



BUCKETTS WAY

Neighbourhood
Group Inc.

January 2026 Newsletter



Tracey, Julienne, Jo, Marji and Sharon

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER OF 2026

As we step into a new year, we would like to take a moment to wish all our participants, families and carers a happy, healthy start to 2026. We look forward to continuing to support you in the months ahead.

We would also like to remind everyone that Australia Day will be observed as a public holiday on Monday, 26 January. Our office will be closed for the day, and some services will be affected. If you haven't already spoken with your BWNG Care Partner about your services, please contact our team.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to another year of working together.

EMBRACE DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS & STATEMENTS IN 2026

As we start the new year, why not make 2026 the year you go digital? One easy way to do this is by receiving your newsletters and statements by email instead of the post.

Switching to digital has many benefits:

- **Faster delivery** – get the latest BWNG news and updates straight to your inbox.
- **Environmentally friendly** – reduce paper use and help the planet.
- **Send to multiple people** – your carers or family members can receive a copy too, so you never miss an update.
- **Easy to store and search** – keep past newsletters at your fingertips.

It's simple to switch. Just let your BWNG Care Partner know your preferred email address, and we'll make sure your newsletters and statements start arriving digitally.

Embracing digital is a small step that can make staying informed easier and more convenient than ever.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS FOR THE YEAR

Although our team advise you of any special dates impacting your services, it is still a good idea to keep track of what public holidays are coming up.

Gazetted public holidays are subject to higher pay rates for workers and may affect availability or price, if you require our services on a public holiday.

To help you plan ahead here is a list of all the public holidays observed in NSW this year.

- **Australia Day**
Monday 26 January
- **Good Friday**
Friday 3 April
- **Easter Saturday**
Saturday 4 April
- **Easter Sunday**
Sunday 5 April
- **Easter Monday**
Monday 6 April
- **ANZAC Day**
Saturday 25 April
- **King's Birthday**
Monday 8 June
- **Labour Day**
Monday 5 October
- **Christmas Day**
Friday 25 December
- **Boxing Day Holiday**
(Because Boxing Day falls on a Saturday)

January 2026 Newsletter

FOOD SAFETY IN HOT WEATHER

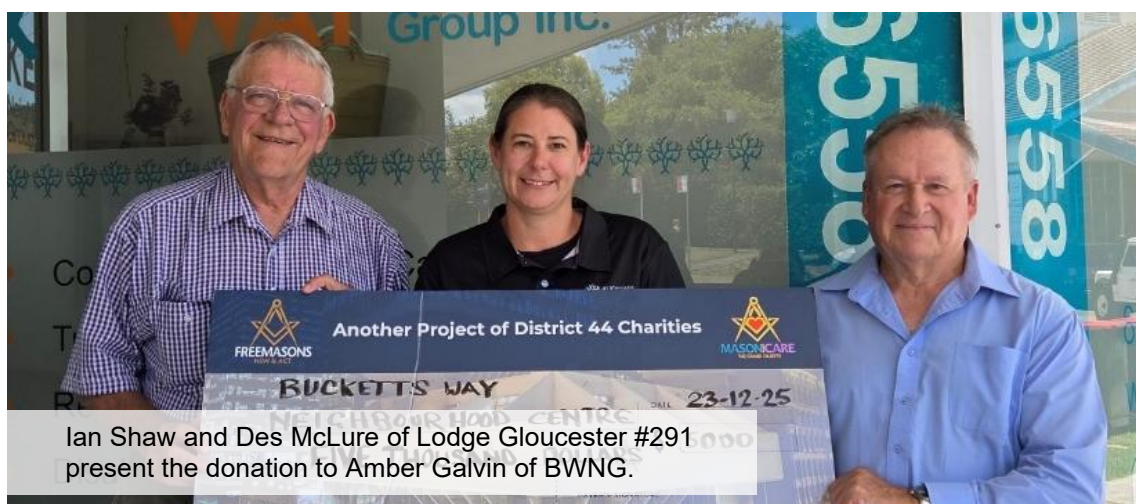
Warmer weather can cause bacteria to grow faster, including the bacteria which causes food poisoning.

Food safety is especially relevant to seniors as older people can be impacted acutely by food poisoning.

By practicing hygiene, proper storage and correct cooking you can minimise the risks and keep your food safe to enjoy.

Here are some tips:

- Make sure fridges and freezers are working properly. Fridges should be set below 5°C and freezers at -18°C. If you suspect your appliance is not keeping temperature you may need to check it with a thermometer.
- Wash your hands before preparing food to avoid cross-contamination.
- Ensure high-risk food such as chicken is cooked thoroughly.
- Check best-before dates. Hot weather can shorten the shelf life of some foods.
- Left-overs should be cooled quickly, stored in the fridge and used within 24-48 hours.
- Eat your hot Meals on Wheels delivery straight away – don't save it for later.



GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM TWO COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

BWNG recently received generous donations of \$5,000 each from *District 44 Masonic Charities* and *Gloucester Community Shop* to aid in the delivery of our programs and services.

District 44 Masonic Charities Incorporated is a community-focused charitable entity operated by Freemasons within our region. A key fundraising initiative of District 44 Charities is 'Shop 44,' an op shop located within Taree Masonic Centre. *Shop 44* is run by volunteer helpers and sells donated goods.

Gloucester Community Shop is a second-hand shop in Church St, Gloucester, which helps raise money for local causes. The shop is operated by volunteers and helps divert waste from landfill by recycling pre-loved items.

The support of organisations like the Freemasons and Gloucester Community Shop means that we can respond to the needs of the people of Gloucester when support is needed most.

Last year that included providing over \$100,000 in financial assistance and emergency food relief to the community. We also facilitated programs to help our young people build skills and gain experience. We delivered 5,464 hot meals and we injected \$3.6 million in employment back into the Gloucester economy.

This would not be possible without the support of organisations like the Freemasons and Gloucester Community Shop. We extend our heartfelt thanks.





The beginning of a new era - Kylie and Nicole hold the first signed Support at Home service agreements.

SUPPORT AT HOME – THE NEXT CHAPTER

We are now almost three months into the first phase of the Australian Government’s new aged care program, Support at Home.

The most important thing for us is that your services have continued without interruption. Making sure you continue to receive the support you rely on is what really matters, and we are proud of the work our team has undertaken behind the scenes to make this happen.

While much of the change has happened out of sight, our team has performed a significant amount of additional work to meet the new program requirements, including:

- Reviewing and updating hundreds of policies and procedures to match the new program.
- Updating and replacing many of our forms and documents.
- Rebuilding and reconfiguring large parts of our client management and reporting software systems.
- Retraining our administrative team in the new program structure.

Under Support at Home, reporting and record-keeping requirements are more detailed. You may notice that we are asking more questions or carefully documenting contact. This is necessary to meet government requirements and ensure your services are delivered correctly.

As with any new government program, particularly one of this scale, some early challenges and system “bugs” were expected. We did experience some issues with our first monthly statements and are continuing to work through these. We apologise for any inconvenience and thank you sincerely for your patience and understanding.

We would like to thank our staff, participants and stakeholders for their ongoing support as we continue to refine our processes.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact our team.

LEGAL AID CLINIC RETURNS FOR 2026

Gloucester’s free legal advice clinic has commenced for 2026

The clinic operates on the first and third Monday of each month and is facilitated by practicing solicitor Eddie Roux of Legal Sphere Taree.

Legal Aid can help with all Family, Civil and Criminal Law issues.

If you have a legal issue, you need help with, please call our team to book an appointment Ph: 6558 2454.



DENISON STREET OFFICE OPENING SOON!

We’ve enlisted a number of local businesses and contractors to complete the retrofitting of 29 Denison Street, including Galvin Construction, Shady Solutions and John Judd Professional Painting and Home Maintenance.

Work is proceeding as planned, and it has been exciting to see this historic building with deep roots in our community receive a new lease on life.

With demand for our services only increasing our team has outgrown BWNG’s current premises at 88 King Street.

Our Ageing and Disability Services team will move to the Denison St building to give our clients easier access, while BWNG’s other services will remain in the current premises.

We expect to open the doors of 29 Denison Street in late February or early March, so stay tuned!



ENERGY BILL HELP

The NSW Government's Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme offers payments of up to \$400 per household, twice a financial year to help with the cost of energy bills.

You could be eligible for assistance through the EAPA Scheme if you are finding it hard to pay your electricity or gas bill due to short-term affordability issues, or a crisis or emergency such as:

- unexpected medical expenses
- higher than usual energy bills
- family illness or family crisis
- other unexpected expenses or bills.

The way it works is simple:

1. Through an appointment with BWNG your eligibility and amount of EAPA help available to you is identified.
2. BWNG processes your EAPA request online.
3. If successful, payments are sent electronically to your energy provider to apply to your account, usually within five business days.

It is also a great idea to talk to your electricity provider to see what other NSW Government rebates and concessions you may be eligible for, including:

- Low Income Household Rebate
- NSW Gas Rebate
- Life Support Rebate
- Medical Energy Rebate
- Seniors Energy Rebate for self-funded retirees

To apply for assistance through the EAPA scheme please contact our team and make an appointment Ph: 6558 2454.



KING ST CENTRE UPDATE

Thank you, Killer Graffix for producing the signage which has recently been installed for the King Street Centre, at 47 King St Gloucester.

We have three services operating from the centre:

- **Melt** – providing therapeutic massage and wellness services
Ph: 0423 533 438
- **Key Community Group** – helping people with disability, disadvantage, and people who may need extra support to engage in social, economic and community life. **Ph: 1300 539 562**
- **Tailor Allied Health** – physiotherapy and psychological support services. **Ph: 4981 0416**

MAKING THE MOST OF SUPPORT AT HOME FUNDING

Under the new system your aged care funding is provided quarterly, rather than building up continuously over time. This means it's important to plan ahead and use your funding within each quarter.

Only a small amount of unused funding can carry over into the next quarter (up to 10% or \$1,000 whichever is greater). Any funding not used beyond this limit is returned to the Australian Government.

The goal of this funding is to help you remain safe, supported and independent in your own home, so we encourage you to make the most of it to support your wellbeing and day-to-day needs.

Depending on your care plan, funding may be used for a range of supports, including:

- **Domestic assistance** – cleaning, laundry, dishes and shopping
- **Meal support** – meal preparation, cooking and assistance with eating
- **Personal care** – showering, grooming, dressing and continence care
- **Transport** – getting to appointments, shopping or social activities
- **Social support** – companionship, community connection and carer respite
- **Home and garden** – minor maintenance and light gardening

If you're unsure how to best use your funding, or if your needs have changed, we encourage you to speak with your BWNG Care Partner. Any changes or additional services will need to be included in your care plan, and your Care Partner is there to help you explore options and plan ahead.