

BRIMBANK & NORTHWEST

Star Weekly

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Grand final fever

Brimbank is a sea of red, white and blue as footy fever grips the west. Diehard Bulldogs fans are showing their support by decking out in their houses in red, white and blue. Among those showing their colours is Hillside's Bridges family who painted their fence.

■ Story: Page 5.

(Damian Janevski) 250880_02

JACKSON (FRONT), LUKE AND ANGELA BRIDGES WITH DOG HARLEY

'Hate' graffiti on the rise

By Tara Murray

Anti-Semitic graffiti found in the Keilor area has been condemned by police and Australia's leading civil rights organisations. Spray painted Swastika symbols were recently found at Caroline Chisholm Park in Keilor, while there have also been reports of homophobic graffiti in the area. Brimbank council has since removed the graffiti and reported it to police. Brimbank infrastructure and city services director Neil Whiteside said the graffiti "has no

place in our community". Keilor Downs senior sergeant Adam Beuliv said police would increase patrols around Caroline Chisholm Park in response to the graffiti. Anti-Semitic graffiti has also been reported in Broadmeadows and Mernda in the last two weeks. Northern suburbs MP Andrew Giles has launched a petition calling on the community to "reject this sort of hate". Anti-Defamation Commission chairman Dvir Abramovich said the reports were troubling and ominous. Parents taking their

children for a walk in a park should not be confronted with these disturbing messages. Whenever such incidents happen, there is chilling emotional damage on all community members," Dr Abramovich said. "This craven display of intolerance against people of all faiths is a sad reminder of the lengths extremists will go to express their unbridled bigotry and serves as a wake-up call that anti-Semitism and racism are on the rise. "We know that propaganda efforts by these hardcore racists are on the increase, and these incidents are the latest in a string of similar

attempts to spread this dangerous agenda across Melbourne." A Victoria Police spokesperson said everyone had the right to feel safe in the community. "We understand incidents of anti-Semitism can leave communities feeling targeted, threatened and vulnerable. These incidents have no place in our society. "There is no excuse to engage in behaviour that promotes fear or hate in our community. "We treat any report of anti-Semitism seriously, whether it happens on the street or online."

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Pop-up boost for mental health

By Tara Murray

A pop-up COVID-19 pandemic mental health and wellbeing service is expected to help provide urgent care to those most in need.

The state government last week announced there would be 20 statewide pop-up COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing services established to help already stretched services.

cohealth will deliver a service which provides support for Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Melbourne and Melton residents.

cohealth chief executive Nicole Bartholomeusz said the pandemic has taken

a toll on many people in a number of different ways.

She said the pop-up service would provide support for people who are struggling with mental health issues.

“A pandemic is not just a physical health phenomenon; it affects individuals and the broader community creating anxiety, stress, stigma, and fear,” she said.

“Loss of income, isolation from friends and family and disrupted education can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions, and trigger episodes in people with no history of mental ill-health.

“Investing in community-based mental health services is a sensible investment that helps our health system work more efficiently. It will fast track specialist care for people who need urgent support, while reducing the burden on acute responses such as ambulances and emergency departments.”

People will be able to access the service, which are set to be running by the end of this month, via a free 1300 number and website which will connect them with trained mental health workers in their area, who are based at community health services.

Ms Bartholomeusz said she knows people

in the western suburbs had felt the most devastating health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The state government also announced further funding for Triple P parenting programs, for LGBTIQ+ community organisations, to support the mental health workforce to better respond to patients presenting with trauma and funding to the Royal Children’s Hospital, Vichealth and key partners.

Orygen executive director Professor Patrick McGorry said the organisation was extremely grateful for this extra funding. He said the system had been overwhelmed for some years.



Sandra and Claude Ceccomancini, owners of Arunel Estate Farm, which was the location for the final episode of the new hit drama ‘Clickbait’. (Damjan Janevski) 250520_05 **Inset:** Behind the scenes from the filming of Clickbait. (Supplied)

Roadmap to new normal

Brimbank residents have a clearer idea when they can see their friends and family and get back to the thing they love doing.

The state government announced Victoria’s roadmap out of the lockdown on Sunday, with the easing of restrictions based around the national plan.

Small changes will happen when the state reaches 80 per cent first dose for over 16s, with bigger changes set down for 70 per cent double dose and then 80 per cent double dose.

Under the current vaccine rate, the state is expected to reach 70 per cent double dose about October 26.

When that mark is hit the travel limit will be increased to 25 kilometres, things like religious ceremonies, outdoor dining, community sports training, outdoor pools and entertainment venues will open with limited numbers for those who are fully vaccinated.

The next mark, 80 per cent double dose, is expected to be reached around November 5. This mark will see regional and metropolitan areas become one, with no travel limits. Most businesses will be able to open up at that point, in limited capacities, for people who are fully vaccinated. Visitors in homes will also be allowed.

Premier Daniel Andrews said he hoped that people could have 30 people in the home for Christmas celebrations.

Mr Andrews said that opening up too soon before people had the chance to be vaccinated would result in an overloaded hospital system.

“The path to being open again will be difficult – but essential to moving forward as a state,” he said.

“Victoria’s new roadmap to deliver the national plan sets us on a hopeful path to opening while also preserving our health system.”

Winery shines on the small screen

Keilor’s Arundel Farm Estate is in the spotlight as part of the new hit Netflix series, Clickbait.

The estate was the location for the filming of the final episode of the American-Australian miniseries.

The series centres around the abduction of Nick Brewer and the race to undercover who is behind it.

The estate’s Sandra Ceccomancini said it was exciting having the film crew out at the farm in November.

“They were here in November for seven days,

between 7pm and 7am,” she said.

“A lot of people have been excited when they’ve found out it was filmed here, some are amazed.

“The whole setup was really interesting.”

It’s not the first time the location has been used as a filming site. The farm is part of a Flims Victoria list.

In recent years it’s been used in advertisements for well known companies, while Ms Ceccomancini said she was told that it was used to film some of Gallipoli before they

owned the place.

The filming and the release of the show is some good news in what has been a tough two years for the business with the COVID-19 lockdown.

“We’ve been closed down for so long,” Ms Ceccomancini said.

“It’s beyond a joke. The vines keep growing all the time. The restaurant has just stopped as we didn’t think it would be worth doing take away as we are a little bit further out.

“All the staff just want to get work.”

Sunshine North paint company fined over noise pollution

Sunshine North paint and coatings manufacturer AkzoNobel has been fined for noise pollution.

The Environment Protection Authority last week announced the company had been fined \$8261 for breaching a remedial notice.

The company received the notice in December 2020, requiring it to modify or install controls on its activities and processes by February this year to reduce noise, but the company failed to comply.

EPA western metropolitan regional manager Stephen Lansdell said sound monitoring equipment installed three days after the deadline showed people in nearby homes were still being exposed to too much noise.

“The official notice from EPA specified noise limits of 58 decibels during the day, 51 dB during the evening, and 47 dB at night,” Mr Lansdell said.

“We installed EPA monitoring equipment at a home in Barwon Avenue, Sunshine North, on March 1 and left it there for just over a week.

“Data showed noise from the plant in McIntyre Road was consistently exceeding the limits.”

The sound monitoring found that noise levels detected were up to 15 dBA over the limit in the evening and between three and 11 dBA over the limit during the day.

Mr Lansdell said the company is still required to comply with the notice, and EPA

continues to actively regulate the site and work with the local community.

“I’d like to say thank you to our local community. This investigation, the [notice] and the fine all started with routine inspections by EPA officers together with local intelligence and pollution reports from residents.

“The clear message to all businesses is that if you fail to comply with EPA requirements to protect the community and the environment, you will be held accountable.”

The company is also currently subject to EPA notices requiring measures to reduce odour from the site.



Akzo Nobel has been fined by the EPA.

(Damjan Janevski) 243170_01

Tara Murray

Barro's tip licence suspended

By Tara Murray

Barro Group's licence to operate the Kealba landfill has been suspended.

The Environment Protection Authority last week announced that the licence had been suspended due to breaches caused by ongoing hotspots and odour impacting nearby residents.

The suspension follows a notice of intention to suspend issued by the EPA in July, alleging Barro was in contravention of its operating licence due to the odour impacts of the hotspots.

Barro Group and the EPA are currently involved in legal action in the Supreme Court

regarding Barro's request for an extension to a clean up notice that was issued by the EPA.

Hotspots have burned at the site for almost two years, prompting residents to call for the site to be permanently shut down.

Since the hotspot fires started, Barro has been issued with five clean up notices and a noise notice, while they have received two sanctions.

Barro voluntarily ceased accepting waste at the site in December.

Barro can't accept waste until EPA is satisfied contravention of its licence has been rectified.

EPA chief executive Lee Miezis said the EPA had received more than 900 pollution reports

about the landfill from residents.

"We have had clean-up notices on this site since December 2019," he said. "This is not acceptable to the residents or EPA."

"We will continue to regulate until the company fully extinguishes all hotspots and prevents them from reoccurring in the future, while ensuring there would be no financial cost to the community."

"Protecting the health and wellbeing of the residents and the environment is our first priority and we will continue to use whatever powers we have to make sure the hotspots are extinguished as quickly and safely as possible."



Kealba landfill. (EPA Victoria)



Bobbie Speed. (Damjan Janevski) 250796_02 **Right:** Alby Speed in 2019, and in 1948 at age 18. (Pictures: Footscray Hockey Club)



Footscray Hockey Club honours Alby

Footscray Hockey Club has named a pitch in honour of Alby Speed who died with COVID-19 at age 90 last year.

Vice president Nicole Virtuoso said as a Yarraville iron foundry apprentice in 1949, Alby was ready to go when two colleagues challenged him to come and watch a game of hockey in his local area.

Alby not only went to watch, he played that day and was hooked ever more.

"From that time forward, the FHC's history is synonymous with Alby's contribution and the personal experiences he has shared with us all," she said.

"Little did Alby know that that day's involvement was the beginning of a 75-year connection to his beloved Footscray Hockey Club.

"Alby was awarded life membership of FHC in 1962 and received Hockey Victoria's Award of Merit in 1990.

"The Women's Club Champion (first XI Best and Fairest perpetual award trophy) is named after Alby and more recently the F1 ground was also named in his honour."

Alby's wife, Bobbie Speed said it wasn't known how Alby caught COVID-19.

"We're never quite sure how he got it, it's

possible that I gave it to him because at the early stages when we didn't know it was airborne like it is," she said. "The first I knew ... I couldn't get him to get out of a chair of a night.

"From then, it's a bit of a blank because I got COVID myself and was very ill with it."

Ms Virtuoso said: "...We are grieving now as any family would, as a very big part of our family will no longer be with us.

"Rest in peace our beautiful friend, may you be gracing the hockey fields where ever you may be."

Goya Dmytryshchak

Study blitz underway for VCE

Are you – or a VCE student you know – in need some extra last minute help ahead of exams?

A Equal Ed and Brimbank council-led VCE study blitz can help.

The online program will offer study support across a number subjects.

Equal Ed's Jeffrey Lai said the social enterprise had planned to run the blitz in-person at the Sydenham Neighbourhood House, but it will now be held online because of lockdown restrictions.

"A lot of year 12's, especially in the area at the end of the year, are looking for some extra support," he said.

"Some are struggling and it's a stressful time for them. Through Sydenham Neighbourhood house we will have tutors and offer different strategies and free support."

Mr Lai, along with Edward Le and Liam Cross, has previously provided support at the house during exam time in 2018 and 2019.

So far more than 30 people have pre-registered for sessions this year.

Mr Lai said the past two years had been hard for students and teachers.

"A lot of people are zoomed out and maybe something taught a different way might help."

Sessions started this week and will run until October 19.

To register: <https://tinyurl.com/StudyBlitz2021>

Tara Murray

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Claro



New social housing for Brimbank

By Tara Murray

More than 100 houses will be built in Brimbank for those who need it most, as part of the state government's Big Housing Build.

The state government recently announced the first round of the build, which includes 2352 social housing properties across 89 projects.

Each project will be completed in partnership with a housing provider.

In Brimbank, there are three different projects, which will result in 108 properties being built.

In St Albans there will be 53 one, two or

“ This is so much more than a construction project ” - Richard Wynne

three bedroom properties built in partnership with Women's Housing Limited.

A partnership with BapCare Affordable Housing will result in 47 properties being built in Keilor Downs.

Eight properties will be built in Sydenham in partnership with Affordable Rentals Victoria.

Women's Housing Limited chief executive

Judy Line said the project would provide much-needed housing.

She said the housing would help women and their families escaping family violence, as well as older and Aboriginal women.

Work on the projects is expected to start later this year.

The Big Housing Build is set to deliver more than 12,000 new homes to boost Victoria's social housing supply by 10 per cent.

Housing Minister Richard Wynne said the houses would give more people the certainty of a roof over their head.

“More than \$1 billion in projects will start

this year – delivering new housing and hope to thousands of Victorians,” he said.

“This is so much more than a construction project – it's a safe place to call home, training and apprenticeship opportunities and thousands of local jobs.”

The announcement is the second social and affordable housing boost in Brimbank in recent months.

The state government is currently building 51 new social and affordable homes, with 14 of those homes already finished in Albion and Sunshine. Four are currently under construction in St Albans.

Go red, white and blue!

Grand final fever has washed over the west as Western Bulldogs fans dream of premiership success.

While die hard supporters can't get to Saturday's game against Melbourne due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are showing their support in different ways.

Hillside's Luke Bridges spent 15 hours painting his fence in red, white and blue last week.

“It was just a bit of fun and we wanted to show our support from here,” he said. “Everyone is walking past with a smile on their face.”

A Bulldogs member for 48 years, Mr Bridges was at the last grand final with a large group of friends and family.

He said this year they would connect via Zoom.

Sunshine's Peta Hayes was another who was at the 2016 grand final.

She said the last grand final really lifted the

community and hoped the Bulldogs could do it again this year.

“The lead up to this grand final will be different from 2016, with no grand final parade to attend,” she said.

“We will be decorating our home and watching the 2016 final series again in the lead up.”

Paul Cutajar, 84, while also be decorating his house to show his love from the Bulldogs – and will be in touch with his daughter, Lorraine and her family, who are Melbourne supporters, during the game.

Meanwhile, in Taylors Lakes, Esther Cini decorated her window, urging her beloved doggies to “yield to none”.

Paul Cutajar all dressed up in his Doggie clothes. **Right:** Peta Hayes and her family at the last Bulldogs grand final; Esther Cini's window in Taylors Lakes. (Pictures: Supplied)



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Call for better buses in the west

By Tara Murray

A new campaign has been launched to improve bus services in the west while also focusing on the environment.

Better Buses for the West is calling for frequent, reliable and electric buses in Melbourne's west, and a better bus network statewide.

Friends of the Earth Melbourne, through their sustainable cities collective, ran an online forum last week, called Better Buses for the West, with more than 100 people tuning in.

The group's Laura Sykes said the improving bus services in the west was important on a number of fronts, including reducing emissions from cars.

"The west is heavily reliant on cars," she said.

"But there's a lot of people unable to drive and public transport is their only option. Many don't have that access to basic services, with the lack of accessible public transport."

Ms Sykes said the group had three key focuses in their campaign.

The group want bus services every 10

minutes and for the services connect to other public transport like trains and trams.

The group is also keen to see the introduction of electric buses in Victoria.

"You have to have a car to get somewhere in a timely manner," Ms Sykes said.

"It's a really important area to improve transport while also linking it with emissions. It is a social justice issue.

"We don't want to see people limited due to not being able to access public transport."

Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Wyndham are the three council areas the group is

focusing on most.

The campaign will build a network of local climate, transport, union, community and social sector groups to demonstrate support for bus reform that reduces emissions, creates local jobs and connects to existing and future transport infrastructure.

Ms Sykes said that conversations with the three councils have been fruitful.

"They are some of the biggest areas of growth," she said.

"We've had a lot of support from the council's community groups in those areas."



Ajak Deu, Dylan Wenzel-Halls, Adisu Bayew, Ben Collins show their support to the Bulldogs. (Supplied)

Tougher fines for dumping

Rubbish dumpers are being put on notice, with Brimbank council set to issue tougher penalties.

Under stronger powers, council officers have the ability to issue on-the-spot fines of up to \$1800 for individual dumpers, up from \$361.

Businesses also face tougher penalties of on-the-spot-fines of up to \$9087.

Brimbank council spent about \$1 million in 2020-21 investigating, enforcing and cleaning up illegally dumped rubbish.

It's hoped the new fines will help act as a deterrent to the dumping of rubbish.

Mayor Ranka Rasic said the cost of rubbish dumping to the community was shocking.

"Actions like tougher penalties aimed at the minority of people doing the wrong thing will hopefully be a strong deterrent," Cr Rasic said.

"I also urge the rest of our community to keep doing the right thing - recycle, donate items in good condition to charity, dispose of items you no longer need responsibly."

Ways to get rid of rubbish include the council's at-call hard waste collection service, with one free collection per year.

Electric waste like televisions, computers, hard drives, printers, faxes, clean cardboard, paint tins and all types of batteries can be dropped off at council's Resource Recovery Centre when it reopens after restrictions are eased.

Anyone who comes across litter can report it at brimbank.vic.gov.au/report-it

Tara Murray

Western United backs the Bulldogs

Western United players traded the soccer ball for a football last week.

The playing group changed things up at training to show their support for fellow western suburbs side, the Western Bulldogs ahead of this week's AFL grand final.

Italian star Alessandro Diamanti showed he had the tricks now matter what shape the ball, including a dribbling kick from the boundary which found the back of the goals.

United NPL player Ben Collins has been a Bulldogs supporter his whole life.

He said United, like the Bulldogs, gives people of the western suburbs a team to call their own.

"Growing up, we would always go to games together as a family, and although there have been some pretty dark times as Bulldogs supporters, the last half-dozen years have been pretty exciting.

"The pinnacle was going to see the Dogs win the 2016 grand final, which has satisfied my dad's dream of seeing a premiership in his lifetime."

Collins said the two club's had a good partnership, with United playing a home game at Whitten Oval during the 2019-20 season.

Ajak Deu is another Bulldogs supporter after going on school excursions to the club when he first came to Australia.

Collins wished the Bulldogs luck ahead of the big game.

"Hopefully, they can add a third premiership next week in the Grand Final, Go Dogs!"

Tara Murray

Students push for safe spaces for recreational hooning

A team of students from Keilor believe they have a solution to the state's hooning problem, which they are taking to parliament.

Despite increasingly harsh laws against anti-social driving in Victoria, hooning is still common in many towns and suburbs.

A team of six students from Overnewton Anglican Community College will present a bill calling for the development of safe spaces for recreational hooning to the YMCA Youth Parliament - a parliament sitting made up of 120 of their peers from across Victoria.

They say their proposal will reduce levels of dangerous and disruptive driving in communities.

The bill aims to provide a supplement to existing anti-hooning measures, which the team sees as being unrealistic and ineffective.

As it stands, anti-hooning laws in Victoria

aim to prevent hooning through fines and seizing cars.

Hoon driving though is still a mainstay of many suburbs and towns, with almost 1500 vehicles impounded last year alone for racing, excessive noise and smoke, and speeding, according to Victorian Police's impoundment statistics.

In contrast to these current laws, the bill put forward by the Overnewton team does not aim to prevent hoon driving entirely, but rather proposes giving drivers a place where they can partake in racing, dangerous and stunt driving, in a controlled environment off the streets.

"It's impossible to stop hoon driving outright," explained team members Mads.

"We want to create an area where it can be done in safe practice and makes our roads safer as well as our drivers and innocents."

The group said these areas would consist of dedicated facilities located at least 25 kilometres from residential areas.

They would require all drivers to hold, at minimum, a probationary licence, have a car that meets safety regulations and complete a round of safety training. Emergences services would be on call at all times.

The Overnewton team argues these facilities would take dangerous and disruptive drivers off roads and make sure those who practise dangerous driving - as an outlet, for fun or for sport - do so safely.

They also argue their bill would support communities - giving both drivers a place to connect with like-minded people, and local businesses a new market.

The concept of spaces where dangerous driving is legalised is not a wholly new one.

The Overnewton team does not anticipate their bill to proceed without opposition.

For the team though, these criticisms can be addressed, for the most part, through research.

Along with statistics showing the effectiveness of safe injection sites, the team also points to the inclusion in their bill of plans for a six-month trial of one of their facilities, which they anticipate would prove the efficacy of their proposal.

"If we can provide a safe place for people to do this, then why shouldn't we try something a little bit controversial?" Jonathan said.

Bills that are successfully passed in Youth Parliament are then passed on to be considered by Minister for Youth Ros Spence.

Charlie Goldberg is a member of the YMCA Youth Press Gallery.

Alfrieda Street safety concerns

By Tara Murray

Increased illegal and anti-social behaviour in Alfrieda Street, St Albans, has left residents fearing for their safety.

Residents have contacted both police and council expressing their concerns about illegal behaviour that has got worse as the lockdowns have continued.

Long time St Albans resident Jenny Isa said she had never seen the street like this before.

"It's not great," she said.

"In 30 years I've never seen anything like

this. There's people selling things on the footpath. We need to be looking at and seeing if we can get organisations in to help in the area.

"We need to try and make it a safe street now. The businesses there can only do so much."

Ms Isa said the council had some positive things planned for the street, but something needed to be done now before the poor behaviour worsened.

Keilor Downs senior sergeant Adam Beauliv said police were aware of concerns in the area.

"We've had complaints about people selling

goods in the street," he said.

"We've run a couple of small ops and arrested a few people. We have tasked our officers to patrol when they have the opportunity."

Brimbank mayor Ranka Rasic said the council would look to support the local community and businesses along the strip.

"The council wants the community to feel safe wherever they are in Brimbank," she said.

"Council will continue to work closely with Victoria Police, trader associations and local service providers to ensure a coordinated approach to addressing safety concerns

and keeping the area safe for the whole community."

The council recently engaged with the community to create a longer term vision for the future design of Alfrieda Street to help establish the draft Alfrieda Street master plan.

Upgrades to the Alfrieda Street Civic Plaza were completed last year.

It involved converting the former bus interchange into a gathering space for the community with improved safety, colourful public art, more shade trees, landscaping and plenty of seating.



Kids can cook up a storm these school holidays. (Supplied)

Cooking up a storm in the holidays

Looking for a way to keep your kids busy during lockdown school holidays?

Jamie's Ministry of Food's national online school holiday program, run by The Good Foundation, could be the answer.

The Good Foundation chief executive Siobhan Boyle said that many participants have said that the program makes them feel more connected to the outside world.

"Our school holiday program will teach students aged 12 and up the basics of food, nutrition and cooking, as well as some of Jamie's special tips and tricks," she said.

Participants will learn how to make meals from scratch, by baking, grilling, sautéing, boiling and roasting fresh ingredients.

"Studies show that kids who learn to cook take their skills well into adulthood and have

improved overall health and wellbeing. That's why our programs equip people of all ages with skills that make it simpler and quicker to cook healthy, delicious meals."

Jamie's Ministry of Food is committed to improving the nutritional education and cooking skills for locals and priority groups.

The program will run across both weeks of the school holidays.

Funding for bin education

Melton council is preparing to roll out an information campaign to help residents make the switch to a new four-bin waste service.

The council has received \$89,600 through the first round of the Recycling Victoria Household Education and Behaviour Change Fund, which is helping drive the campaign to introduce new glass recycling and food and garden organics household waste services.

The aim of the grant is to help councils educate their communities ahead of the transition to a four bin recycling service, as part of the goal to divert 80 per cent of waste from landfill by 2030.

Melton council has also recently introduced a new flat fee of \$332 for all households that receive a council waste service as part of its drive to help reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Brimbank council didn't apply for the Recycling Victoria Household Education and Behaviour Change funding, but plans to apply for funding in a future grant round which aligns better with its time frame to introduce the new bin system.

In May, Brimbank councillors considered a report outlining potential options for Brimbank to transition to a new, four-bin collection. More details will be considered at a future council meeting.

Energy, Environment and Climate Change Minister Lily D'Ambrosio said educating communities on these new household recycling services is essential for a successful transition to a four-bin waste service.

"Our new household recycling services will maximise recycling capacity, create new jobs and help reduce the amount of waste going to landfill," she said.

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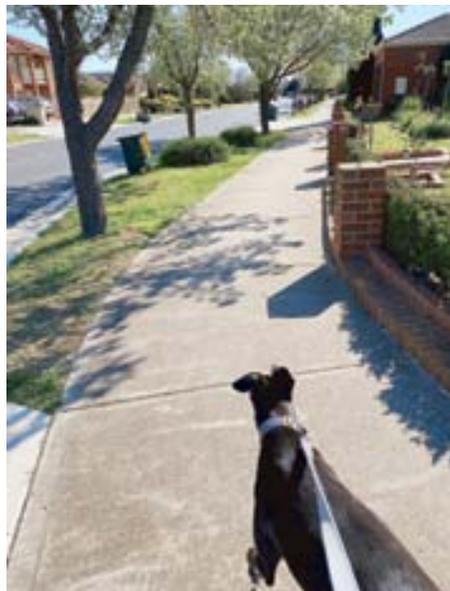
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Views on two of the staff members' walks. (Pictures: Supplied)

Walking for a cause

Deer Park West Primary School staff have been hitting the pavers to raise funds for Camp Quality.

What started as one staff member registering for the Big Walk for Little Kids, a virtual walking challenge, turned into a group of staff members getting on board.

Office administration staff member Kelly Myall had a pretty special reason to get involved.

"Nearly seven years ago, we lost our school's performing arts-visual arts teacher, Emily Day to cancer," she said.

"Every year since her passing I try and raise money for the Cancer Council by having morning teas at work but of course the past couple of years have been tough.

"This year when DPW decided to join the Big Walk for Little Kids I didn't think Emily would

mind that if this year the money went to the kids."

Ms Day's parents were kind enough to donate \$200 to the fundraising efforts.

Teacher Dakota Balintong said, "if all it takes is walking 100km in a month to raise enough money for young children and their families to visit the camp and join in experiences, education and care, I would complete this every month of the year."

Melissa McFarlane, a teacher and a mother of three, said she joined the walk because she knows how lucky she is that her children are all healthy and it's her way of supporting children with cancer.

To donate: <https://fundraise.campquality.org.au/fundraisers/DeerParkWestPrimarySchool>

Tara Murray

Briefs

Business grants extended

Applications for the Brimbank small business grants have been extended. Local businesses can apply for grants of \$10,000 for projects to adapt to COVID-related challenges and support business growth. Businesses must be located in Brimbank, more than 12 months old, and have a turnover of less than \$10 million pa. Apply at <https://brimbank.smartygrants.com.au/> by 4pm on September 23.

Melton rolls out green bins

Melton property owners and tenants will be offered a green waste bin and second hard waste collection under a shake-up of waste services. Melton council has introduced a new flat fee of \$332 for all households that receive a council waste service. The flat fee includes an optional kerbside green bin which can accept both food and garden waste, as well as an additional hard waste collection each year. Details: melton.vic.gov.au/bins

Motorcyclist dies

Police are investigating the death of a motorcyclist in Caroline Springs on Sunday morning. Police say the motorbike struck a tree on Rockbank Middle Road about 10.30am. A 49-year-old Caroline Springs man died. Witnesses are asked to contact Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000.

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Good handwriting is vital to literacy

A recent study has investigated the links between handwriting and other literacy skills in young children, finding that handwriting automaticity, or fluency, predicted writing quality and reading skills a year later.

The researchers warn that a shift to “paperless schools” does not have strong empirical support and that it could potentially have a negative impact on students’ literacy.

Dr Anabela Malpique of Murdoch University and associate professor Deborah Pino-Pasternak of University of Canberra conducted the study, which involved 154 students and 24 teachers across seven Perth schools. They wanted to understand the effect handwriting automaticity has on children’s later literacy skills.

“A growing body of research argues specific cognitive benefits of handwriting during early childhood, including brain development, working memory, translation of thought-to-script, and overall writing quality and production.”

Despite the widespread use of technology and the current digital literacy agenda, handwriting plays a unique and fundamental role in writing development. Anecdotally described as “thinking with a pencil”, handwriting involves the integration of visual-perceptual, fine and gross motor skills with cognition

While it might be tempting to dismiss the importance of handwriting as simply cosmetic, handwriting in fact underpins many higher functions of writing.

The researchers note that poor handwriting automaticity hinders vocabulary selection, ideation and revision, while also affecting motivation, writing development and, in turn, academic success.

Automatic letter writing has been found to be the best unique predictor of the writing



Handwriting plays a fundamental role in writing development. (Supplied)

skills of early developing writers, theoretically supported by the notion that the translation of ideas into written text relies heavily on the writers’ ability to retrieve alphabet letters in memory and produce these letter forms efficiently, legibly, and automatically.

Of particular concern to the researchers were the teaching practices reported. Year 1 students spent less than 50 minutes per day practicing writing, which is the minimum recommended, while across the board there was great variability in the time students spent on writing. Writing time and instruction ranged from 30 to 120 minutes per week.

The researchers also note that Australian teachers may be focusing too much on basic

skills rather than teaching writing processes such as planning for writing and learning strategies to revise the quality of their texts.

“This may be problematic since research with primary students suggests that writing instruction in early education should include the teaching of basic writing skills and the teaching of writing processes in the same instructional protocol.”

The researchers conducting the research were also assisted by Dr Magda Sofia Roberto, their statistical consultant.

For more information contact Dr Malpique at a.malpique@murdoch.edu.au or associate professor Pino-Pasternak at deborah.pino-pasternak@canberra.edu.au.

VUSC results are a testament to hard work

The consistent resilience and hard work of the staff and students at Victoria University Secondary College has been reflected in the remarkable results for 2021’s NAPLAN results for year 7 and 9 students.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, students at Victoria University Secondary College are excelling – with year 9 students recording above the Victorian mean score in both writing and spelling for their NAPLAN test, which is a huge improvement on previous years.

The year 9 writing mean score for 2021 is 547.4 (while the state mean is 541.7) while the year 9 spelling mean score for 2021 is 579.8 (and the state mean is 578.1). Both the year 9 numeracy and reading mean scores have also consistently increased over the years as have the number of students in the top two bands in all areas.

These results are due to the hard work and effort staff at VUSC put into getting to know their students. Staff at the college use student data in professional learning teams to set priority focus areas and use student work samples and other formative assessment as evidence to plan intervention strategies and evaluate their impact to improve each student’s learning outcomes.

At VUSC, the focus on literacy and numeracy together with support frameworks for social growth and positive health and wellbeing ensures a holistic approach for students’ academic, social and personal development.

Enrolments for 2022 are open. You’re invited to join the exciting community at VUSC. Phone 9363 1155 or visit www.vusc.vic.edu.au.



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Milestone for principal

By Tara Murray

When Sunshine North Primary School principal Ken Ryan started out, he wasn't sure he wanted to be a teacher.

While at high school, he was interested in pursuing a career in computer programming. But a speech from a former student of his high school set him on the path to becoming a teacher.

The idea of living in Bendigo at teachers college and playing footy on the weekends attracted him to the career.

Fast forward to today and Mr Ryan is being recognised for 45 years of teaching.

"There's not many people who celebrate being with one employer for 45 years," he said.

"When I signed for three years at the beginning, I thought that was a lifetime. Now I don't feel like it's been 45 years of work.

"If you don't want to walk through the front gate and be ready for something different each day, you're probably not made out to be a teacher."

Mr Ryan started as a classroom teacher before becoming part of the school's administration team and then principal. He also studied at Harvard.

He started teaching regionally and taught overseas for a year in Alaska, but the western suburbs became home.

He taught at a number of different schools in Brimbank, before spending the last 21 years at Sunshine North.

Mr Ryan said while many people didn't like the idea of teaching in the western suburbs, it was something he enjoyed.

"When I first started, many didn't want to work in the western suburbs," he said.

"I found it a melting pot. Many families are starting their life in Australia and as a teacher



Ken Ryan has been recognised for 45 years of teaching. (Supplied)

you help them establish themselves.

"Now walking back into a classroom, it's great seeing the kids learning so they can reach their potential.

"Everyone is different, but students need the right person to champion for them."

Mr Ryan said the COVID-19 pandemic had presented many challenges over the past 18

months. But he says it's all part of the journey.

"When I started we put everything on the blackboard," Mr Ryan said.

"Things like computers and printers didn't exist. I say every 10 years a teacher needs to change and reassess what learning looks like.

"I introduced the one-on-one iPad program at the school. The students now need to learn to

be creative and how to communicate."

Due to the pandemic the education department won't be able to hold a ceremony to recognise long-serving teachers. However, Mr Ryan will still receive a personalised certificate of recognition and a commemorative booklet.

Mr Ryan said it is likely he will retire next year.



Gardens full of colour

Sunshine's H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens are in full bloom.

The gardens were built in the early 1900s as a community garden, but a lack of maintenance over the years left the gardens in a state of disrepair.

That is until the Friends of H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens got to work restoring the gardens to their former glory.

Friends of the H.V. McKay Memorial Garden president Melissa Mockridge said the gardens were looking really beautiful at this time of the year.

It's the first spring since the completion of works on the northern end.

"We're very pleased with the area, not just the new planting, but also the reinstatement of

the original parts of the path from the original garden back in 1909," she said.

"Everyone including the council has put a lot more effort into the gardens including employing a curator.

"Many people used to consider the gardens unsafe, we want everyone to feel comfortable and want to come and visit them."

The group, which has been together since 2007, holds occasional walking tours and is hoping to hold a festival next year.

Ms Mockridge said they were keen to get people back out in the gardens and using them more.

"It's about getting it back to what it was in the beginning."

Tara Murray



The H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens are in bloom. (Pictures: Damjan Janevski) 250815



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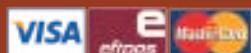
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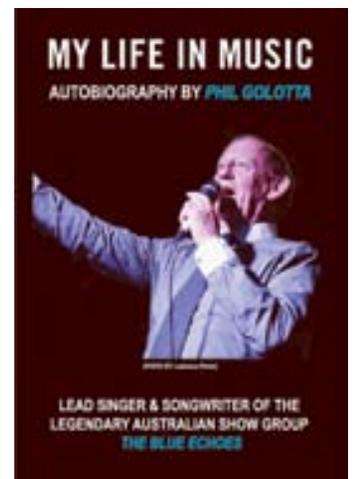
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Phil Golotta was lead singer of *The Blue Echoes* band from the sixties to the eighties. **Left:** Golotta with copies of his book. (Pictures: Supplied).



Singer's legendary life in music

Phil Golotta is no stranger to the stage. The Truganina resident spent decades performing as the lead singer of *The Blue Echoes*. He speaks with Alesha Capone about his life in music and his new autobiography.

Phil Golotta says that writing an in-demand book "is like having a hit record".

And he would know – from 1962 to 1983, Golotta was lead singer of *The Blue Echoes*, whose albums *Dancing In The Streets* and *Clap Your Hands* achieved Gold and Platinum status.

The Truganina resident says he penned his autobiography, *My Life in Music*, to chronicle his career in showbusiness for his seven children and family.

However, the book has proved popular with *Blue Echoes* fans who watched the band perform at Melbourne's hotels across the sixties, seventies and eighties.

Golotta, 82, who previously lived in Altona North and moved to Hoppers Crossing in 1981, recalls *The Blue Echoes* appearing at Tottenham Hotel's opening night.

He remembers playing to crowds of 600 people at venues such as The Tarmac (now The Westside Hotel) in Laverton and Altona Sports

Club.

"The queue to get in would be right around the entire hotel," Golotta says.

Golotta may also be familiar to television viewers, after auditioning for *The X Factor* and appearing as a judge on Channel 7's *All Together Now*.

A song written by Golotta won the Australian Popular Song Festival, run by Yamaha, in 1973.

"I wrote the song in 10 minutes after an Essendon-Carlton game, which Essendon won," he recalls.

Sung by Jamie Redfern, it went on to become a number one hit.

Golotta and Redfern also travelled to Japan to represent Australia in The World Popular Song Festival.

While at the event, Golotta says he met a "big guy with a beard and flowing robes", not realising at first that it was Greek singer Demis Roussos who has sold more than 60 million albums worldwide.

Golotta says that Roussos was a "lovely guy" who took him and Redfern out for dinner.

My Life in Music includes recollections of Golotta's involvement with other celebrities, including John Farnham, Johnny O'Keefe and Jimmy Barnes.

In 2018, Golotta experienced heart failure while on a cruise to Puerto Rico.

He was brought back to life with a defibrillator and spent 21 days in intensive care.

But Golotta has not let this stop him, adopting a regime of cycling, running and lifting weights every day.

Unfortunately, despite being in top shape, the pandemic forced Golotta to cancel 130 gigs last year.

COVID-19 also means Golotta has been unable to do his regular volunteer work at the Penrose Promenade Community Centre in Tarneit, at Wyndham's two Visitor Information Centres, and driving a bus to take elderly residents shopping and to medical

appointments.

However, he has just released a solo album titled *This is the Moment*.

In July, Golotta went on a cruise from Canada to Alaska, where he decided to enter karaoke competitions along the way.

"I was pretty bored, I thought: 'I'll go in every contest'," he says.

Golotta said that he was worried younger members of the audience would not like his singing.

Instead, he achieved standing ovations for songs like *My Way* and *New York, New York*, winning every contest and being inundated with offers to join people for a drink.

"That tour of Canada was unbelievable, I didn't have to buy a drink for 21 days," Golotta says.

Contact Golotta at pgolotta@gmail.com to buy a copy of *My Life in Music*. Cost: \$25 including postage.

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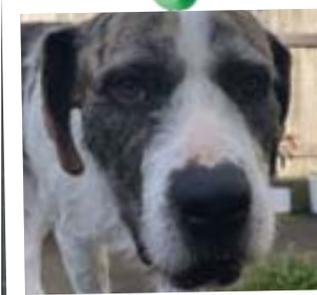
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The application is for a permit to: **REMOVAL OF THE RESTRICTIVE COVENANT CONTAINED IN TRANSFER 2015379 AS IT APPLIES TO VOLUME 08166 FOLIO 657**

The applicant for the permit is: **EASTON CONSULTING**

The application reference number is: **P471/2021**

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The responsible authority will not decide on the application before: **6th October, 2021**

The Contact Officer is: **Eunice Wong, (9249 4875)**

Any person who may be affected by the granting of the permit may object or make other submissions to the responsible authority. **Any comments received will be placed on the electronic file associated with this application and will be available for inspection.**

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- Cristiano Ronaldo plays for which English Premier League club?
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- Great Britain's men's 4 x 100m relay team are likely to be stripped of what Tokyo 2020 medal after news of a runner testing positive to banned substances?
- Australian cricket captain Tim Paine is set to undergo surgery to fix what type of injury?
- The Mexico City Capitanes are set to join which sporting league for the 2020-21 season?



Cristiano Ronaldo

- Which Australian tennis player won the women's doubles US Open title with Zhang Shuai?
- Which former NRL star was offered a Queensland State of Origin coaching job?
- Aussie Daniel Ricciardo won his first grand prix in three years at which recent European race?
- Which three-time AFL premiership captain has stood down as skipper of his club?
- A-League club Macarthur FC finished in which position on the ladder in their first season in the competition in 2020/21?
- Which 1993 sports comedy film featured a Jamaican bobsleigh team?
- By what margin did Melbourne defeat Geelong in their preliminary final match?
- US Open men's tennis champion Daniil Medvedev is ranked what number in the world?
- In September and October, against which country is the Australian women's cricket team playing a series of T20s, ODIs and a Test match?



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- Which legendary driver is the only Frenchman to become champion in Formula One history?
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- Golfer Patrick Cantlay recently won which award?
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- Which NFL team did former AFL player Arryn Siposs debut for as a punter in week one of the 2021 NFL season?
- What is the only sport that has been played on the moon?
- What alternate name is field hockey referred to in Sweden and Norway?
- How many periods are there in an ice hockey match?
- Who did the Western Bulldogs defeat in their preliminary final to reach the 2021 AFL Grand Final?

2409
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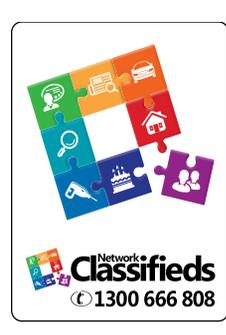
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A vibrant drive from Hyundai

By Ewan Kennedy, Marque Motoring

Hyundai has a strong lineup of models in its Kona series - everything from a relatively basic petrol engined models all the way up to a full electric. Much as we enjoy getting behind the wheel of any electric car, this week's road test review is the Kona Elite variant.

At \$31,600 plus on-road costs it's far more affordable than the (gulp) \$64,000 Highlander Extended Range full-electric model.

Styling

Kona is a cross between a hatchback and an SUV in its shape. The protection around the wheels arches adds to the SUV look. The body is stylish without going over the top. We particularly like the front with its high-level daytime running lights and the low-slung headlights.

Ground clearance is 170mm which is higher than the typical on-road hatchback but falls well short of the 210mm in "real" four-wheel drives. That 170mm does add to the appearance, though.

Safety

All Kona variants have received five stars from ANCAP. It has six airbags, forward collision warning, lane keeping assist and lane-following assist.

The Kona Elite model also has blind-spot warning, rear cross traffic alert and safe-exit warning. The automatic emergency braking recognises cars, pedestrians and cyclists at low and high speeds. It also has rear occupant alert in case you've forgotten there are kids in the back seats when you get out. No doubt it has happened somewhere sometime.

Driving

Let's get to the CVT automatic straight away as



Hyundai Kona Elite has fascinating frontal styling with the unusual arrangement of the lights.

(Pictures: Supplied)

that's what friends have been asking me about due to my previous complaints about CVTs in other cars. There's good news as Hyundai's engineers have got it pretty well sorted out and have given it a feeling of having preset ratios, it did jar a little but we soon ceased to notice what was happening under the bonnet.

You can sort of use it as a manual by changing 'gears' if you feel that way inclined. After trying this we simply left it to do its own thing.

There's less room in rear seat of the Kona than we had expected, meaning I had to move my driving seat forward a couple of notches to provide knee room for anyone behind me.

The Koreans have a long history of tuning their cars to suit Australian roads and what we Aussie drivers like in the way of handling and comfort.

Kona is obviously not a sports car but does hold on nicely during cornering and gives good feedback through the steering while and your backside.

It's a bit noisy on gravel road and there's some bump-thump on concrete road joins such as those on our road test section on the M1 motorway between Gold Coast and Brisbane.

Fuel consumption during our test period was



AT A GLANCE

DIMENSIONS, WEIGHT AND CAPACITIES:

Length: 4205 mm

Wheelbase: 2600 mm

Width: 1800 mm

Height: 1550 mm

Turning Circle: 10.6 metres

Kerb Mass: 1280 kg

Fuel Tank Capacity: 50 litres

BRAKES:

Front: Ventilated disc

Rear: Solid disc

in the 8 to 10 litres per hundred kilometres in town and suburban driving. It fell to five to six litres per hundred on country and motorway testing.

All Hyundais have a five-year/unlimited-kilometre warranty and a lifetime capped-price-servicing plan.

Summing up

The updated Hyundai Kona Elite is a pleasant car that's easy to live with. We feel the added 'extras' now fitted as standard, particular in the safety features makes it a must on your short list of cars to be seriously considered.



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Rocci's Opals dream comes true

By Tara Murray

Maddison Rocci's dream of becoming an Australian Opal is now a reality.

Having been part of a larger squad ahead of the Olympics, the Werribee-product will get her opportunity with the Opals team for the Asia Cup.

"It's always super exciting to represent your country," Rocci said before the team headed off.

"It's an honour and I'm super excited to play for the Opals.

"We had the squad list come out and then we got an email when the team was announced.

"We leave for Jordan on the 23rd and the tournament starts on the 27th. We were meant to have a camp and play against New Zealand in the lead up but obviously with COVID-19 and the border stuff it didn't happen.

"I think we're going to go straight to Jordan and maybe get one or two training sessions in before we will play our first game."

Rocci said the opportunity to train with some of the senior Australian players in the lead up to the Olympics would help her at the tournament.

The 23-year-old said she learnt so much in a short period of time.

"I think we only had three camps, but just those camps I went to, I learnt so much from those older girls and what they did on and off the court.

“ playing with experienced players has really helped me ”

- Maddison Rocci

"I think I learned the style the Opals like to play as well.

Rocci isn't a stranger to representing her country, having played in both the under-17, under-19 and emerging Opals teams.

She said while those times were special, this Opals experience would be something completely different.

Rocci will head into the tournament with some strong form behind her.

Her team, Southern Districts Spartans in NBL1 North in Queensland, just finished up their season, where they finished runners-up.

Rocci was named in the all-star 5 team averaging more than 18 points, nearly five assists and more than six rebounds a game.

Rocci has spent the last few Women's National Basketball League off-seasons up north.

"My boyfriend lives in Queensland and plays with the Brisbane Lions, so I think that was a massive factor for me," she said. "Being in Queensland it's given me a really good opportunity to keep playing basketball and be in a training environment every single day.

"I've really enjoyed playing in the Queensland competition, I think it's at a standard where we have a few WNBL players in it now."

Rocci won't have much rest when she returns to Australia from Opals duty, with the WNBL season fast approaching.

No date has been announced for the competition, or whether it will be played in a hub like last year.

Rocci will be pulling on some new colours this season, having signed with the Victorian-based South Side Flyers.

The guard said it was a difficult decision to leave the Canberra Capitals where she had played the last four years.

In that time, Rocci has been part of back-to-back premierships with the Capitals. With no imports last season, Rocci took on a bigger role averaging 16 points a game.

She finished top five in the Suzy Batkovic Medal for the league's most valuable player, top three in the youth player of the year and was named in the all-WNBL second team.

"Leaving Canberra was a really hard decision as I really enjoyed playing there for my past four seasons," she said.

"I never really imagined my life in Canberra for six years [having spent two years at the AIS] but I look back on the last six years as a really



Maddison Rocci at an Opals camp.
(Pictures: Basketball Australia)

good experience and it's something that really helped me moving forward into the next part of my basketball journey.

"For me I came in there [the Capitals] so young as an 18-year-old. I was learning from the veterans. I played with such amazing leaders in front of me Leilani Mitchell, Kelly Wilson, Kelsey Griffin and Marianna Tolo ... and Kia Nurse playing with experienced players has really helped me."

The desire to return to her home state played a major factor in her decision.

Rocci said her parents were already getting her room ready at home in Werribee for when she moves back. She said she was excited to play in front of her family again, who haven't seen many of her WNBL games.

"I'm excited, the team we have at Southside is pretty special and I think playing with those Opals players will be really good for me and I'm really excited to learn off Jenna O'Hea. Just being with her in those camps, I can see how good she is as a leader and now I get to learn off someone like that."

Rocci said her aim was to make next year's Australian World Cup side, with the Olympics firmly in her sights as well.



Maddison Rocci during her time at the Canberra Capitals. (Sittixay Dittthavong)

WRFL makes call on promotion, premierships

The Western Region Football League will recognise its minor premiers, but there will be no promotion and relegation.

The league last week announced the outcome of the season, after it was cut short by the latest lockdown.

No finals series were played in any of the football or netball competitions.

In a statement on its website, the league said the board was determined to acknowledge and recognise the team on top of the ladder when the season was cancelled.

“While consideration was given to the awarding of premierships as opposed to minor premierships, the decision to award minor premierships only again acknowledged the reality that despite its best efforts, the league was unable to play a finals series across any one competition, with the completion of a finals series again considered critical in order to recognise and award fully fledged



The WRFL has decided the outcome of its season. (Damjan Janevski) 234498

premierhips.”

Altona, Wyndhamvale, Wyndham Suns are the minor premiers in the three men’s divisions, while Manor Lakes and West Footscray will be

recognised in the two women’s competitions.

Players of junior teams that finished on top of the ladder, will be presented with minor premier medallions.

The league also announced that there wouldn’t be promotion and relegation for its senior men’s competition.

The statement said clubs were surveyed on their views of promotion and relegation, with the majority clubs against promotion and relegation.

“In making this determination, the board identified that fundamental to the promotion/relegation process was the completion of a finals series.

“As desperately as the entire WRFL community wanted to complete a finals series this season, the board acknowledged the reality that this had not been able to occur.

“The WRFL board also took into consideration the minimal number of senior

matches completed over the past two seasons, recognising the significantly reduced sample size of completed matches to adequately inform any promotion/relegation process.

“The board also recognised the inequities between different club fixtures as a result of intermittent lockdowns throughout the season, acknowledging the varied implications these lockdowns had on respective club fixtures and in turn the make-up of competition ladders at the time the season came to an abrupt end in early August.”

Those who were looking at relegation were Point Cook, which was sitting bottom in division 1, and West Footscray, which was sitting bottom in division 2.

The league will present individual awards including best and fairest awards in online ceremonies in coming weeks.

Tara Murray



Kaitlyn O’Keefe was one of the stars for Keilor this season. (Damjan Janevski) 235220

Keilor’s hard work pays

By Tara Murray

Keilor walks away from a unique season as the Essendon District Football League women’s premier division premiers.

The league made the call to award premierships to the team that finished on top of the ladder in all divisions after no finals were played due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Blues lost just one game for the season, to sit three games clear of second-placed Hillside.

Blues coach Shannon McFerran said it was nice to be rewarded for their efforts this season.

“It’s very exciting,” she said. “I think it’s a unique situation and hopefully a one off situation.

“We had a good year and in the end we lost one game, but we got through [most] of the season.

“The girls worked hard all season on fitness and skills and even in lockdown, they were hoping that the finals would have taken place.

“They didn’t stop and credit to them, how

they took it.”

McFerran said it was a season where every team in the division could take something out of it.

She said her side just continued to get better and better.

“We sort of grew as a team throughout the year,” she said. “We worked on different game scenarios.

“We had a mixture of some younger players, with a really good blend and balance.

“Leading into our last game, I thought we were starting to hit our straps. It would have been nice to finish with a finals series.”

McFerran said one of the strengths of the side was its ability to listen.

“They worked hard off the field and they stayed together through the unknown times. We were creating a culture.”

McFerran highlighted Burcu Johnson, who joined the side from Hillside, as a player who really matured and developed with the team.

She said Jessie Cameron and Bianca Michetti

led from the front while Kaitlyn O’Keefe got better every game.

McFerran said it was also rewarding to see some of the 16-and-17-year-olds find their feet playing senior football.

The club didn’t have an under-18.5 team this season, but McFerran said she hoped they could get one back up and running.

The premierships caps off a successful return to local football for McFerran having been in the AFLW and VFLW in recent times.

“Keilor is such a great club with great history,” she said. “It was nice to get back to local footy and be a part of it.”

With the season now officially over, McFerran said it was time to have a break before getting back into it for next year.

“We’ll take a break and recharge as they were going right until the end in case we played again,” she said.

“We’re hoping to be able to catch up and celebrate the season that was. We want to be able to reward ourselves for the season.”

Muhtari takes over at Saints

Zammy Muhtari always had the ambition to coach St Albans Football Club, but the opportunity has come a couple of years earlier than he expected.

Muhtari has a long coaching career at the club, starting out in juniors before becoming the senior assistant coach at the Western Region Football League club the past few years.

With Sam Butler heading back to Western Australia due to work commitments, Muhtari has stepped up to the main role at the Saints.

“I’m really grateful and honoured to be given this position,” he said.

“I always had the ambition to coach one day and the position opened up with Sam heading back to Western Australia.

“There was always a succession plan, but it has come 12 to 24 months earlier than expected.

“I’ve always wanted to do what is best for the club and everything has lined up.”

Muhtari takes over a side that was starting to build a good base heading forward. This year they had 13 new players arrive.

The club was sitting seventh outside the top five on percentage with a 6-6 record when the season was called off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Saints had been hoping to play finals for the first time in eight years.

“It was disappointing for all footy lovers,” he said. “The boys have started work the last two years and haven’t been able to get a full season in.

“Hopefully we can have a full season next year.”

Muhtari said some of the playing group had mentioned about trying to start pre-season training earlier to get back into it.

He said everything would depend on announcements from the state government.

In a good sign for the Saints, Muthari said they were set to keep most of the playing group next year.

“Most of the group is eager to stay together,” he said. “We will go out and recruit in the areas we need to put our best foot forward and hopefully play finals.

“We’re always looking for height and speed.”

Tara Murray



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