyer competition and demand as well.

Since the end of February, following the first rate hike this year, auction clearance rates have trended downwards in the largest three capital cities, where the majority of auctions take place.

How further rate hikes may impact the market

Ongoing geopolitical tensions are expected to add inflationary pressure in the upcoming months. With several interest rate hikes anticipated throughout the year, demand is expected to continue softening as borrowing power decreases, housing affordability declines and buyer sentiment becomes more conservative.

While market activity is likely to ease, tighter markets such as Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide may see more modest easing in demand and home prices as ongoing shortages in supply offset some of the impacts of rising interest rates.

With the rental market remaining challenged, investor interest may hold steady while government schemes implemented late last year may continue to support demand from first-home buyers and single family households.

However, the pressures of higher interest rates are likely to weigh on the confidence of buyers, leading to more subdued price growth compared to 2025.

Article taken from: realestate.com.au/insights/housing-market-activity-is-slowing-as-interest-rates-rise/

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Property Market Update:

In Northam and the nearby towns Bakers Hill, Wundowie, Clackline, Grass Valley, the market feels steady and grounded. Homes aren't flying out the door like last year, but good properties still attract solid interest because stock is tight.

Buyers are looking carefully, comparing options, and taking their time, but when something well-presented comes up, it stands out. Rentals remain even tighter. Clean, tidy homes are leasing quickly, often after the first viewing.

Overall, the region is calm, stable, and quietly competitive. A market where realistic pricing and good presentation still win, and where demand stays steady because people genuinely want to live here.

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Drive Further for Less: Smart Fuel-Saving Tips and the Rise of Electric Vehicles in the Wheatbelt with Avon Valley Toyota

As fuel prices continue to fluctuate, more regional drivers are looking for smarter ways to save at the bowser while still enjoying the freedom to travel where they need to go. Whether it's the daily school run, commuting into town, weekend sport, or longer country drives, reducing fuel costs starts with a few simple habits, and for many locals, it may also mean considering the next generation of vehicles now available right here at Avon Valley Toyota.

Easy fuel-saving tips can make a real difference for country motorists. Keeping tyres properly inflated helps improve efficiency, while regular servicing ensures your vehicle is running at its best. Avoiding harsh acceleration, reducing unnecessary weight in the car, and planning trips to combine errands can all help stretch every tank further. On open regional roads, using cruise control where safe can also assist with fuel economy. Small changes behind the wheel often add up to meaningful savings over time.

For drivers wanting to go further, Toyota now offers innovative low and zero-emission options designed to suit a range of lifestyles. Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) combine petrol power with battery-electric driving, giving drivers the flexibility of both technologies. Many shorter daily trips can be completed using battery power alone, while the reliability of the petrol engine is there for longer distances. PHEVs are a practical option for regional families who want to reduce fuel use without worrying about charging range on every journey.



Photo: Toyota KINTO bZ4X

Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) run entirely on electricity and produce no tailpipe emissions. They're smooth, quiet and increasingly popular with Australians looking to lower running costs. Charging can often be done conveniently at home overnight, while public charging infrastructure continues to grow across the Wheatbelt.

At Avon Valley Toyota, our electrified options including the Toyota bZ4X BEV and the Toyota RAV4 Plug-in Hybrid PHEV, alongside Toyota's well-known hybrid range. These vehicles bring together advanced technology, comfort and the reliability regional motorists value.

Importantly, choosing an EV or PHEV in the country is not just about the vehicle. It's about having the right

advice. Regional driving can involve longer distances, towing, changing road conditions and planning ahead, which is why the team at Avon Valley Toyota has created a free EV Guide and Regional Driving Checklist. It's designed to help locals understand charging options, trip planning, battery range, and whether an EV or PHEV suits their lifestyle.

If you're curious about lowering fuel costs or making the move to an electrified vehicle, visit Avon Valley Toyota today to explore your options and pick up your free guide. The future of driving is here, and it's ready for our regional roads.

Pick up your FREE EV Guide and Checklist from Avon Valley Toyota today. | avonvalleytoyota.com.au

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OH WHAT A FEELING

Ford Ranger Super Duty



by Mark Bowler, Valley Ford

The Ford Ranger Super Duty was released by Ford Australia after much consultation with Australia's largest fleet customers. These discussions were around what was working and any pain points they faced with the next generation Ranger released in 2022. A recurring theme was costly and time-consuming modifications that were critical to the work they do.

These heavy duty usage customers needed a mid-size truck that could carry almost 2 tonnes of payload, tow up to 4.5 tonnes, and be incredibly capable off-road. Nothing existed in the Australian market that could do all this, backed by a full factory warranty.

These upgrades started at the chassis which was reinforced with thicker gauge steel and extra bracing. This saw the Super Duty sit wider and higher with a ground clearance up to 299mm and 1,710mm track

width allowing the vehicle to better tackle uneven ground and command a dominant presence. The suspension was upgraded with reinforced chassis components, upgraded axles, and stiffer leaf springs, reducing rear-end sag to under 75mm even with nearly 1,000kg loads.

This additional strength allowed the Super Duty to deliver class-leading towing and hauling. 4,500kg Towing with 4,500kg GVM and an amazing 8,000kg GCM* were the result. This meant that expensive and untimely delays to get a GVM Upgrade by a third party was no longer required. In a rural setting these numbers gave the agricultural (among others) industry more flexibility to tow, carry and haul.

The other side of the Super Duty capabilities is for harsh and remote work. With that impressive ground clearance also comes front and rear locking differentials, dual recovery hooks and an underbody that is reinforced with thick, high strength steel along with a frame mounted steel bumper all giving confidence to take on the toughest terrain. Little things like using 33" General Grabber All-Terrain tyres to boost off road traction and designing squared off wheel arches that provide extra clearance and protection were thought of. To power this hard work the Super Duty is fitted with a 130L long range fuel tank (protected by heavy duty plating) from factory to keep drivers moving. Under the bonnet is a 3.0L turbo diesel V6 delivering 154kW of power and 600Nm of torque.

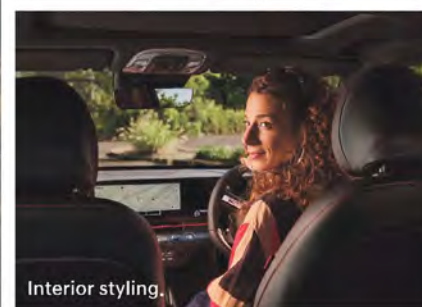
The Super Duty nameplate is also something special that the Ford Australia design team should be proud of. Getting approval from head office in Michigan to use the nameplate saw local engineers at Ford Australia put the Ranger Super Duty through a series of brutal durability tests including one at the infamous Silver Creek durability track. Imagine a dry creek bed, but instead of smooth pebbles, it's packed with 300

randomly placed, bone-rattling bumps of different shapes and sizes. Although a single run on Silver Creek generates over 2000 suspension movements, the test primarily assesses the durability of engine mounts, body mounts, joints, and connectors. To ensure consistent and relentless testing, an autonomous robotic test driver took the wheel, running the Ranger Super Duty 24/7, rain, hail and shine. And because the Ranger Super Duty is built to carry more, the team didn't hold back. They tested it on Silver Creek at its maximum gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 4,500 kilograms. Other tests included 600kgs of mud. Simulating an extreme build-up of mud on the vehicle, the test for Ranger Super Duty was Ford's toughest ever. A critical test, mud can severely impact the performance and lifespan of critical components. Ford Australia engineers drove the Ranger Super Duty on a specially designed heavy-duty mud track in Victoria, delivering a variety of terrain, including mud ruts, bog holes and open sections of thick mud. The team also tested extensively on real-world, enthusiast-level tracks known for their mud. Ranger Super Duty has been designed, developed and tested to thrive in extreme locations for those who need to rely on their truck when the going gets toughest. Meeting and surpassing the incredibly high standards of the Super Duty team in Michigan to get the Super Duty name is an impressive feat for the Australian team.

*Maximum towing capacity braked using Genuine Ford tow equipment. Does not include tow ball-available at additional cost. Subject to State and Territory regulations. To comply with these limits, any load transported by the vehicle may need to be restricted to not exceed the GCM and GVM limits.

*Gross Vehicle Mass is the maximum allowable weight of a vehicle including any load transported by the vehicle, including tow ball down weight of a trailer but excluding the weight of a trailer itself. GCM is the maximum allowable weight of the vehicle and its trailer. Subject to state and territory regulations. Stated vehicle weights are approximate and subject to individual variances. Vehicles should be weighed before and after adding any load to ensure the maximum GVM, GCM and Gross Axle Weight Ratings are not exceeded.

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Focus on Farming: Fuel and Fertiliser Security

by Chris Antonio

The shortages, and risks of short or non-supply continue. At the time of writing, despite the reduction in fuel levies, diesel is hovering around \$3.25 per litre at service stations. There is little confidence in the sector that the prices won't continue to rise. At present, the concern extends to beyond the seeding period to what happens during May and beyond, especially if the Middle East conflict continues.

At the same time of concerns about fuel supply, many people reached for their online search engines to research if 'force majeure' was exactly what they thought it was. This was in relation to fertiliser

contracts suddenly being cancelled or altered by agreement. For those who were wondering, force majeure is a contractual clause freeing parties from liability when unforeseeable, uncontrollable events – like natural disasters, war, or pandemics – make fulfilling their obligations impossible. I know that many grain growers caught in these contract cancellations or amendments are thinking about who they want to deal with in seasons going forward, the actual lack of benefit from having a contract in the first place, and how the contracts seem to heavily favour the suppliers, and not the growers themselves. There has been and will likely be more reputational risk incurred by suppliers of products to grain growers.

Notice that previous decisions made are being quoted as the reason for one of the wool agents closing their Rockingham Facility and moving all handling and selling to Melbourne. The sheep flock has declined in WA, and there is no current estimate of the size of the flock in our state.

With the prior sudden and volatile changes for all of our agribusinesses, which are continuing, remember to engage with your professional business partners to assist in making prudent decisions.

\$1 million in grants for WA research program to boost 'water smart' farms

The Cook Government is offering \$1 million in grants for farmers to improve on-farm water options, water security and resilience in drying climates as part of the latest WaterSmart Farms research initiative.

Farmers in the Wheatbelt and Great Southern who are planning to drill for water can apply for up to \$20,000 to take part in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Curtin University research initiative, which will use magnetic surveys to find water in underground bedrock.

The research team will work with up to 50 eligible farmers, and specialist companies in ground based geophysical surveys and drilling to develop fit-for-purpose groundwater exploration services.

"Groundwater exploration and desalination technologies give farmers the ability to draw on additional water supplies when needed in dry seasons

and support value-add opportunities for livestock or cropping enterprises," said Minister Jackie Jarvis.

The grants will build on DPIRD's early research, which involved a small number of farms where researchers found water at more than half the exploration sites.

This phase of research will work with more farmers across a larger area with the aim of improving landholder understanding of water supply options on their land and increasing access to excess ground water.

The research is part of the broader WaterSmart Farms program, established in 2021, to conduct research on water supply options for Wheatbelt agribusinesses and communities.

Minister Jackie Jarvis noted, "Supporting further exploration in this area through these grants will continue to build scientific understanding to support our farmers to make informed decisions and build

confidence in our drying climate."

Applications close 30 April 2026, with more information available at the DPIRD website.



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Skyrocketing oil and resource prices will hit WA's agricultural industry, how can it adapt?

The war in Iran has sent oil prices skyrocketing around the world, and the impacts are being felt across every major industry.

In Australia, experts say the sector that will take the most substantial hit is agriculture – one of the country's largest economic drivers.

Murdoch University's Associate Professor in Sustainable Agriculture, Hanabeth Luke says rising costs, resource shortages and roadblocks for both importing, exporting and transporting goods will be just a few of the ripple effects Aussie farmers, and citizens, will feel.

Planting, harvesting and managing crops requires a great deal of diesel, so rising prices and/or shortages will have an immediate impact on the hip-pocket of farmers.

Particularly impacted will be farmers in the Wheatbelt, who have properties that average 3500-5000 hectares.

"That's a lot of land and crops to manage. Electrification is one solution, but a piece of farm machinery can cost millions, so replacement of key infrastructure like this takes time – and it also needs to ensure that the technology can keep up. Electric tractors are out there and practical to use in horticulture and vineyards, especially those with solar and battery systems installed, but the tech is still experimental for broadacre farmers."

This will of course have knock-on effects for all Australians, including potential shortages and increasing cost of food and fibre products.

Fallouts for fertiliser

Another key impact is the rising price of ammonia, a synthetic nitrogen fertiliser. Ammonia production is currently reliant

on about 2 per cent of the world's fossil fuels.

"Nitrogen is literally everywhere – it's 78% of the air we breathe, but plants and crops can only use it in certain forms.

"The main way it is produced is the Haber-Bosch process, which pulls nitrogen out of the air, and turns it into a usable form for plants. However, this process takes a lot of energy."

Aussie farmers who have worked with Associate Professor Luke have told her they need to generate 3.5 tonnes of wheat per hectare just to break even. And good production levels in previous years won't mitigate these impacts.

"Bumper production years, as occurred in 2025, can actually reduce the dollars that farmers receive per tonne of wheat. Farmers are under pressure from multiple fronts, and rising costs at this scale present another major challenge they will need to deal with." But Associate Professor Luke says there are opportunities to pivot, and resources that could help to mitigate this impact.

Looking towards green alternatives

"One potential solution is to plant more legumes – a major area of research in WA, and something we are working on at Murdoch University in partnership with DPIRD," she said.

These plants are able to pull their own nitrogen from the air and make it available for themselves while building it up in natural forms in the soil.

These could be planted in several beneficial ways, including between rows of other crops, or in a rotational cycle with wheat and other crops.

WA farmers currently rely on international sources of

phosphorus, an essential element for growing food and fibre – but with import costs rising, Associate Professor Luke said natural soil amendments were crucial.

"An important solution is to utilise more of the nutrients coming out of our cities and food production facilities, improving the re-circulation of nutrients and other wastes."

Murdoch University's Algae Innovation Hub, led by Professor Navid Moheimani, is currently looking into using algae to clean nutrient-rich water and turn it into useful fertiliser and feed products.



Photo: Algae Innovation Hub at Murdoch University

Associate Professor Luke said this was one example of how scientists could strengthen Australia's circular economy, turning waste into a resource.

"If we can see every challenge as an opportunity, and, as researchers, continue to ask the right questions, we can build a more resilient, sustainable and healthy agricultural system for WA and beyond."

Article taken from: murdoch.edu.au/news/articles/skyrocketing-oil-and-resource-prices-will-hit-wa-s-agricultural-industry-how-can-it-adapt

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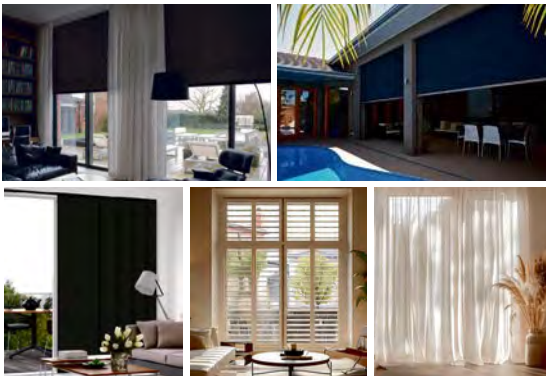
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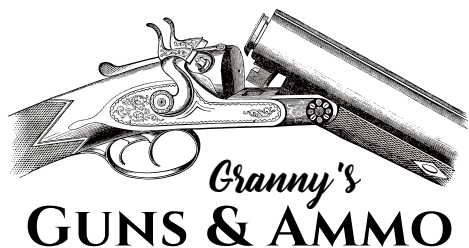
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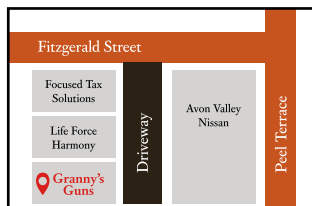
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Services at 10.00am every Sunday throughout the year.



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For more information on other programs or activities contact Bridgeley Reception 9622 3981.

Memorial Service



MEMORIAL SERVICE for

Christopher Thomson

Born: 01/01/1964-2025

31 Burgoyne Street, Northam

Chris, known as "Bear" to his friends, is being remembered and his life celebrated at a memorial service to held at the Mortlock Room Bridgeley Community Centre, 91-93 Wellington St, Northam WA 6401.

Friday, 22nd May 2026

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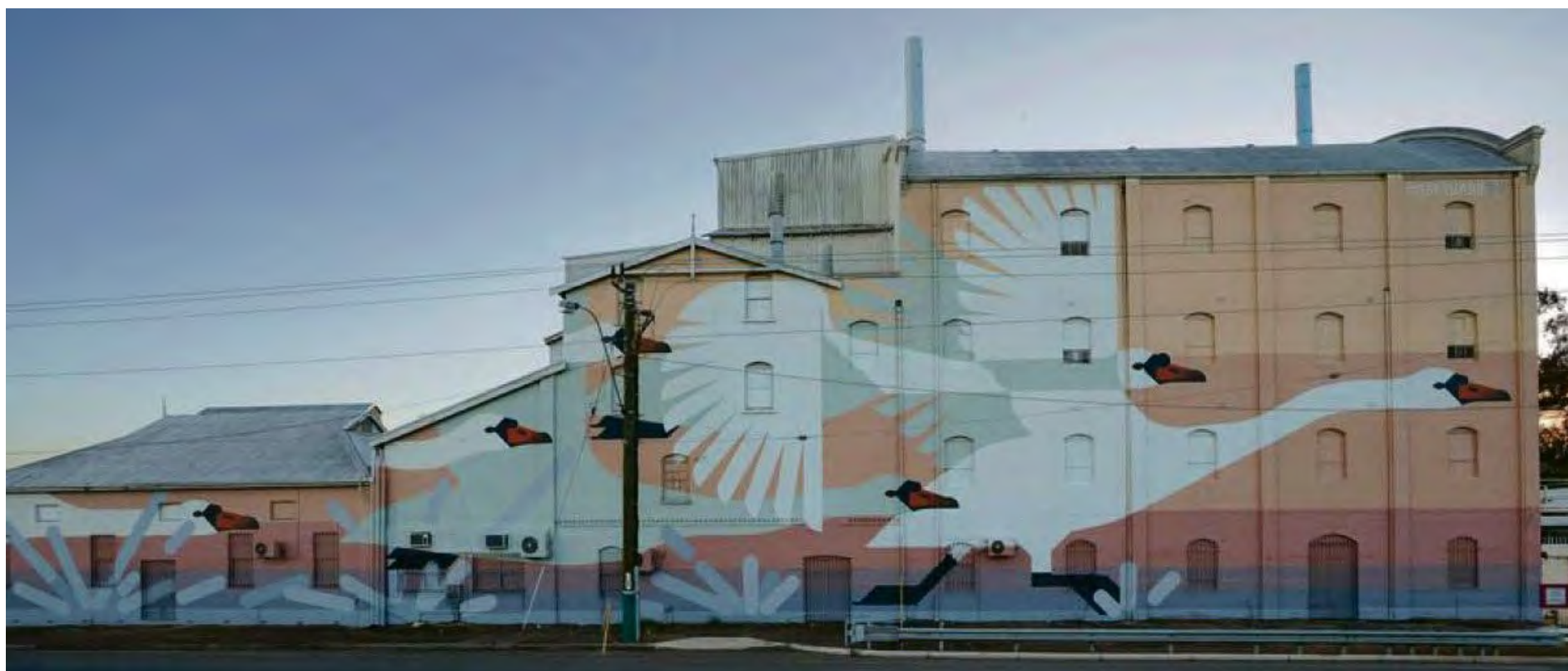
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Northam Golf Club News



A great field of 39 golfers kicked things off on Saturday the 18th in excellent conditions. It was fantastic to see a few new faces.

The honour of the first tee shot for the year was given to Jeremy Lawler, in recognition of the passing of his dad during the off-season. In fitting fashion, Jeremy's shot had a touch of his dad's slice and landed off the fairway.

Congratulations to young Nate O'Driscoll, who delivered an outstanding performance with 47 points to take out the win, with Rachael Flint runner-up on 41 points.

There will be many great events this year, including the 100th year of the Corolin Cup, which is held in July.

If anyone is interested in joining the golf club, contact the Northam Country Club on ph 96221050 or email northamgolfclub@gmail.com.



Photo: Brayden Sibley, Nate O'Driscoll and Rachael Flint

Registrations Open for Golf Lessons



Registration is now open for golf lessons by PGA professional Brayden McCubbing. The lessons are scheduled from Thursday 4th June to 2nd July.

Open to all abilities and skill levels and ages.

Please register via MyGolf for juniors at golf.com.au.

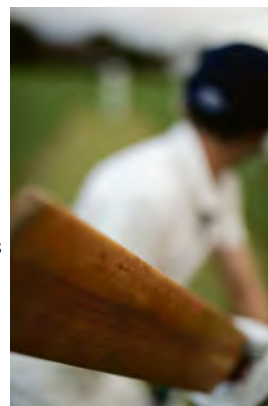
Get Into Golf for women at golf.com.au

All enquiries regarding the upcoming golf lessons can be made to Wendy Richards 0408 222 889 or northamgolfclub@gmail.com.

Junior Cricket Season Ends on a High Note

The 2025/26 Northam Junior Cricket Association (NJCA) season wrapped up in style, with a fantastic Finals Day and Presentation Afternoon celebrating the talent, commitment and sportsmanship of young players across the region.

Bert Hawke Reserve played host to two exciting Grand Finals, bringing together players, families and supporters for a memorable morning of cricket.



In the Under 12 decider, York Imperials CC delivered a strong performance to defeat Goomalling CC by 34 runs, finishing 7/102 to 8/68. Both teams showed great determination in what was a closely fought contest.

Charlie Wherrett was named Player of the Match for his outstanding all-round contribution, including impressive bowling figures of 2/5 from three overs.

The Under 16 Grand Final saw St Joseph's School claim a convincing 88-run victory over Toodyay CC, posting 8/165 before bowling Toodyay out for 77.

Jack Clements produced a standout performance, earning Player of the Match honours with an unbeaten 77 off 59 balls, along with two wickets and a catch in a dominant all-round display.

The celebrations continued at the NJCA Presentation Day, where players were recognised for their performances across the season.

In the Under 12 competition, Hunter Wilkes (Goomalling CC) was named Champion Player after an exceptional season, while Geo Subin (St Joseph's School) impressed with both bat and ball, leading the bowling awards. George Boyle (York Imperials CC) also featured prominently across multiple categories, highlighting the depth of talent in the competition.

The Under 16 awards saw Winton Davey (Toodyay CC) take out Champion Player honours, capping off a consistent and high-quality season. St Joseph's School players featured strongly across both batting and bowling categories, with Liam Leeson leading the batting statistics and Dustin Manning and Cameron Clements excelling with the ball.

The association also celebrated the success of its Under 14 representative side, which completed an outstanding campaign during the Rutherford Shield, recording dominant wins across all rounds.

Parker Byfield was recognised for a remarkable Country Week performance, producing a series of exceptional innings including scores of 54 not out, 108 not out, 115 not out and 104 not out across the tournament.

Behind every run scored and wicket taken is a network of volunteers, coaches, umpires and families who make junior cricket possible.

A special acknowledgement was given to NJCA President Alan Sibley, whose ongoing dedication, time and leadership continue to drive the success of junior cricket in the region.

As the season draws to a close, the strength of the competition is clear — not only in results, but in the spirit of participation, teamwork and community that underpins it.

Congratulations to all players and award winners on a fantastic season. The association now looks ahead to welcoming everyone back for another year of junior cricket in 2026/27.



Nominate A junior from your club

Want to recognise a junior within your club? Nominate them as the Junior Club Champ. Send us a photo and 25 words why you nominated them.

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

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Tennis Celebrate 100 Years of Tennis, Community & Legacy by Kathy Saunders

Following on from The Northam Advertiser April edition, the Northam Lawn Tennis Club centenary celebration held on Saturday 21 May 2026 further highlights the tennis community, the families and friendships that have formed over generations of serves and volleys on the grass courts.



Photo: Former strong tennis families of the Northam Lawn Tennis Club, Bowen & Richter stalwarts of the Club in their day; daughters and fathers – Kellie Brown of Quairading with her father Wayne Richter of Busselton, stand with Linton Bowen of Mandurah and his daughter Jodie Schell of Goomalling.



Photo: Past presidents of the Northam Lawn Tennis Club looking very proud are John Dwyer, Tim Powell, Kathy Saunders, Kevin Sleight, Wayne Richter, Ray Collins, Julie Smith, Dennis Saunders, Kirsten Arthur, and Robert Jamieson current President.



Photo: Honoured life members of the Northam Lawn Tennis Club encapsulated are Bernie Wilcox, Wayne Richter, Ray Collins, Dennis Saunders and Kevin Smith.



Photo: Cr Chris Antonio president Shire of Northam and Lachlan Hunter MLA with longest time, serving and active tennis members, Jeanette Masters and Bev Young



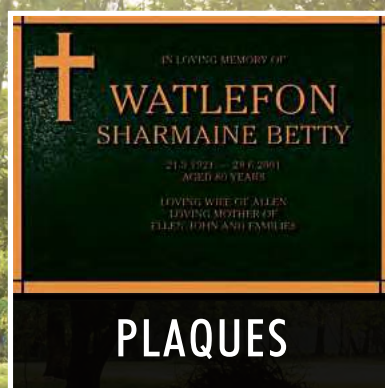
Photo: Enjoying the celebrations are members and players of the Northam Lawn Tennis Club Kirsten Arthur (ladies singles runner up club champion), Cathy North (ladies singles club champion), Kellie Podmore, Bev Young and Brittany Norrish

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Player of the final Beau Vellios stuns with incredible match winning haul



by Ry Shaw

The Northam Cricket Association 40 over competition concluded in stifling heat on Saturday March 21 with a clash between the two top-ranked teams after the

regular season – ladder leaders Roos and perennial bridesmaids Ferals.

After winning the coin toss, Ferals elected to bat first. Their hopes of posting a significant total were soon scuttled.

Kane Robinson did the early damage for Roos, claiming the first three top order batters on his way to 3 wickets for 9 runs from 7 overs with 3 maidens. He made an early case for player of the final.

Ferals were reduced further, slumping to 5 for 25, prompting Ben Howard to join Jermaine Davis Snr at the crease, looking to steady the ship. They ground out a 26-run partnership, but when Howard (12 runs from 32 balls) skied a simple catch to midwicket, the wheels fell off again.

The Howard wicket triggered a collapse of 5 wickets for 7 runs including top scorer Jermaine Davis Snr (22 from 45). Ferals were stumbling at 6 for 51 only to fall flat on their face, all out for 58 in just 15.3 overs. It was a total that was never going to be enough against the ladder leaders.

Amidst the destruction, Kane O'Driscoll pipped the other Kane for bowling honours with 4 for 19 from 6 overs. Bailey O'Driscoll (1 for 15 from 5) and Zeki Allardyce (2 for 14 from 4.4) chimed in.

The second innings stuck to the Roos' script as their openers knocked off the first ten runs and a Ferals fielder put down an important chance at backward square leg to give Roos captain Braydon Beck a life.

However, after Beau Vellios made the initial breakthrough, the game turned. He ripped through the Roos top order with a rapid 5-for to leave Roos staggering from 1 for 11 to 5 for 20. He pitched full and straight, hitting the stumps or trapping batters in front, and roaring with each breakthrough. Suddenly, 59 to win looked a long way away.

The top order collapse finally brought Jaime Forbes to the crease, the Roos' most destructive bat, fresh off 83 in the previous fixture against the same attack. He set about resurrecting Roos' innings with Cody Gorbig.

Vellios wasn't done yet. He broke the steadying

partnership and removed the incoming batter for his 6th and 7th wicket. Jermaine Davis Snr (1 for 32 from 8) then collected his first wicket after bowling unchanged from the other end.

Roos were 8 for 46, requiring a further 13 to win.

While Forbes remained at the crease, they still seemed likely. He struck the ball powerfully, hitting two to the boundary and two over it. The first maximum was a missed chance parried over the boundary by the fielder at deep backward square leg off the bowling of Davis Snr. The second was a statement – a huge on drive between midwicket and long on that cleared the boundary by more than twenty metres off the bowling of dangerman Vellios.

The game was in the balance and a result, either way, would come quickly as Roos reached 52 with 7 runs to win and two wickets remaining.

Vellios had the final say in this contest within a contest with a delivery that thudded into Forbes' front pad for his 8th wicket.

Forbes (26 from 27 balls with 2 fours and 2 sixes) had threatened to clinch the game as he compiled the top score for either side.

After 15.2 overs, Roos were 9 for 52 with 7 runs to win and one wicket remaining.

Under immense pressure, the final Roos batsman attempted to defend the first ball he faced from Vellios but was struck on the pad and adjudged LBW after a loud appeal.

It sparked jubilant, chaotic and some distasteful scenes to end a thrilling contest.

There was no detracting from the extraordinary performance of player of the final Beau Vellios who effectively singlehandedly bowled Ferals to victory with his incredible 9 for 19 from 7.3 overs with 2 maidens. No players present could recall having ever previously played in a game with a 9-for.

Ferals were NCA 40 over champions for the first time and the curse was lifted.

Available after 10.30am for a limited time at participating restaurants. Serving suggestion.