

## Keeping community news alive



## Meet Our Contributors



**Caroline Baum** is a journalist, author and the ambassador for the Older Women's Network (OWN) in NSW. She is the artistic director of Coledale's annual True Story Festival.



**Dr Berlinda Png** is a GP at Bulli Medical Practice whose areas of interest include women's health. She likes spending time with her husband and daughters, cooking and walking.



**Nathan Enriquez** is a local PhD student in palaeontology with a long standing passion for dinosaurs, fossils and all other things prehistoric. He has been involved with the excavation of dinosaurs in Australia, Canada, Mongolia and England, and has published scientific research articles on both dinosaur footprints and skin.



**Amanda De George** is a naturalist, writer and photographer. Her passion lies in discovering interesting critters in urban environments and sharing them via her Facebook page, Backyard Zoology. Oh, and adventures and naps and wine; she's passionate about those things too!

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THE ILLAWARRA  
**flame**

EDITORS Genevieve Swart, Marcus Craft

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DEADLINE 17 Nov. Contributions welcome.

COVER Local stars of 2025's True Story Festival.  
Photo: Anthony Warry

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their  
cultural and spiritual connection to this land. Their stories  
are written in the land and hold great significance to  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, from the  
mountains to the sea.

NEXT  
DEADLINE  
17 Nov  
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edition





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# Cancer support suits town to a tea

By Tyneesha Williams

They say cancer touches every family at some point, and Kay Chaplin's experience has prompted the most positive response a community could imagine.

Helensburgh's second Pink Ribbon Afternoon Tea will be held on November 15 to raise funds for the National Breast Cancer Foundation at Rex Jackson Oval, and, busy as she'll be, Kay will spare a thought for her aunty and her grandmother.

"I lost my aunty to breast cancer quite a few years back and my Oma also had breast cancer, but, thankfully, she lived to a ripe old age," Kay says.

"Breast cancer has touched everyone sadly, but last year, everyone took it [the event] as an opportunity to think about the ones that they were there for. It ended up being about connection and being together and supporting loved ones who are on that journey."

Kay, who moved to Helensburgh in 2008 opened a catering company after the pandemic.

At last year's first event, she expected 50 people to attend and ended up welcoming 255, who together raised \$23,484.

"It just absolutely blew up. I couldn't even keep up, I didn't expect it to be an all-female event, but that's just obviously what the community wanted. There was a real sense of girl power," Kay says.

"It is quite a sad topic and ... has so much fear around it. And there was none of that."

This year's afternoon tea is set to be even bigger. Kay has organised two outdoor marquees so more people can attend. Ticket holders will enjoy a welcome drink, afternoon tea, music, games and a raffle with prizes valued at more than \$30,000. Over 350 tickets have been sold already.

[Tickets via the Helensburgh Pink Ribbon Afternoon Tea Facebook page.](#) ✨



More than 250 people attended last year's event. Photos: Rebecca Sears



## Swim Challenge makes a \$13k splash

By Need a Feed founder Shaz Harrison

Need a Feed is thrilled to announce that our September 21 Swim Challenge raised an incredible \$13,831 to help us take a big step closer to purchasing our very own food truck.

The day was filled with fun, community spirit, and generosity. A heartfelt thank you to our Lord Mayor, Tania Brown, the Figtree Lions Club, our incredible volunteers, Asquith Legal, Symbio Wildlife Park, and the many businesses, families, and individuals who participated and gave so generously. This isn't just about raising money – it's about giving hope, dignity, and connection to people who need it most. The support from this event

moves us closer to putting our food truck on the road, so we can reach more people where they are and provide not only meals but also care and connection.

The Swim Challenge showed that together, we can turn a splash into a ripple effect that nourishes lives, minds, and hearts. ✨





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## Help us make a difference in our 5th Annual SAHSSI Christmas Gift Drive

SAHSSI is a not-for-profit organisation that supports vulnerable women & children affected by homelessness or domestic violence.

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Here are some great gift ideas that are sure to brighten the faces of many;

- Gift packs, store gift cards, vouchers & hampers
- Hairdryers, straighteners & manicure kits
- Jewellery, cosmetics, candles & chocolate
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- Homewares, coffee cups, tea & coffee
- Books, stationery, toys, puzzles & board games



*Warm Wishes*

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# Scouts camp out at Heathcote

By 1st Austinmer Scouts member James Donohoe and committee chair Sam Donohoe

Most overnight Scout camps involve at least some hiking. And sometimes the hiking can be a little challenging (and rewarding!) as the Scouts haul their camping gear in their backpacks as they traverse from one campsite to another. Other times – such as this – the hiking is a little easier as the Scouts leave their camp gear behind and carry only some food and a few essentials in their day packs.

On a warm September Saturday, 1st Austinmer Scouts met at Thirroul Station to hop on a train to Heathcote and then made their way on foot to the nearby Heathcote Scout camp. There they doffed their full backpacks, set up camp, then prepared for a day hike by adding their lunches, snacks, rain jackets (just in case!) and other essentials to their packs, now repurposed as day packs.

From camp, the group set out into Heathcote National Park. They followed Friendly Trail to the aptly named Pipeline Trail (which follows a water pipeline) which they then followed as it parallels Heathcote Creek.

Eventually they intersected with Heathcote Creek where they found a good place to settle for lunch on the creek bank by Elbow Pool. A couple of intrepid Scouts braved the frigid creek waters for a quick dip. Others explored the creek and surrounds. Eventually the crew doubled back to camp. On the way back the group tallied the different flower colours they spotted – 15 in all.

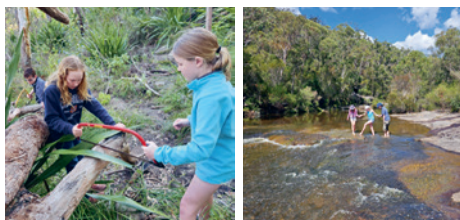
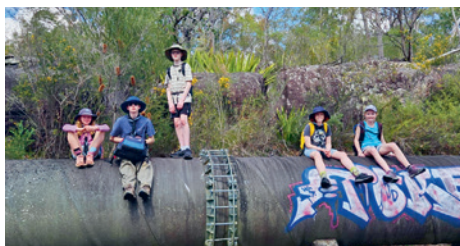
Back by camp, the crew noticed old fallen timber that might serve well as campfire fuel. They were excited to exercise their inner lumberjacks by sawing off the older sections and taking them back to camp, proving the old adage that firewood will warm you three times: once when felling (or in this instance, sectioning), again when transporting, and then when burning. Scout James proved tenacious with his preparations, sawing at logs for two hours.

Leader Jono helped Scouts set up an impromptu swing that Scouts tested before dinner which was enjoyed around a lovely campfire set-up and tended by Scout Reuben.

The next day they ventured to the other side of the Princes Highway, where they followed the track from near Heathcote Station to Karloo Pool at the intersection of Heathcote Brook and Kangaroo Creek. There they enjoyed another water-side lunch, before returning to Heathcote Scout Camp where they were collected by parents and carers.

1st Austinmer Troop provides a supportive and inclusive environment for adventures. Call 0409 695 575 if you have any questions.

1st Austinmer Scout Troop host a bake and jumble sale at the scout hall (20 Moore St) on Sunday, November 23 from 8am-1pm 🌟



A couple of weeks ago, we worked together to create our own herb and flower garden. We started by clearing and weeding our chosen space in the garden. We then prepared holes ready to plant our plants. We planted mint, thyme, rosemary, marigolds and petunias. The plants have had two weeks of growth over the school holidays and I'm excited to see how much they have really grown.

Pro-gardening tips: always wear gloves to protect your hands and, after planting, water thoroughly.

If you would like to volunteer at the Helensburgh Girl Guides, visit [www.joinguides.com.au](http://www.joinguides.com.au) or call 1300 447 548. Join Girl Guides and be part of something amazing! 🌟

## Guides' garden grows

By Annabel S, 11, Helensburgh Girl Guides



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## A big thank you, 2515!

Recently, we teamed up with Blessed Bowls Thirroul for a community giveaway, & we were blown away by the support. It's a reminder of why we love calling the Illawarra home.

**David Hyslop** - Your local agent, here for the 2515 community  
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## High Tea theme for porcelain exhibition

By Carolynne Macdonald

Established in 1976, Illawarra Porcelain Art Society has a proud history of nurturing the art of porcelain painting. In 2024, it merged with the Sydney Southern District association to form Illawarra & Sydney Southern District Porcelain Artists – a thriving community. This month we will present our 43rd annual exhibition, *Art on Porcelain*. The theme is “High Tea”, conjuring up images of summer afternoons, the joy of shared moments and the elegance of leisurely gatherings. Expect more than just teacups and saucers – we’ll feature everything from coffee sets to serving plates. All artwork will be for sale, from under \$20 to over \$200. Come and be inspired!

Free entry, at Belmore Basin’s Old Courthouse in Wollongong, Sat, Nov 22 (8am–5pm) and Sun, Nov 23 (9am–4pm). Payment via cash or card. Enquiries: Carolynne, 0417 436 012 🌟



## See inside artists' studios

By Pateena Donnelly-Gorissen

The much-loved Northern Illawarra Art Trail is back, 13 amazing artists opening the doors of their local studios and creative spaces for one unmissable weekend.

This is your chance to discover the incredible talent thriving in our beautiful area. Follow the trail through our picturesque villages with many cafes and restaurants to enjoy along the way and find a vibrant community of painters, illustrators, sculptors, ceramists, jewellers, printmakers and multi-disciplined artists waiting to welcome you. See where the magic happens, ask about their techniques, and discover the stories behind the work.

Whether you’re a seasoned art lover or simply looking for a unique and inspiring day out, the trail offers a perfect blend of creativity and connection.

The trail is a free, self-guided tour designed to celebrate the rich artistic soul of the Northern Illawarra.

Gather your friends and family, download the map from the website, plan your route, and prepare to be inspired.

Support local art, meet the artists, and visit our wonderful community through a more colourful lens. We look forward to seeing you!

For the full map, artist list and opening times, please visit [www.niarttrail.com](http://www.niarttrail.com) 🌟

## Art Show another first-class affair

By Tyneesha Williams

Scarborough Public School successfully transformed into a popular art gallery again last month, with more than 150 eager artists, collectors and parents queuing for a first look at the annual show on Friday, October 10.

“This event is a celebration of creativity, community and care – values that sit at the heart of our small school,” school principal Emma Hutchinson said at the opening night event.

“The funds raised tonight and across the weekend make a tangible difference. They support additional in-class support, innovative creative arts programs and experiences, and a range of rich resources that help us deliver an inclusive and aspirational education for every child.” 🌟



Cassius and Amala, the daughter of artist Marissa Gunning, at the Scarborough Art Show. Scan the QR to see more opening night photos





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# Austi minister preaches last service

By Stephen Le Bas

Many in the Northern Illawarra will be familiar with the Austinmer Uniting Church in Moore Street. Over the years, locals have likely attended weddings, funerals as well as Sunday services at this lovely 100-year-old church. Others would have visited the Church to see 'Classics in the Chapel', featuring performances by local artists, and more recently, performances in conjunction with students and teachers from the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music.

Roselin Fisher has been the minister at Austinmer Uniting Church for the past 15 years and will be preaching her last service there on Sunday, 30 November 2025, 9:30am.

I first heard Roselin preach when my partner was looking for a local Uniting Church to attend. I am always happy to listen to an informative, well



considered sermon. We arrived on that first Sunday to hear Roselin's sermon based on an interpretation of the Aramaic translation of The Lord's Prayer. I found this fascinating and was more than happy to continue to attend with my partner if this quality of sermon was maintained! I was never disappointed – Roselin has always delivered very intelligent, engaging and informative messages that appeal to, and resonate with, those within and without the faith. This is the sign of a great preacher.

Many traditional churches are dealing with an ageing and declining congregation. The Uniting Church is considering a significant reduction in the number of presbyteries across NSW and the ACT.

Unfortunately, this may mean the demise of Austinmer Uniting Church, a huge loss to the

community. The irony: against the odds, Austi Uniting Church is financially viable.

I wish to thank Roselin for her service to the Austi Uniting Church, and for the great sermons I have enjoyed over the past few years. ✨

## Unpacking boxes in the Shed

By Paul Blanksby of Helensburgh Men's Shed



Boxes. We all need them. Big, small, heavy-duty for that son who is moving out (again), or light and dainty for sparkly grandchild girly things. Made of timber, stone, cardboard, plastic (eeww), metal, boxes are everywhere in our lives.

Taken for granted, kicked across a garage floor, piled high in the supermarket, full

of fishing lures, or a little box placed in a treasured spot on your mantelpiece.

We've made quite a few boxes at the Men's Shed over the years; boxes to hold a new tool and its accessories; boxes for beautiful hand-turned pens that we make and sell; boxes with lids, boxes with doors; boxes inside boxes; boxes with drawers, flowers, patterns, mirrors, secret openings; even boxes with no visible means of holding together.

Everyone has a favourite box.

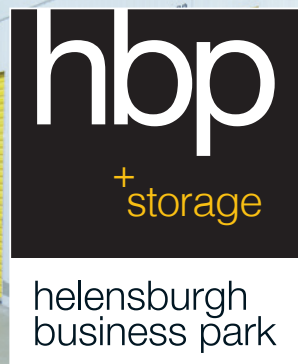
Bob 'Boxman' Pymm is one chap at the shed who makes boxes – and other items. Bob's a retired academic archivist (library shelves are almost like boxes), a top chap to share interesting words with, discuss books, England, BB King's handshake, and what it's like to kiss a girl who once kissed Elvis.

Boxes. Just like us, really. Humans come in all shapes, sizes, patterns, colours – and sometimes we get kicked around. Taken for granted. Put on a shelf. Maybe we feel like we've been chucked away. But even the humblest box, in the right setting, can be useful, needed, cherished. Where's your right setting?

You never know who you will meet at the Men's Shed, and what that box we call your humanity can become. Everyone 18 years and on is welcome.

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# Remembering 'a bonzer of a man'

By Jenny McConchie, a Local Studies specialist at Wollongong City Libraries



Above: Christina Kane with six of her seven children (her daughter Anne had passed away). Below: Suderoog, where the wreckage of Ronald Bryant's plane was found. Inset: Ronald Bryant.



"He was a bonzer man," Christina Kane remarked with a sad twinkle in her eyes. She was referring to her fair-haired, blue-eyed husband, Ronald Owen Bryant. They had married in

May of 1941 after a four-month engagement.

Shortly afterwards, Ronald, a trained airforce pilot, departed for duty in England. Cruelly, within six months, the couples' dreams were shattered. Ronald was declared missing in action in November 1941 when his plane did not return from a bombing raid to Berlin.

You may remember this couple from a story earlier this year in the Illawarra Flame (scan the QR above to read 'Love lost in wartime tragedy'). Since then Local Studies staff have made contact with descendants of the couple who were able to provide more details of their story.

Christina had received the telegram declaring Ronald missing while on duty as a nurse at Wollongong Hospital, and true to her stoic nature she just kept on working. "What else was I going to do?" she later said. In time, a blue suitcase with Ron's name inscribed on it was sent back to her from Europe. It contained all of his wartime possessions. His body was never recovered from the sands around Suderoog, Germany where the wreckage of his plane was located.

One can only guess how long it was before Christina gave up all hope that a miracle might occur and Ronald be found alive and well. Another woman, Ronald's mother Sarah and his seven siblings from the Central Coast, must have been saying the same prayer.

Ronald's loss was a further blow to Sarah, who was mourning the death of her 68-year-old husband Samuel. He had been injured in a motorcycle accident in November 1939, and a month later he was dead. However a sense of duty must have compelled Ronald to enlist, which he did at Lindfield in Sydney, in October, 1940. Luckily for Sarah, Ronald was the only one of her five sons able to enlist.

Ronald's sacrifice was never forgotten by his family, with his sister Marj Camp (nee Bryant) naming one of her children after him. While Christina went on to marry Charles Kane and raise a family of seven children, she still kept in touch with Ronald's sister, Neva Twigg from Cowra. Indeed, Neva's son Lance remembers visiting Christina in Sydney. Like others interested in documenting his family's history, he is still searching for clues as to the fate of Ronald and the crew of Whitley bomber Z6796.

This article is based around the memories of the Bryant and Kane families. If you want to uncover stories from your family's history, staff at the Wollongong City Libraries Local Studies section are here to help. Email enquiries to localhistory@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

## Remembrance Day Ceremonies

RSL Sub-branches across the Illawarra will pay homage to the fallen on Remembrance Day, traditionally held at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month to mark the end of World War I. 🇺🇦



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Over recent years, Horizon has taken meaningful steps to reduce emissions where possible in areas such as electricity, cleaning and chemicals, machinery, vehicles, postage, courier & freight, refrigerants, stationery, waste, water and more.

Horizon has also invested in projects that reduce or remove carbon from the atmosphere such as Greenfleet; a not-for-profit environmental organisation that reforests using native plants. This certification milestone is an important part of Horizon's broader sustainability journey.



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# Platypus breeding, scientists 'elated'

By Genevieve Swart



In May 2023, in one of the most ambitious rewilding projects attempted in New South Wales, Dr Gilad Bino and his University of NSW team released 10 platypus into the Royal National Park.

The researchers have been checking on the shy monotremes twice a year, but a recent field survey began with sad news – they found an older male had died, likely of natural causes. On average, platypus live for about 10 years, Gilad said. “This is, I guess, part of the life and death process.”

But then, they stumbled upon two bundles of joy. “One is a juvenile male from just this year and the other one is a sub-adult from the previous year. We’re very much elated,” Gilad said.

“We’ve had a bit of a sigh of relief ... there’s a lot of, like a sense of responsibility and pressure – it’s almost a bit like *The Truman Show*, where we know it’s such a high-profile project.”

Platypus were locally extinct for 50 years. Now, with 13 introduced and three juveniles found since the project began, Gilad guesses up to 20 could be

roaming the Royal, although it’s hard to be sure.

“That’s just part of the mystery, and we just have to keep monitoring them.

“We just finished a round of water quality and macroinvertebrate surveys, and the park seems really good and healthy. And the platys are obviously thriving. They’re just starting their third breeding season in the park.”

In June this year, UNSW Sydney’s Platypus Conservation Initiative translocated three more platypus into the park after receiving a \$630,000 funding boost from Peabody’s Metropolitan coal mine in Helensburgh. “I think it’s an important initiative on their part – to support positive change in the park,” Gilad said.

“I think it’s also important that they’re much more aware of what we’re doing and the consequences of what happens to the park.”

UNSW researchers track platypus via tiny acoustic tags that emit a sound pulse in the water that’s picked up by listening stations, and they have also had help on the ground. “We very much like working with the Friends of the Royal,” Gilad said. “They’re such an enthusiastic and amazing bunch.”

His tip is to keep an eye out for platypus in the Hacking River, downstream from Audley Weir, all the way past the Upper Causeway and further up.

But watch your step! Spring is a critical breeding time and each female can lay one to two eggs.

“We need to be very mindful of not destroying or, God forbid, collapsing burrows,” Gilad said. “So stay on the tracks, stay to the picnic sites, and then, if you’re lucky, be patient and maybe you get a glimpse of a platypus.” ✨

## Symbio throws 50th party

By Brodie Meney of Symbio Wildlife Park

Helensburgh’s Symbio Wildlife Park will mark 50 years of operation with a three-day celebration from November 21 to 23.

Entry will include performances by children’s entertainer Emma Memma (Nov 22 and 23), bubble artists, face painting, hula hoopers and sweet treats. For a small fee, visitors can also enjoy carnival rides, including a carousel, flying elephants and mini pirate ship. On Saturday, firefighters will give safety demonstrations and promote “Be Bushfire Ready” activities.

The park has transformed since Max and Pat Mapleson turned a rundown property into Symbio

Animal Gardens, opening in 1971.

Symbio grew under the stewardship of

Bob and Fran Grover, who took over in 1975.

In 2000, John and Margaret Radnidge bought Symbio and it’s now a multi-award-winning attraction: this year at the 2025 Illawarra Business Awards Matt Radnidge was named Outstanding Business Leader and Symbio won the Outstanding Visitor Experience and Excellence in Sustainable Tourism categories. ✨





# Christmas raffles

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# Call for action on 'river of death'

By Genevieve Swart

It has been five years since Frank the Lyrebird was killed in a hit-and-run on Buttenshaw Drive and the tree that local ecologist Kylie Madden planted in his memory is now twice her height. Yet residents are still waiting for Wollongong City Council to take traffic calming steps.

"The traffic is just getting worse and worse, and council just handball it," says Kylie, who often sees utes fly by at 80km/h on the back roads through Wombarra, Coledale and Austinmer.

"Every so often, typically when some animal is dead out the front of my house, I get really angry. I'll have a bit of a flurry of pressure on them, and they say all the right things, they 'hear you' and listen – and do nothing."

This spring – when marsupials are carrying joeys, and lizards and amphibians are bearing eggs – has been particularly traumatic.

"I run along here all the time, every other day, there's the stench of rotting flesh," says Ed Birt, the president of the Illawarra Bicycle Users Group (IBUG), who called the *Flame* after seeing council had installed speed bumps in Mangerton.

"It's now 40km/h all through there. So they can do it. They can slow people down," he says.

## Residents want to reduce the speed limit

The backroads run from Wombarra to Austinmer, through the foothills of the escarpment, and those who live there fear it's only a matter of time before a car crashes into cyclists or pedestrians.

A mum of two school-aged children, Bettina would like to see the area made a 30km/h zone, the suburban norm in her homeland of Germany.

"I feel it would not impact many people in a negative way to reduce the speed on this street – it would just have benefits, and also it wouldn't be very costly either, to just put a few speed bumps, a few signs," Bettina says.

In addition to children walking to school or waiting for the bus, Buttenshaw Drive is frequented by joggers and walkers who come from near and far to exercise amid the cool, shady beauty of the backroads. "Nature wise, they get that connection," resident conservationist Josh says. "And it's actually cooler up here because you're in the escarpment."

Long-time local Fiona, who walked with her dog, Evie, to our safe meeting place on Austinmer fire station's driveway, has been advocating for action for 30 years and is determined to see change in her lifetime. Fiona suggests chicanes, which slow traffic via extra curves and narrower lanes.

Residents aren't calling for expensive kerb and guttering – they want traffic-calming measures, such as speed bumps, warning signs or targeted mobile speed cameras in peak times, including summer weekends. All agree that reducing the speed limit, preferably from 50 to 30km/h, is key.

## Counting dead creatures

The backroads lack footpaths or road lines and are instead marked by skid marks, donuts and burnouts. Residents believe Buttenshaw Drive is not only being used as a detour to avoid traffic jams on Lawrence Hargrave Drive but also by drivers wanting to avoid speed cameras or police checks.

"It was not designed for the level of traffic that we have, especially on weekends," says Kylie, who has recorded 40 species killed by cars over the years. "One of the saddest roadkill was quite an unusual species – a cave-roosting Eastern Horseshoe Bat. It was a juvenile and maybe not as good a flyer."

Frogs are among the worst hit – just in the patch where residents stand for the *Illawarra Flame's* photo are the remains of two Striped Marsh Frogs.

"The backroads from Wombarra to Austi via Morrison, Buttenshaw and Asquith is about 5km,"





Kylie says. "On a wet night in summer, one to two frogs will be killed every 100m, meaning at least 50 frogs every warm wet night!"

### Take care, pythons crossing

Once Fiona came across a huge python on the road. "I couldn't move him ... so I had to put branches around, so that people would stop."

Diamond pythons migrate from the escarpment towards the coast each spring and are lulled by the warmth of the road into a false sense of security, Kylie says. "They're just being wiped out on this road, like we're changing the ecology of the place."

Local nicknames for Buttenshaw Drive now include the "river of death" and the "killing zone". There is one section near a 'Slow' sign, with bush on both sides that is known as "death valley".

Recently run-over species have included wallabies, possums and a bandicoot.

"The water dragons are getting smashed," Ed says. "I saw one with eggs everywhere; they explode when the cars hit them."

He also recently called WIRES to help after a mother possum was killed but her joey survived.

While residents await council action, Kylie issues a plea to drivers: go slowly, try to avoid the backroads and report vehicle strikes via citizen science platform iNaturalist, as gathering this grim data could help prod the government into action. 🌟

Millie rescuing a python; other animals have not been too so fortunate. Photos: Kylie Madden



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# Scholar dives into ocean protection

By Tyneesha Williams

If anyone would make a perfect pick to pursue a career in sustainable aquaculture, it would be hard to look past Tahnee Chandler.

A Bulli resident who spends her time snorkelling, reading, travelling, bushwalking and researching ways to help the marine environment, Tahnee is a Bidjigal woman with connections to the South Coast community. Her name even means saltwater, or sound of the sea.

She is one of four recipients of Hi Neighbour's First Power Scholarship and will start a PhD focused on sustainable aquaculture development, with the scholarship's support, next year.

"My dream job is simply to empower communities and protect the ocean. As a proud Indigenous woman from Bidjigal sea country, I am passionate about impactful community-based research that creates sustainable solutions for both

ecosystems and the people who depend on them," says Tahnee, who has lived in the Illawarra since she was four years old.

"The ocean has always been a huge part of my identity. My ancestors are saltwater people and I have always had cultural obligations to preserve and protect sea country."

Last year, she completed her honours thesis. "I investigated the use of better management practices in rice-shrimp farming in Vietnam due to ongoing problems with climate change and reduced agricultural yields."

Hi Neighbour, founded by actor Yael Stone, has empowered her to continue studying, "to be the Indigenous scientist I would want to see", Tahnee says. "In Yael's words 'You can't be it if you can't see it', and I hope to be a role model that younger Indigenous kids would look up to." 🌟



L to R: Yael Stone, Darryl Best, Brock Amatto, Tahnee Chandler and Ali Gerritsen. Photo: Tyneesha Williams

## Bright spark gets jump-start

By Tyneesha Williams

Hi Neighbour is helping Brock Amatto, a Yuin man from Shellharbour, build his career in renewable energy by awarding him a First Power scholarship.

Brock, 20, put his hand up for the scholarship, wanting to advance in electrical trades.

"My dream job would always change during high school, whether it be something in IT, teaching, and of course what every footy player growing up wanted to be – a professional footy player," Brock says. "But my dream job now has definitely been decided."

Brock decided to become an electrician after completing a Certificate II in Construction Pathways. It gave him experience across all trade areas, and he enjoyed electrical work the best.

"Ever since then, I have had my eyes set on starting an apprenticeship and starting my journey

in the electrical industry," Brock says.

"Especially now with all the renewables and the battery rebates from the government, it's great to join a very thriving industry."

Early this year, Hi Neighbour announced the First Power scholarship round with \$20,000 funding provided by Buckaroo Leatherworks. In 2023, Hi Neighbour had loaned Buckaroo the money to install 100 kilowatts of solar panels on its Bellambi rooftop. The interest on their repayments provided funding for this round of scholarships.

Brock says the scholarship has opened up new pathways. "I now have access to power tools because of them and have my own kit. I have a mentor who's in the industry... and also have access to quality equipment for TAFE – whether that be a good calculator or textbooks." 🌟

# Managing Postnatal Depression

By Dr Berlinda Png of Bulli Medical Practice

Welcoming a baby is one of life's joyful moments, but it can bring emotional challenges. Postnatal depression affects about 1 in 7 women in the first year after childbirth, and some fathers experience it too. The good news? It's treatable, and you don't have to face it alone.

## More Than Just the Baby Blues

You've probably heard of the "baby blues" – those tearful, overwhelming feelings that affect up to 80% of new mums. These usually pass within 10 days. Postnatal depression is different. Symptoms last longer than two weeks, feel more intense, and make it hard to get through the day.

## Common Signs to Watch For

Signs include persistent feelings of sadness or emptiness, losing interest in activities you usually enjoy (including bonding with baby), feeling hopeless or guilty, changes in sleep or appetite beyond normal new-parent exhaustion, trouble concentrating, irritability, withdrawing from loved ones, or thoughts of self-harm.



## Help is Available

If you're experiencing these symptoms for two weeks or more, please reach out to your GP. Early recognition and support make a difference. Treatment options include counselling, therapy, and sometimes medication that can be safely prescribed during breastfeeding. Self-care and family support are important too.

If you're having thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, seek immediate help through emergency services. Remember, postnatal depression is common and treatable. You're not alone, and reaching out for support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Need support? Our compassionate team at Bulli Medical Practice is here to help. Book an appointment to discuss your concerns in a safe, understanding environment. We can work together to develop a treatment plan.

## For confidential support:

PANDA 1300 726 306 | Lifeline 13 11 14 | Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 🌟

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# What's On

More events at [theillawarraflame.com.au](http://theillawarraflame.com.au)

## Walking Tour of Buli

**Sunday, 16 November** Starts 1.30pm. Join a guided tour of Old Bulli to Railway Bulli. We'll hear from about the church undergoing restoration, a miner's cottage awaiting awakening, a Grand old Pub, a Railway Museum, an award-winning property, the garden of an early home and other sites that mark the history of Bulli. Meet at Bulli Uniting Church, Point Street (car parking on site), ends 3:30/4pm. Cost includes entry fees and light tea. Adults \$25/Members \$20/Students \$10/Preschool children free. Book by Nov 13, email [oldcourthousewollongong@gmail.com](mailto:oldcourthousewollongong@gmail.com); payment details will be provided OR cash on the day. Be prepared to walk up and down hill between Old Bulli and Bulli Shops and to cross the highway.

## What's On at U3A, Term 4, 2025

Visit [www.northernillawarra.u3anet.org.au](http://www.northernillawarra.u3anet.org.au)

### Wednesday Talks Program at Thirroul:

**5 Nov** Peter Windsor: Animal Welfare for Livestock Producers

**12 Nov** Bruce Christie: Eastern Indonesia

**19 Nov** Susan Ackroyd: Nursery Rhymes

**26 Nov** Christmas Party

### U3A Film Appreciation Group:

**5 Nov** *Nomadland*: USA, 2020

**12 Nov** *Underworld*: USA, 1927, silent crime film

**19 Nov** *Heat*: USA, 1995, starring Al Pacino.

## Stanwell Park University of Third Age (U3A)

Mondays. All welcome. First session at 9.30am, second from 11am-12pm with Music Appreciation.

**3 Nov** Current Affairs, Members Discussion

**10 Nov** Sherpa Villages Trek 22 – Elizabeth Pigott

**17 Nov** Stan Grant's Self Disclosure & The Treaty of Waitangi – John Ryan

**24 Nov** Crossing the Continent via Eri Dungi, Red Centre, Coober Pedy, Kakadu & more – KerrieAnne Christian. & Christmas Luncheon.

## North Illawarra Probus Club meeting

**18 Nov** Meet at Woonona Bulli RSL at 10.30am, retirees welcome. The speaker is Tom Palmer from Angel Flight. Contact Shelley Tough 0418 218 959.

## Combined Probus Club of Helensburgh

**November** Lawn Bowls (Nov 6th, 10am Wombarra Bowlo then lunch). Monthly meeting 10am for 10:30am on Thursday 13th at Tradies Helensburgh with guest speaker Paul Kierney, talking about "Magical Music Memories". Lunch following at Club. Golf, 8:30 for 9am Friday 14th at Bexley Golf Course. Guided Tour of ANSTO (9.45 for 10am, Thursday 27th, ANSTO New Illawarra Rd Lucas Heights). Contact Val on 0419 129 984 or email [helensburghprobus@y7mail.com](mailto:helensburghprobus@y7mail.com).

Visit [www.probusouthpacific.org/microsites/helensburghanddistrict](http://www.probusouthpacific.org/microsites/helensburghanddistrict) ✨

# Countdown to Christmas Panto

By Stanwell Park Arts Theatre's Lauren Mitsak

## Nov 3: SPAT AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 3rd November at the CWA Hall from 7.30pm. Everyone is welcome to attend, but if you want to vote, you must be a financial member. New blood and ideas are vital in maintaining creativity.

## Nov 8: Fly me to the Moon

Our last film for 2025 stars Scarlett Johansson. Doors 7pm, film starts 7.30pm. Membership is \$20 a year, with four films. Even if you missed the first three, it's a great deal, with wine & nibbles served.

## 6, 7 and 12, 13, 14 Dec: SPAT Panto

The curtain is set to rise on *12 Hours 'til Christmas*, the 2025 SPAT pantomime, directed by the dynamic duo Tom and Katie Peach. This year's show boasts a cast of 32, including 23 enthusiastic children bringing festive cheer through toe-tapping songs (thanks to musical director Catherine



Rostrum) and dazzling dance numbers choreographed by the talented Rachel Kiddier – who also co-wrote the script alongside Christine Higgins. Rehearsals are in full swing, with the chorus channelling their inner baby chicks and a delightfully cheeky scene brewing between a farmer and his cow. The energy is infectious. Behind the scenes, if you'd like to get involved without stepping into the spotlight, we'd love your help. Whether it's painting, building, or simply adding a bit of sparkle, there's still time to join the fun.

## Fridays: SPAT Singers

The Singers, directed by Lindy Sharp, are adding Christmas Carols to their repertoire, along with a beautiful little-known 16th century carol and other gems. Every year the singers bring the joy of Christmas to the residents of 2-3 local nursing homes. Come along to the Stanwell Park CWA Hall on Friday at 7:30pm. New members welcome! ✨

# Dapto dogs 'will need rehoming'

By Oguzhan Dincsoy

The final waves of nostalgia for greyhound racing have washed over Dapto Showground, and a growing sector of the community will not be mourning the end of its 89-year history at the site. When the final race was run on September 11, a much-lauded era of community connection ended – and so did a shocking toll of death and injury suffered by its star performers.

For animal advocates such as Kylie Field, the race meetings will not be missed.

“The dominoes are finally falling – who would have ever thought five years ago Dapto dogs would be closing, and good riddance to it,” said Kylie, NSW director for the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds (CPG).

Kylie says the closure of Dapto dogs could have an impact on greyhound rescue centres. “At the moment, all the adoption agencies are at capacity as there aren't enough homes for the number of greyhounds that need rehoming,” she said.

Kylie believes there is a shift in the general societal acceptance of the greyhound racing industry. CPG gathered data from stewards reports that shows from 2020 to 2025, 926 racing greyhounds were injured at Dapto, with 237



categorised as having serious injuries which might have resulted in euthanasia after race meetings. Eight greyhounds were euthanised on the track.

Kylie says greyhounds make wonderful companions who are gentle, kind and quiet. “They are lovingly called couch potatoes by their owners as after a walk they sleep on your couch all day.

“The Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds aims to keep pressuring the racing industry with the ultimate goal of phasing out greyhound racing.

“This is an industry that breeds twice as many dogs as it rehomes. Out of a litter of pups, only one may become a racing greyhound.” 🌟

**RayWhite**

**2026 Calendar Magnets Arriving in Your Letterbox Soon**

Congratulations to John Heath for capturing the stunning sunrise over Woonona Beach!

Thanks to everyone who entered – we truly appreciate your effort in showcasing our beautiful community!

# Champion volunteer appeals for aid

By Tyneesha Williams

A Thirroul woman named the region's volunteer of the year fears vulnerable families her charity helps will face mounting difficulties in the lead-up to Christmas.

Gloria Rohov says Anglicare has made an emergency appeal for donations following a drastic federal government cut to funding she says might lead to the needy missing essentials.

"They risk missing out on material and financial aid, such as food, rent assistance and other support including financial counselling because the funding we've relied on to deliver these services has been cut," she says.

"I'm particularly concerned about the impact on the lead-up to Christmas, a peak time of need for many families we support."

"Anglicare gives extra food and make up a Christmas hamper and provides toys for children whose families can't afford it ... they always need donations, but this particular time is a real crisis."

Gloria was named 2025 Illawarra Volunteer of the Year, recognising her efforts in supporting vulnerable Illawarra residents facing hardship.

She says the award was a surprise and attributes it to the work of the entire team at Anglicare. "It's the first award I've won in my life," she says. "I don't feel as though it should just be for me. Other people are doing the same thing and doing it well."

After leaving clerical work at Telstra, Gloria began volunteering at Anglicare 12 years ago because she wanted to give back to her community.

"When I was at work, I was sitting in an office thinking, 'I'm not doing anything worthwhile,'" she says. "I saw a notice in the church bulletin that they



At left: Thirroul's Gloria Rohov, the Illawarra's volunteer of the year, with Shellharbour MP Anna Watson

wanted volunteers at Anglicare, I went in, and I've kept going back since."

Gloria dedicates one day a week to Anglicare, assessing people for food and bill assistance through the Energy Payment Assistance Scheme.

She helps them manage bills, such as electricity, gas, water and phone expenses. She coordinates emergency food parcels, assists non-English-speaking clients and mentors other volunteers.

"It's just nice to be there – the staff are really nice ... They make you feel welcome, it's enjoyable and I've made friends there," she says.

"For me, it's great to know that you're helping someone in something that's worthwhile."

To donate to Anglicare's appeal, call 1300 111 278. Those in need of help can call 8624 8600. ✨

## Council tri-umph!

Wollongong City Council's Infrastructure Strategy and Planning Manager Nathan McBriarty and Personal Assistant Sile Crowe made their colleagues proud at October's World Triathlon Championship Finals. Both had trained for months. "I'm certainly proud to be a competitor in this event that's shining a spotlight on our city," Nathan said. ✨



## Happy Probus Month

Thirroul Probus celebrated Probus Month in October with a special morning tea at Club Thirroul. 81 members attended, enjoying a lovely cake (decorated by Di Wallace) and a delicious morning tea. Thanks to Paul and Cheryl Seagrove for all of their organisation! ✨



# ONE REGION, THREE VERY DIFFERENT MARKETS

While our coastline may be connected, our property markets are currently moving at very different speeds.

Helensburgh continues to lead in demand, driven by Sydney buyers seeking affordability and lifestyle. With very few properties available, well-presented homes are selling quickly and with strong competition.

Just five minutes away, Stanwell Park tells a different story. Prices remain below their COVID peak, stock levels are modest, but several older listings have gone stale – suggesting buyer confidence is selective rather than absent.

Further south in Wombarra, Coledale, Austinmer and Thirroul, the upper end of the market is experiencing oversupply. Prestige homes that once sold off-market are now competing for attention, leading to extended days on market and frequent agent switching.

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# Gracious Care a tribute to Nan

By Tyneesha Williams

Inspired by her grandmother, and determined to treat older people with the dignity they deserve, a Helensburgh woman has launched her own home care service.

"My Nan's unconditional love for people shaped the foundation of who I am," said Grace Barlow, who founded Gracious Community Care in February. Grace said her nan, Jill Potter, was known for her "kindness, empathy, and unwavering belief in the dignity of others".

"In her later years, she was diagnosed with dementia, and being there to support her and our family through that journey was heartbreaking and transformative. After her passing, I launched Gracious Community Care as a tribute to her legacy. I wanted to create a service that reflects the same compassion and attentiveness she lived by, where every person is genuinely seen, valued, and supported with dignity."

After seeing too many people receive care from a revolving door of support workers, Grace is now using her home town as a base to deliver personalised NDIS and aged care services.

"I had this vision to create something different from every other company," she says.

"In Helensburgh, people look out for each other not because it's expected, but because it's part of who we are. That kind of unspoken compassion shaped me from an early age. It taught me the value of presence and the power of community."

Born in Helensburgh, Grace is now raising her own family in the tight-knit town.

"I went to Helensburgh Public School, and now my kids go there too," she says. "We're also part of

Hope Church Helensburgh."

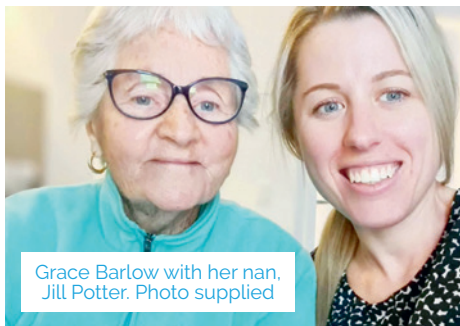
Grace is one of seven children. "Dad runs the local bus company ... between my siblings' businesses in floristry, beauty therapy and pool maintenance, we've somehow managed to cover diverse needs. Community has always been at the heart of what we do."

From her first job at the town's pharmacy, at age 14, Grace's career took off as she moved into the NDIS and aged care sector, spending 15 years in the field before opening her own business.

"I started working in local nursing homes when I was 19," Grace says. "I've worked for other larger care providers, and I ended up finishing up just last year because I thought, 'You don't get it. You don't understand the community I live in.'"

In a growing space, Grace says her team's consistency and personalised plans set them apart.

Contact 0426 292 555 📞



## Vet says vaccination best Lepto defence

By Marcus Craft

A fatal case of Leptospirosis in Helensburgh has prompted local vets to remind residents to check that their dogs' vaccinations are up to date.

The leptospirosis case in Helensburgh was confirmed on September 16 and the dog was unvaccinated.

Dr Melissa Lee, of Helensburgh Veterinary Clinic, said people could take some easy steps to reduce the risk of their dog contracting the disease.

"They shouldn't panic. They should get their dogs up to date with the new Leptospirosis vaccination, which [protects] against two strains of the Leptospira bacteria. Leptospirosis is carried around by rats and mice and it's a water-loving

organism so if their dog can avoid puddles or stagnant waterways and avoid rats and mice, then that would be good."

"Initial signs of Leptospirosis are usually pretty generalised: so they're lethargic, they're vomiting. They're quite obviously sick and they usually keep deteriorating.

"So if you notice any signs like that, they should be taken to a vet immediately."

Adult dogs that have never had a vaccine for leptospirosis need two shots: an initial vaccination then, two to four weeks later, a booster. Call the Helensburgh (4294 2508) or Austinmer Vet Clinics (4268 3353) or the vet nearest to you. 📞



# Alison Byrnes MP

Labor Member for Cunningham

If you have any issues relating to the federal government and require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office on 4228 5899, email [Alison.Byrnes.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Alison.Byrnes.MP@aph.gov.au) or come in at 74 Crown Street Wollongong.

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## Time to *parli Italiano*

Janice Creenaune meets Rob Dal Mas, who worked as a financial accountant in the transport industry before moving to Thirroul. In retirement, he finds time to join others and practise his language skills in the Thirroul U3A group. Photos supplied

The belief that learning a foreign language is easiest for the young, may hold true, but that does not stop Rob Dal Mas and others like him from meeting each week to practise their Italian language skills, learn about Italian culture, and simply enjoy each other's company. Rob is 65 and he is among the youngest, yet age is not about to stop any of them. The group is part of the U3A (University of the 3rd Age) network in Thirroul.

Rob was first attracted to the Illawarra in 2022 and moved mainly because of work. "I love to draw and the surrounding area is so beautiful with the escarpment and the beaches and I couldn't believe how friendly everybody was. So when I retired, my wife, Di and I moved to Thirroul and joined U3A.

"I found a drawing group just right for me, a film group and this wonderful Italian group, all within the U3A network and in Thirroul. Pina McPherson is our wonderful teacher/mentor, but we all help each other and converse each week in Italian."

Rob was surprised by the diverse backgrounds of the group. "I am from an Italian immigrant family, so many in my family still converse in Italian, but others in the group have German backgrounds,

English or Scottish or even multi-generational early Australian backgrounds. We all have a love for Italy and Italian though."

Rob says that, as his parents, grandparents and others age, speaking their native tongue can be an advantage. "I do speak now to my aged mum in Italian and it is very comfortable for us both.

"There are about 18-25 people in the U3A Italian group and we meet each Friday. It is all very relaxed, but Pina McPherson is there to assist us and gives us the correct way to say things.

"Sometimes we are set little research tasks to talk about and exercises out of language books and writing exercises. For example, one day we wrote a postcard from Italy."

The U3A Italian group also talk about food and Italian recipes and each term they visit The Fraternity Club for a group meal to celebrate.

"Food, for Italians, is always about celebrations. It is why we enjoy it so much."

Rob was apprehensive about life after retirement but with U3A's talks, drawing classes, film sessions and language groups, his week is full. "And I have met so many interesting people in the process." ✨

## What's On at Your Libraries

### School Storytime with Billy Backpack

**Fri 7 Nov** 10.30am (Helensburgh). Getting ready for big school? Enjoy stories, songs, and school-ready fun with your family. No bookings required.

### Surf Safety Storytime

**Fri 14 Nov** 10.30 - 11.15 (Helensburgh)

**Tue 25 Nov** 10-10.45 (Thirroul)

Council's lifeguards will talk about how to swim safely and what to do if you need help.

### Stories in the Park

**Thu 13 Nov** 10am Bulli Beach Reserve Playground, free.

### Upcoming Events

**5 Nov** Hayley Scrivenor and Vanessa McCausland in conversation, 5.30-6.30pm (Helensburgh)

**5 Nov** Knit, Stitch, Yarn 10.30-12.30 (Thirroul)

**6 Nov** Justice of the Peace 10am-1pm (Thirroul)

**7 Nov** Let's Try – speed puzzling, 5-7pm (Thirroul). Grab a group of friends and take on a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle. For ages 18+. Free.

**12 Nov** Author talk with artist Sarah Rowan – The Creativity Cycle, 5-6pm (Helensburgh)

**26 Nov** Get Creative: Denim Feathers, 4-6pm at Thirroul. From worn to wow! Turn jeans into beaded denim feathers – perfect for earrings, keychains or a bag charm. Bring an old pair. ✨



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## CWA tea with Cunningham MP

By Jan Johnston of Stanwell Park CWA

In August the Stanwell Park branch celebrated International Day and our CWA birthday. This year our country of study was South Korea. We set the scene with Korean music, decorations and three courses of Korean food, which I can thoroughly recommend trying.

The highlight was a performance by Stanwell Park schoolchildren who stole the show with their play, costumes and fan dance.

### Focus on Urgent Care Clinic at Corrimal

We also held a morning tea with our local Federal representative, Cunningham MP Alison Byrne.

It was a lively discussion about a number of local issues. Topics ranged from a shortage of aged care places to summer parking congestion to cat control legislation at the local and state level.

An important takeaway I would like to advertise is the Federal Government's Wollongong Medicare Urgent Care Clinic, which can be found within the Corrimal Medical and Dental Centre at 46-50

Underwood St (02 4258 0220). It's open daily – 7am to 9pm, just walk in.

Also raised was a topic close to our heart at CWA – recycling. We plan to attend council events on FOGO and soft plastics recycling. Also mentioned was the recycling of medication bubble packs, which we will be following up.

### Dressing up 1920s style

In September, we attended a Group Cultural Day at Albion Park. The theme was the 1920s so it was a great opportunity for us to raid the local charity shops and all look spectacular in sequinned and fringed dresses. Two imaginative members came in 1920s swimwear complete with floral caps and donut floaties. The presentation was well researched and thought provoking and supported with photos and film clips. A great day!

We can be found at 15 The Drive Stanwell Park at 10am on the first Tuesday of the month and everyone is most welcome. ✨

## Giving back is baked in

By Marion Cook, publicity officer at Keiraville CWA



When people hear "CWA", they think of scones and tea, but the Keiraville branch of the Country Women's Association is about so much more.

From fundraising stalls and sausage sizzles to school canteens and library book covering, Keiraville CWA members are rolling up their sleeves and making a real difference in the Illawarra community.

With members from Coalcliff to Lake Illawarra, our dedicated group brings together women of all

ages, skills and walks of life. What unites us, a shared passion for giving back.

We raise funds for local charities and support groups through regular cake stalls, handmade crafts, and community events.

Recently, we've lent a hand at local schools and preschools, volunteering in the canteen, covering books in the library, and hosting craft mornings.

At Russell Vale we are helping with everything from knitting and crochet to marbling paper and wielding a hot glue gun like seasoned pros.

Joining Keiraville CWA means being part of something bigger. It's a place to share your skills, meet like-minded locals, and make a difference.

Get in touch via [keiravillecwa@gmail.com](mailto:keiravillecwa@gmail.com) ✨



# Powering the future

By Elsa Evers of Electrify 2515

As our community takes bold steps toward electrification, Endeavour Energy is working behind the scenes to ensure the grid can keep pace. The Electrify 2515 Community Pilot in the Illawarra offers a glimpse of what future suburbs may look like. We spoke with Dr. James Hazelton, Future Energy Strategy Manager at Endeavour Energy, about the project and why he's confident the grid is ready for change.

## Why is Endeavour involved in the pilot?

We are responsible for planning and running the electricity network that connects over 1.1 million people. Electrification is a really important step in decarbonising our energy system. It's important we understand what the impacts are in terms of loading on the electricity system but also how we can work to deliver the transformation at the lowest cost to households.

## What is Endeavour Energy's role?

We're installing monitoring equipment and acquiring smart meter data to better understand the use of the network. This helps us in long term forecasting and in planning the network— so that

the money customers save in going electric is not lost to higher network charges. We are also looking into the way we charge for use of the network, and how that can be better passed on by retailers.

## Can the grid handle the transition?

The key is having good data and visibility of what's happening, which is why we're installing 80 new monitors across the postcode. With that, we're confident this part of the network has plenty of capacity to support the community's electrification journey.

## What do you say to those considering solar and batteries?

There are plenty of good reasons – climate benefits, of course – but there's also a solid business case for many households. The payback period for solar improves dramatically when you use that energy yourself. 🌞



**ELECTRIFY 2515**  
community pilot

**We're going electric  
and you're invited!**

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- Reverse cycle air conditioners
- Induction cooktops



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[electrify2515.org](https://electrify2515.org)



# HERE + NOW launches future talent

By Genevieve Swart

The art world knows *HERE + NOW* as a series to watch, with past shows launching the likes of India Mark. Now the secret to spotting rising stars is out, with a record opening night crowd at Wollongong Art Gallery in September.

"It was astonishing," says *HERE + NOW V*'s curator, Matthew Grayson. "There were over 300 people here – the place was absolutely packed, you were literally like sardines in a can."

For 2025's exhibition – titled *There's No Place Like Home* – Matthew has gathered six young artists whose works are shaped by memory, migration and belonging, asking them to examine the meaning of 'home' in a time of global upheaval.

"I couldn't have been more ecstatic in curating an exhibition," says Matthew, who came to Wollongong for uni, and stayed for its appealing mix of energy, small-town quaintness and close-knit art community. "When Daniel [Mudie Cunningham, the gallery director] called me to tell me that I got it, I was literally running and screaming around the house."

"Wollongong Art Gallery is very much a stepping stone towards bigger sort of galleries. They give you more leeway into experimenting and that's what emerging artists need."

Matthew took the *Illawarra Flame* on a tour of his show, starting with Abbey McQueen's rust-dyed textiles, a body of work that includes *The end*, a bed marked by rust dye, notes to self and Abbey's own sheets. It's an ode to Tracey Emin's seminal sculpture that was the talk of the Tate 30 years ago. On the walls are Abbey's *From dirt* series, works on fabric 'buried' in the tea-tree waters of Lake Ainsworth. "It tells a very universal experience of living in a rural area," Matthew says.

Next is *L(earn) your Reo* by Alicia Nahona, a poem lino-printed on plywood expressing the complexities of cultural identity.

"Alicia's work explores her Maori heritage in like a poem-slash-patterned work," Matthew says. The repetition of words and lino block patterns creates layers of dialogue, telling stories of belonging and displacement that support his central idea of conveying different experiences of 'home'.

"Home is not always a destination," he says.

It could be a feeling, a person, a culture or even a tethering point in tough times, as in Bridie Nicholls' felt-tip pen on paper drawings of iconic suburban homes. "With Bridie's, home was in the places and spaces that she inhabits," Matthew says, pointing to *The long way home*. "This is from one of the houses that she would walk past during Covid. So it's almost like an anchor point."

Matthew moves to the "uncanny realism" of William O'Toole's paintings – in oil and spraypaint on coconut coir doormats. "I just love how he conveys such a crisp, but also such a blurred image. When you're looking at it from far back, it looks like a whole image, but then you go up and it's just strokes that hang on, literally, bristles."

In contrast, the works beside Will's are delicate, free-motion embroidery, with Jessica Martin's vision of home inspired by a familiar student space.

"Jess explored share house culture, being with her friends," Matthew says. Each work took about a week. "They're so technically complex."

Our final stop is Naia Webb's installation, *Confessional in lampshades*, with wool roving on silk-covered wire frames sourced from op shops.

Running through a 10-minute light program, her work is a meditation on how we live. "It's to do with the idea of the lights being turned on and off in a house between 7.30 and 8am," Matthew says. "The private rituals, the sort of stuff that you do in the morning before you leave the house."

See it for yourself – *There's No Place Like Home* is at Wollongong Art Gallery until November 23. 🌟



L to R: Matthew Grayson, Vivian Vidulich, Abbey McQueen, Naia Webb, Alicia Nahona, Bridie Nicholls, Jessica Martin, and William O'Toole. Photo: TW Baker

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# Books you cannot read

By Caroline Baum

For artist and curator Judy Bourke, every day feels like Christmas at the moment as she opens the mail to unpack the entries for *Crescendo25*, a two-week exhibition of artists' books opening at the Clifton School of Arts at 6pm on Friday, November 14. They are coming in from all corners of the country, in packages large and small, from 61 participants, selected by Judy with co-curators Liz Jeneid, Kathryn Orton and Lucia Parella.

*Crescendo25* follows on from *Prelude*, the highly successful show of artist books at the CSA held two years ago, which drew a strongly enthusiastic response from the public, many of whom were encountering artist books for the first time. This

year, a prize of \$5000 will be awarded to the winning work by acclaimed book artist Dianne Fogwell. There will also be a \$1000 prize for the best work by a local artist.

"The definition of an artist's book is an object that uses the book as a starting point, but is open to a wide variety of interpretations in a wide variety of media including textiles, wood, and sometimes includes recycled or organic materials," says Liz, who has been teaching workshops about artist's books for many years at her studio on Mount Kembla. "Judy Barrass, has made her entry, called *Memory*, out of the motherboard of a discarded computer."

"We trawled wide networks for submissions," Judy Bourke says, "and have included works by established and emerging artists, but we don't know their age or cultural background. Some use handmade paper, some include feathers, many artists have invented their own ways of gluing and folding the works so it takes extreme care to unpack and catalogue each one."

"The art form has no rules," says Liz, "it has created its own vocabulary, and is very broad and inclusive, so some works are quite private and personal while others are political, often with an environmental theme." One of her works is a response to public discussion about asylum seekers. "I read comments in which people compared them to weeds, so I used that imagery."

The curators did not set a theme, but the environment has come through as a strong presence.

"It's playful, individual and forgiving as a form of expression, but very much on the fringe of the culture, often edgy rather than part of the mainstream," Judy says.

"Artist's books are almost impossible to price, because they don't fit the usual commercial categories. Sometimes they come in a specially made sleeve or box and are meant to be taken out to view rather than kept on permanent display, some have a slightly feral quality," Liz says, laughing.

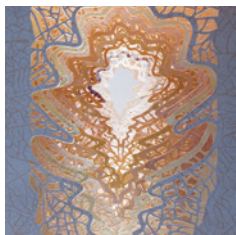
Apart from the fact that they are not books that can be read, some are responses to a place, some can be hung on a wall, others open out in a concertina form, some are called tunnel books, some are a collaboration between several makers.

The only thing all the works have in common is the consistently high standard, says Judy, who is delighted that there will be a permanent record of the exhibition in a full colour catalog.

And with that, she's off to see what's been delivered in the post today. ✨



From top: Kathryn Orton's *Auburn Street* (Goulburn), Liz Jeneid's *Reconciliation books* (2 of 25), Lucia Parrella's *Written on Oak Leaves*, Anita Johnson's *Workbook*, Judy Bourke's *Anzac Hill*



# Authors in store

With the team at Collins Booksellers Thirroul



As the end of 2025 looms closer, the new releases keep on coming – so avid readers come in and delight in the choices. Event-wise, meet the author on Sunday 2nd at

3:30pm in the bookshop when Amber Creswell Bell will be signing her new art book, *EXPOSURE*. This is Amber's seventh book exploring different genres in art, this one a focus on 40 photographers and their work. Hoping for a guest appearance from Stephen Dupont, one of the featured photographers. On Sunday 30th at 4pm, Benjamin Rose will be in store with a special presentation of *The Creatrix Prophecy* (book & cards). Then, we have Advent Calendars to excite the kids. Can you think of a creative way to lead up to Christmas? How about reading a book of fairy tales or myths and legends, one a day until the big finale on Xmas Eve? Such activities create family memories that last a lifetime. ✨

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# crescendo<sup>25</sup>

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<https://artsclifton.org/event/crescendo-2025-artist-book-award/>

**Exhibition open daily 10am to 5pm**

Julie Bradley *That the wave brought to me*

# When to draw the line

A tale of global cataclysm, mass extinction and destiny hidden beneath the Sea Cliff Bridge, by Nathan J. Enriquez

It is 252 million years ago. All the world's continents are combined into a single landmass, surrounded by a single, vast ocean. Dinosaurs are yet to evolve. In fact, reptiles at this time are relative newcomers, and plant life on what would become today's southern continents is dominated by a now-extinct type of tree called *Glossopteris*, whose abundance across the Australian landscape rivalled even that of today's eucalyptus trees.

This is the setting for arguably the most tumultuous event in the history of life on Earth: the Permian-Triassic Mass Extinction, also known as 'The Great Dying', which wiped out perhaps more than 90% of species on the planet at the time and is the largest of the five historical mass extinctions.

Today, this event is recorded beautifully on our own doorstep, in the rocks that lie below the Sea Cliff Bridge between Coalcliff and Clifton. These provide a tantalising window to a time when life itself was nearly extinguished.

If you look closely at the cliff face next to the Sea Cliff Bridge, you will notice many different horizontal layers of rock stacked on top of one another. Each of these are made up of sediments that were deposited within ancient rivers and lakes in successive order, so that the oldest are on the bottom and the youngest are on the top.

Specifically, the base of the cliff section underneath the bridge is part of the Illawarra Coal Measures and records some of the final years of the Permian period. As the name suggests, dark coal layers are abundant here and represent the compacted and preserved remains of prehistoric

plants. If you could travel back to Coalcliff at this time, you would have seen a vast swampy ecosystem dominated by *Glossopteris* trees. But in a geological blink of an eye, disaster struck, and the landscape was stripped bare. This change can be seen in the cliff underneath the southern end of the bridge. The final layer of Permian coal – the Bulli coal seam – is approximately one and a half metres thick in the cliff at this location.

At the top of the seam, there is an abrupt transition to sandy, pale-coloured layers. Evidently, the vegetation that had been forming the coal here suddenly vanished. Although not overly remarkable on its own, similar disappearances are observable at geological sites close to the same age all around the world and collectively mark the moments in time when almost all species had disappeared. But why?

Unlike the meteorite impact that famously ended the age of dinosaurs 66 million years ago, the primary cause of the Great Dying is thought to be volcanic activity, as huge eruptions in Siberia at about the same time released millions of cubic kilometres of basalt lavas like those that currently erupt on Hawaii. Accompanying this enormous quantity of lava were extremely high levels of carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide, which were released into the atmosphere and oceans, causing a greenhouse crisis that made temperatures soar around the planet, poisoned the ocean by depleting seawater oxygen levels and also turned it highly acidic.

Under these conditions, marine life was hit particularly hard and suffered the highest







extinction rates. The trilobites – those crustacean-like marine invertebrates that have become the quintessential depiction of early life on planet Earth – did not survive this event. In the Sydney area, the great forests of *Glossopteris* trees were wiped out at nearly the same time, as seen by the abrupt end to the Bulli coal seam under the Sea Cliff Bridge.

The official boundary marking the end of the Permian period and the beginning of a new period in Earth history – the Triassic – occurs at a level within the cliff somewhere above the Bulli coal seam. Determining exactly where is difficult, as the mass extinction was prolonged over hundreds of thousands of years and hit different parts of the world at slightly different times. In any case, by the time the extinctions slowed at the dawn of the Triassic, the Sydney area was barren and devoid of forests. This can be seen by the endless masses of sandstone that dominate the upper parts of the cliff above the level of the road: there were no more swampy forests, only sand. It would take millions of years for the less than 10% of species that survived the extinction to re-populate the earth and diversify. All species living on the Earth today – including us – are descended from this small collection of survivors.

The next chapter in Earth history after the extinction was a dramatic one.

The beginning of the Triassic period also meant the beginning of the Mesozoic era, otherwise known as the age of dinosaurs. Although the rocks near the top of the cliff that tower over the Sea Cliff Bridge are approximately 15 million years too old to contain dinosaur fossils (a mere blink in geological history), they represent a time when many of the ecological roles that were previously occupied in the Permian period were now up for grabs, as the extinction had cleared away many different types of animals and effectively eliminated much of the competition. This led to the evolution of new reptile lineages, eventually including the first dinosaurs, which appeared roughly 235 million years ago.

So the next time you are crossing the Sea Cliff Bridge, spare a thought not only for the devastation and near-total annihilation of life on Earth that is recorded in the rocks below you, but also for the great reptilian empire that was destined to come. If we're not careful, the planet may be headed down a similar destructive path today, as rapid climate change spurred on by human-induced greenhouse gas emissions is eerily comparable to what happened 252 million years ago. Let's all hope that this is where the similarities end! 🌱

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Authorised by A. Croft, The Greens NSW, 19a/1 Harden Place, Camperdown NSW 2050

# Business is blooming

By Amanda De George

It took a big change – a redundancy from her media job last year – to turn Angie Thompson's dream of owning a small-scale flower farm into a reality, but now Trampoline Flower Farm's bloom-laden cart is the talk of Thirroul.

"I've been amazed by the interest and well-wishes this little venture has attracted. Friends and strangers have become really invested in it," Angie said. "A man stopped by, seemingly after work. Did someone in the estate get unexpected flowers that night? Because of my little flower cart? It makes me smile. I like the idea of helping to create the type of place I want to live."

Transforming a bamboo-laden backyard into a field of swaying everlasting daisies and fragrant sweet peas isn't easy and Angie has faced unique challenges in starting her new enterprise.

"Our backyard is set really far back from the road, down quite a few stairs with sides too narrow for any machinery. All that mongrel bamboo had to be hauled up and all the bags of horse poo needed hauling down," she said.

"I started talking out loud about having my own farm and people would understandably say, 'How big is your backyard?' I'd always say, 'not big enough'; and yet, it sort of is... If you're smart about

what you plant and where you plant it, a backyard farm can punch above its weight."

"The blue metal runs 40cm deep in some parts and remediating the soil has also been slow-going. The thick, clay soil is no picnic either. I've got some muscles now that I've never seen before in my life."

The torrential rain and howling winds of the past year have brought sleepless nights. "The ground got so sodden last month... I was sure I was going to lose everything to flooding," Angie said. "The wind is probably worse. I've spent a few nights lying awake listening to the big gusts, imagining my sweet peas ripping from the trellis, or hearing the crash of a tray of seeds going belly-up."

While production is ramping up, Angie hopes to eventually move beyond the Friday and Saturday afternoon flower cart that sits at her farm gate on Wrexham Road – she'd like to attend a few markets next year and eventually supply the DIY bridal market. To that end, the planting continues.

"I've got snapdragons in the ground, a few types of cosmos, zinnias, lots of things from the Proteaceae family and lots of young, native perennials – kangaroo paw, coneflowers, strawflowers, wax flowers, hakea, flowering gums, acacia, Christmas bush, a couple of banksias.

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## Doctor warns of unethical practices

By Genevieve Swart

A Thirroul doctor has spoken out against unethical behaviour in the medicinal cannabis industry, warning of the dangers of brief online consultations, "prescribing by algorithm" and practitioners who make their money by recommending a particular brand.

In this, Dr Ashleigh Ray joins a growing number of experts and institutions calling for reform, including the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

"A lot of these cannabis businesses, their business model, I think, is very unethical. So they might charge \$30 for a patient to speak with the doctor and to be assessed, but the conversation often is very brief, and from reports that I've heard through AHPRA, some things are actually just done by algorithm, or a few seconds of a consult.

"Basically, the doctor or the company will charge very little for that, and then they make all of their money off the back end. So they are financially linked to dispensaries, which means that they are financially incentivised to prescribe medications,

which is completely unethical – in no other area of medicine have I heard of that happening.

"You should be prescribing based on the patient sitting in front of you and what their needs are.





Angie's flower farm in Thirroul  
Photo supplied

"I'm about to put a ton of dahlias in the ground after what turned out to be a very stressful and competitive buying process. The most desirable dahlia tubers get snatched from your shopping cart before you can possibly pay for them. Who knew the flower world was so *Hunger Games-y*?"

For all the hard work, the results have been worth the slog.

"I had always loved gardening when I was a kid," Angie said. "I'm lucky I get this little window to try but it got me thinking about whether we are too quick to dismiss the passions of our childhoods when we go out into the world and pick jobs.

"These past few months have felt like finding my way back to something that mattered." ✨

"You shouldn't be relying on your income to come from the medication that you're prescribing to them."

Dr Ray is a psychiatry registrar who entered the field of medicinal cannabis both out of interest and because it gave her the flexibility to combine motherhood and medical work. After working as an authorised medicinal cannabis prescriber for several years, she is determined to call out unethical behaviour that puts profits over patients.

"For some reason, the cannabis space has just gone off on this weird cowboy tangent."

With all the work that goes into becoming a doctor, Dr Ray said she can't understand why health professionals would put their registration at risk in this way. "First and foremost, we're doctors. We're not script sellers."

Best practice operators will have higher appointment costs and prescribe "the cheapest, most affordable, safest, most appropriate option for the patient". Dr Ray said an appointment should cost at least \$100, be at least half an hour, and the doctor should be able to prescribe any medication available on the Australian market. "If they can't, they're financially linked to certain companies, and I think that leads to unethical prescribing." ✨

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Cover  
feature

L to R: Journalist Erin O'Dwyer, Professor Sue Turnbull, True Story director Caroline Baum and documentary maker Belinda Lopez. Photos: Anthony Warry



By Caroline Baum

# True Story BUT SERIOUSLY

It's that time of year again!

True Story is back for its fourth year of showcasing some of Australia's best non-fiction books on the weekend of November 15 and 16, and in 2025 the theme is 'But Seriously'.

This year our festival is about discovering writers who may not be on your radar. Not every award-winner is famous, and the insatiable attention span of the media often overlooks great stories or voices.

So come along to True Story and hear someone you are unfamiliar with, or choose to go to an event on a subject you know nothing about. I've had some of my most memorable festival experiences that way and heard audiences

fizz with excitement when they realise they have unearthed fresh treasure, simply by attending a session they weren't planning on.

True Story provides a broad forum for stories that are based on facts – but those stories come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and ways of making sense of the world. You'll hear voices you can trust, writers who are not making anything up, but have a talent for telling a gripping yarn that may surprise, shock or move you.

It's been a tough year out there in the world, so come and restore your faith in humanity in the welcoming atmosphere of readers. We can't wait to see you.

**TRUE  
STORY.**  
But Seriously

## WORKSHOPS

### FINDING YOUR VOICE

Friday 14 November, 10am–2:30pm



Whether you're writing for online, page, stage or screen, your distinctive voice is what connects you to your audience. In this practical, inspiring workshop with journalist and narrative strategist Erin O'Dwyer, you'll learn how to uncover and refine a voice that's authentic and compelling – whether you're telling your own story or someone else's. You'll leave with refreshed confidence, and a clear sense of how to make your writing sing.

### HOW TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Saturday 15 November, 9:30–11:30am



Award-winning documentary maker and writer Belinda Lopez has spent many years asking the right questions to discover untold stories about families, history and society.

In this workshop, she focuses on the art of interviewing – an often overlooked but crucial skill for writers of family and social histories, memoir and biography, as well as in documentary and journalism. She shares the approaches she has developed to unearth illuminating stories in collaboration with her interviewees.

## WALKING TOUR

### WICKED WOMEN OF WOLLONGONG

Saturday 15 November, 10am–12pm



Uncover Wollongong's hidden feminist history with author and tour guide Sita Sargeant (*She Shapes History*). Take a walk through the city's streets, shoreline and squares to

discover how women shaped Wollongong's politics, culture, and community life.

From ocean baths carved out by convicts so women could swim in privacy, to the grassroots campaigns that changed Australia's constitution, this tour reveals a different side of the city. Along the way you'll encounter stories of survival, protest, reinvention and creativity – from the foreshore to Market Square to the Old Courthouse.

You'll leave with a fresh perspective on Wollongong's landmarks and a deeper appreciation of the women who helped shape the city into what it is today.

# TICKETS

True Story Festival is on  
15 & 16 November at Coledale  
Community Hall. Tickets via  
Humanitix or scan the QR code



Every program is a balancing act, as artistic director Caroline Baum proves again.

Below: Dr Jodi Edwards welcomes the audience and scenes from previous festivals



True Story Festival is brought to you by  
Caroline Baum, the South Coast Writers  
Centre and The Illawarra Flame, with  
support from Collins Booksellers Thirroul.

2025 PROGRAM

## SATURDAY PROGRAM

### WELCOME TO COUNTRY

*Saturday 15 November, 1:15–1:30pm*

Dr Jodi Edwards is a Yuin woman with Dharawal kinship connection who has dedicated her life to community, culture, education and language. She delivers the Welcome Address for this year's festival.

### TRUE CRIME, LOCAL

#### MR WOLLONGONG

*Saturday 15 November, 1:30–2:30pm*



Former mayor of Wollongong Frank Arkell was flamboyant, successful, well-off and a relentless champion of the city he loved. But there was a sinister, dark underside to his

life that involved predatory sexual behaviour towards young boys as part of an alleged paedophile ring of powerful men. In his book *Politics, Pride and Perversion*, historian Erik Eklund (pictured) has done forensic research to tell a story that is disturbing and continues to divide people to this day. He tells Professor Sue Turnbull how he uncovered the secrets of Arkell's network and his brutal murder.

### LOCAL, BIOGRAPHY

#### TRUE LOCALS

*Saturday 15 November, 2:45–3:45pm*



Non-fiction authors walk among us! Four local writers tell ABC Illawarra host Melinda James (pictured) about their exciting new titles. Biographer Jeff Apter reveals

the life of trailblazing music producer Lee Gordon. Journalist Erin O'Dwyer has the inside story on the true crime memoir she co-wrote with a former beauty queen and convicted drug dealer. Electrify Everything guru Saul Griffith explains how to *Plug*

*In!* to cut household costs and carbon emissions. And journalist Jeremy Lasek looks at the people who powered the Illawarra's Yes23 campaign.

### BIOGRAPHY

#### FROM OCEAN TO MOUNTAIN

*Saturday 15 November, 4:00–5:00pm*



Two of the best new Australian biographers talk about how they bring to life remarkable lives that deserve another look. Vicki Hastrich celebrates

deep-sea fishing champion and millionaire author Zane Grey, who spent time fishing for marlin on the South Coast of NSW, while Anthony Sharwood (pictured) travels in the footsteps of his hero, Enlightenment freedom fighter Tadeusz Kościuszko – from Poland to France, from the US to our own high country – to ask how his name got given to our tallest peak. They are in conversation with Caroline Baum, host of *Life Sentences*, a podcast about contemporary biography.

### FIRST NATIONS, HISTORY

#### KEYNOTE: A WAY FORWARD

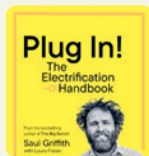
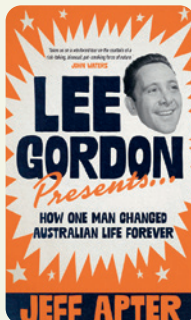
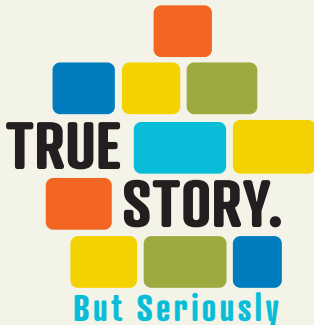
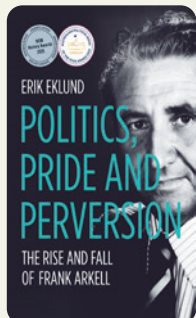
*Saturday 15 November, 5:15–6:15pm*



Stella Prize-winning historian Professor Clare Wright has long been a source of inspiring stories about our past with her award-winning accounts of the Eureka Stockade and the early Australian feminist movement,

as well as her television documentaries, radio programs, feature films and podcasts. We are honoured that this year she delivers our keynote address, which tells the story behind the *nāku dhāruk* (bark petitions) created by the Yolngu people in Arnhem Land to stake their claim to their country, thereby sparking the beginning of the land rights movement that ultimately

2025 PROGRAM





acknowledged legal native title. This promises to be a thought-provoking presentation that no one interested in justice and truth-telling can afford to miss. Following the address, Clare will be in conversation with Jaymee Beveridge.

## SUNDAY PROGRAM

### JOURNALISM, MEDIA

#### YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT

Sunday 16 November, 10:00–11:00am



Nothing could be more topical than conspiracy theories, as recent events such as the tragedy at Porepunkah demonstrate; and in a so-called post-truth world, what role does scepticism have in

determining who we trust and what we believe? To discuss these thorny, burning issues, we have assembled a formidable panel: Walkley award-winner Ariel Bogle and her co-writer Cam Wilson, authors of *Conspiracy Nation*, which covers everything from pandemic origin theories to school shootings; and Tracey Kirkland, editor of *Age of Doubt*, in conversation with fearless media commentator Jan Fran (pictured).

### HISTORY, FEMINISM

#### THE REST IS HER STORY

Sunday 16 November, 11:30am–12:30pm



From monuments to documents, our history casts men as the main characters. Now two powerful storytellers are reframing the narrative to celebrate the accomplishments of women. Join Stella

Prize-winning historian Professor Clare Wright as she speaks to Yves Rees (pictured) about 10 trailblazing women whose connection with the

United States changed the course of Australian history and author Sita Sargeant, the founder of the She Shapes History walking tours, for a fresh feminist perspective on the Australian cities and towns we thought we knew.

### POLITICS, HISTORY

#### THE F WORD

Sunday 16 November, 1:30–2:30pm



It's bandied around a lot these days in conversations about the US and right-wing politics, but what exactly is fascism and why would it prompt Wollongong steelworker Jim McNeil to go and fight against

it in the Spanish Civil War, just as George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway did? Michael Samaras has uncovered a remarkable story of idealism and courage in *Anti-Fascists: Jim McNeil and his mates in the Spanish Civil War*. Meanwhile, Dennis Glover (pictured) brings the subject into the modern day in his book *Repeat: A Warning from History*, drawing our attention to the perils of populists, dictators and authoritarianism. This conversation is hosted by Walkley-award winning author and podcast producer Siobhan McHugh.

### MENTAL HEALTH, MEMOIR

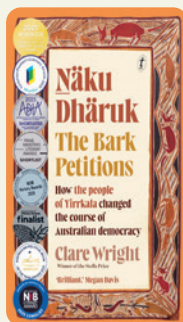
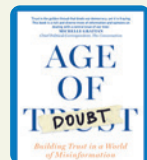
#### HEAD ON

Sunday 16 November, 2:50–3:50pm



In public, they looked poised, confident and fearless, but as high-profile social researcher Rebecca Huntley (*Sassafras*) and acclaimed musical star of *Les Mis* and *Phantom of the Opera* Josh Piterman (*Behind*

*the Mask*) both admit, they have been haunted by trauma and anxiety. So how did they find a way to cope? They talk candidly with award-winning author and celebrant Dr Jackie Bailey (pictured). ✨



2025 PROGRAM

# Accessory to memoir

By Tyneesha Williams



An award-winning journalist and editor wants Illawarra writers to “find a voice” in her True Story Festival workshop in November.

Erin O'Dwyer says she admires the efforts of the South Coast Writers Centre, Caroline Baum and other writers to foster a community where writing is valued and creativity can happen.

“Finding a voice is such a critical aspect in writing,” she says. “Either finding your voice as a writer or helping a client find theirs, or with ghostwriting, you learn how to put your client’s voice onto the page, and that’s quite an art.”

In 30 years as a journalist, Erin has seen a lot of disruption in the media industry, working for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *Good Weekend*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Guardian*, *Australian Geographic*, *Marie Claire* and *Vogue*, and ABC Radio National. Now her broad experience helps her to write in other people’s voices.

“Journalists have found employment in ghostwriting memoirs and business books for leaders, celebrities, CEOs, founders and entrepreneurs... people who find themselves in the spotlight and might not have the story craft or time to sit down and write 75,000 words. They can turn to a professional writer to help them tell their stories,” Erin says.

In 2006, Erin’s work in the promotion of multicultural issues earned her an Australian UN Media Peace Award. She’s a two-time finalist for the same award, as well as a Walkley Award finalist.

“I have a ‘do no harm’ philosophy,” Erin says. “When I first went freelance, at about 30, that

became my ethos for jobs that I would take on, journalism that I would do, clients that I would work with. Anything I did had to have a positive social impact.

“A lot of my work has been grounded in social justice, social advocacy, social issues. And so it is very gratifying to be awarded for that kind of work because you can grind out that work, day in day out, year in year out and not get a lot of recognition or thanks.”

Through Good Prose Studios, her writing and editing consultancy business, Erin trains writers of all kinds in story strategy and narrative development. Good Prose Studios deals with any kind of written content including book-editing and corporate storytelling, and offers coaching and workshops for writers.

“We’re educating people about the core craft elements of storytelling, which we know innately, but we often miss the obvious things when we’re writing creatively,” Erin says.

Erin is a lecturer in journalism at the University of Sydney, mentoring the next generation of storytellers. “Teaching is a really valuable part of my practice as a journalist. I always find that I learn more through my teaching than maybe even the students do,” Erin says.

“We’re at a particularly interesting point in the development of news, storytelling and information ... gathering and sharing. AI and copyright are two burning issues. We’re seeing the demise of local newspapers and we’re now seeing the rise of other news sources. You can either be scared by that or you can embrace it.”

“We will always be storytellers. Human beings are hard-wired for storytelling... information gathering and sharing of news is fundamental to who we are. We just will continue to do it in different ways.”

Erin spent two years getting to know former Miss Australia, gangland girlfriend and convicted drug trafficker Felicia Djamirze, working as a ghostwriter on Felicia’s biography, *Accessory*, which was released in June. “The fact that she’s been able to turn her life around, study counselling, become a counsellor, become an advocate for women who are dealing with family violence and trauma, is a great achievement, and it was an honour to tell her story.”

Erin’s True Story workshop, *Finding Your Voice*, is on Friday, 14 November, 10am-2.30pm at Coledale Community Hall. Book via [southcoastwriters.org](http://southcoastwriters.org) or Humanitix 📌

# Ask the right questions

By Tyneesha Williams

Award-winning documentary maker, writer and researcher Belinda Lopez will bring her expertise to True Story Festival, leading a practical workshop focused on a storyteller's most crucial skill – asking the right questions.

Belinda has spent more than 15 years telling Australian and global stories focused on human rights, social issues, and untold histories. She has worked as a writer, journalist and anthropologist, across outlets like ABC Radio National and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Her writing, podcasts and documentary collaborations received awards, including from the United Nations, Walkley Awards and the Australian Human Rights Awards.

On Saturday, 15 November, from 9:30am to 11:30am, Belinda will present a workshop titled “How to Ask the Right Questions”, focusing on the often-overlooked skill of interviewing. Belinda will share the approach she has developed to reveal impactful stories in a session for anyone interested in writing family and social histories, memoir, biography, documentary or journalism.

Her latest project is a non-fiction manuscript set in West Papua, Indonesia and Australia. “It’s been a



labour of love for many years. It's one of those stories that insists on being told, no matter the challenges,” she says.

“What drew me to the story is exactly what makes it challenging to tell: interconnecting stories over multiple languages, eras and countries, exploring truth, justice, and the mistakes we keep making, over and over again.”

To book a spot in Belinda's workshop on Saturday, 15 November, go to [southcoastwriters.org](http://southcoastwriters.org) or Humanitix 🌟



## Community Centres and Halls for Hire

Modern, flexible and comfortable spaces for groups from 4 to 400. Perfect for your class, group or event.

Scan the QR code or visit [wollongong.nsw.gov.au/centres](http://wollongong.nsw.gov.au/centres)





# Beetling About

'What I did on my holidays' by Dr Chris Reid

'What I did on my holidays' was the frequent title of essays required by our school teachers. I've just been on a field trip to a relatively remote part of New South Wales, a trip which was like a holiday from ghastly old Sydney. So here's my essay.

The Pilliga is a vast forest, 75x75km, between Coonabarabran and Narrabri. A major highway between those two towns cuts off the eastern third of it, so it's not exactly remote, but off that road the country very quickly becomes just wild remote bush. We were lucky with timing – there had been good rain and the place was awash with flowers, providing carpets of blue (*Dampiera*), yellow (*Senna*) and white (*Calytrix*).

I was with a group of biologists invited by the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW – time they changed that mouthful) to survey this wilderness, because the area was relatively poorly known. We were camped at the Australian Wildlife Conservancy field station, with most 'mod cons' provided, but the temperature did get down to 3.8°C, which is not so much fun in a tent.

Two of us from the Australian Museum were chasing beetles, including dung beetles. For the latter, Symbio Wildlife Park had very kindly



provided some roo poo for baited traps.

What did we find? Well, it's still being processed, but we brought back about 1000 beetle specimens from six days. The roo poo traps collected relatively little – five species, all widespread – perhaps because it was early in the year.

We did find a cute new species of leaf beetle, pretending to be an acacia flower (see above) and no doubt there will be many more new things!

I'm very grateful to Bushblitz (DCCEEW) for the invitation, to Cynthia Chan for the extra pair of eyes, and particularly to Symbio for the poo. 🌟



## Two seasons of shark data

Part 2 in Duncan Leadbitter's article about bather protection and sharks

The Illawarra's shark nets and drumlines catch very few sharks but the listening station (noting I don't collect pings from the Wollongong one) shows that sharks are more common than the nets/lines would imply.

Clearly, the sharks caught by a drumline do not

head out to sea and stay away.

The number of sharks sighted by drones is very, very small. As I know from my own drone flights, sharks are difficult to find.

However, once found they can generate some compelling imagery. 🌟

	2022-2023	2023-2024	Notes
<b>Beach meshing</b> (7 beaches)	3 tiger sharks (two off Royal NP and one off South Wollongong)	2 tiger sharks, both off Royal NP	1 Sept to 30 Apr, Royal NP to South Wollongong (City) beach; other species: Sharks, rays, turtles, seals, dolphins.
<b>Drumlines</b> (22 in Wollongong Council area)	nil	One white (Corrimal Beach)	1 July to 30 June – Wollongong reporting region; other species: Sharks, rays.
<b>Detections</b>	53 (whites, bulls, tigers)	65 (whites, bulls, tigers)	Stanwell Park only – June to May; Other species: (pings from same animal) <1 hour apart removed.
<b>Drone</b>	Data not available	4 (species not listed)	Wollongong region – Spring through Autumn; 393 hours flown.
<b>SLSA sightings</b>	2 (species not listed)	5 (species not listed)	Illawarra – swimming season.

Wrapped in rope in July, the humpback is now covered in whale lice. Photos by ORRCA members Khynan Gardner and Ashley Sykes



## Entanglement takes a toll

By ORRCA secretary Jody Langlois

Each year, the Organisation for the Rescue and Research of Cetaceans in Australia (ORRCA) responds to numerous reports of entangled humpback whales migrating along the east coast of Australia, including off the Illawarra coastline.

While disentangling these magnificent animals is a critical and often life-saving step, their challenges do not end once the ropes are removed.

Entanglement can have serious and lasting impacts on a whale's health. The physical trauma, exhaustion, and restricted movement caused by entanglement can lead to long-term complications that persist even after rescue.

Recently, ORRCA tracked a humpback whale along the Illawarra coast that highlighted this. In late July, ORRCA member Khynan Gardner filmed a whale while it was still entangled. A little over a month later, in mid-September, Ashley Sykes, also an ORRCA member, captured footage of the same individual after its successful disentanglement. While the gear had been removed, the whale's

health had noticeably deteriorated. Observers noted a light brown discolouration caused by prolific whale lice, a tell-tale sign of poor health and a weakened immune system. Despite being freed, this whale's condition continued to decline.

This case underscores the importance of early detection and rapid response. The sooner an entangled whale is reported, the greater its chances of survival and recovery. Every sighting plays a role in protecting these animals and contributing data to ongoing research and rescue efforts.

If you're out on the water or along the coast and spot an entangled whale, please don't attempt to intervene directly. Instead, call the ORRCA 24-hour Rescue Hotline on (02) 9415 3333.

Your quick action could make all the difference.

Together, we can continue to give these incredible ocean giants their best chance at recovery and a safe journey through our waters.

Help, join or donate at [www.orrca.org.au](http://www.orrca.org.au) ✨



## Local lookalikes

By Kieran Tapsell of Banksia Bushcare

Pearl Vine (*Sarcopetalum harveyanum*) and Snake Vine (*Stephania japonica*) are two local native vines that are widespread throughout the Illawarra. The difference between the two is that Pearl Vine has the stalk attached to the edge of the heart-

shaped leaf, while Snake Vine has it attached to the middle of the leaf.

Pictured at left are the leaves and flowers of Madeira Vine, an invasive environmental weed, blanketing and smothering both shrubs and trees.

The best way to tell the difference between Madeira and the two local vines is to feel the leaves. Both Pearl Vine and Snake Vine have a stiff but thin texture, more like paper, while Madeira vine has a fleshy feel.

A better way to see the difference is through Madeira vine's significant flowers in late summer and autumn. It is a mistake to try and pull Madeira Vine out because the nodes along the stem drop on the ground and can sprout in the thousands. The best way is to scrape about 50cm along one side of the vine and paint neat glyphosate or similar poison along the trunk. ✨

# Green thumbs eat up edible trail tips

By Tyneesha Williams

Austinmer couple Sarah and James will open their garden gates for November's Illawarra Edible Garden Trail, welcoming trail-goers to their shady but productive backyard.

Sarah said gardeners were “a pretty good mob” who shared a universal language.

“You might go to the native plant nursery at the back of Wollongong University and the Botanic Gardens there, and have a chat with other people who are also interested in gardening,” she says.

“You’re speaking the same language – you believe in the same things. You’re sharing stories with people who really believe this is important.”

The Illawarra Edible Garden Trail began in 2023 and partners with Food Fairness Illawarra and Healthy Cities Australia to foster community spirit and food accessibility.

On November 22 and 23, gardening fans can explore backyard veggie patches, crop swap groups, schools, community gardens and hobby farms and more. This year’s trail will feature gardens from the northern suburbs all the way to Shell Cove.

Sarah’s garden grows in a backyard shaded by rainforest trees, making it challenging to grow vegetables, but with the help of her garden manager, Zoe Bell, she has the herbs, fruits and

vegies to make salads and chutneys at home.

Visitors will see raised beds with herbs and vegies, young citrus trees and native fruit trees as well as two compost bins and a flow hive in the garden.

“I can just go out and grab something healthy for lunch, to add to the cooked chook or whatever, and we’ve always got a fresh salad,” Sarah says. “With the flow hive, you can just turn the tap and the honey just flows out when it’s ready. So I also get to make lovely gifts for people.”

As a recipient of Sarah’s gifts, Zoe understands the beauty in its origins.

“Sarah makes her own labels for the honey and it’s just a packaged gift. It really is very beautiful,” says Zoe, a horticulturist from Bulli who owns landscaping company Plantlandia. She has been working on the garden for almost six years, providing creative, technical and local know-how.

“I’ve seen the garden transform tremendously over the time I’ve been working here. It looked nothing like this when I first started,” Zoe says.

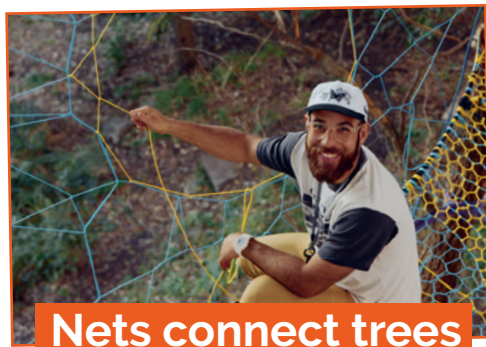
The Renwick’s garden will be open to guests on Saturday, November 23 only. For trail information, visit [foodfairnessillawarra.org.au](http://foodfairnessillawarra.org.au) 🌟



Sarah Renwick and Zoe Bell in the garden at Austinmer.  
Photos: Tyneesha Williams, supplied







## Nets connect trees and people

In January, 30-year-old Bulli local Arthur Pera turned an outdoor hobby into a small business. Now SlackMate Weaves is finding a growing market in the nature-loving Illawarra community. Arthur shares his story.

I started SlackMate Weaves with a simple idea – to bring people outdoors and help them reconnect to nature through play, balance, and creativity. What began as a hobby of rigging slacklines and treenets for friends has grown into a small business creating unique, hand-woven platforms suspended between trees and structures across the Illawarra.

Each SlackMate Weave is built with high-strength static rope and 550 paracord, carefully

tensioned and patterned by hand. The result is a strong, flexible web that feels like a hammock crossed with a climbing net – a space for kids to play, rest, or explore, and for adults to unwind above the ground. Every piece is custom-designed to fit its surroundings, interacting with the layout of the space.

What inspires me most is how these nets naturally draw people together. Once installed, they become instant gathering spots – laughter, curiosity, and movement all seem to flow. There's something special about watching a family or group of children find new ways to climb, balance, and connect with nature.

I'm passionate about making each installation as safe and sustainable as possible. All our work aligns with Australian Standards for Playground Safety (AS 4685:2021), and we make sure our techniques and methods do not harm the tree. It's important to me that the trees remain healthy and that every design complements its environment.

SlackMate Weaves is still a small, local business — it's just me, my tools, and a deep respect for craftsmanship. But what keeps it growing is the enthusiasm of people who value creativity, outdoor fun, and connection. I'm proud to see our projects popping up from Bulli to beyond, in backyards, schools, and community spaces.

At its heart, SlackMate Weaves is about balance — the balance between work and play, humans and nature, strength and stillness. ✨

## Everyone loves Mumma's Beans

Bulli mum Maika Hehir shares the story behind her coffee



In search of a gentle cuppa during pregnancy, Bulli mum Maika Hehir created a guilt-free brew for mothers but has wound up with a product with broad appeal.

"I'm the founder of Mumma's Beans Coffee, an Australian-grown coffee that's slightly lower in acidity and caffeine for a gentler brew, as well as an

organic decaf that actually tastes good," she says.

Born and raised in Germany, Maika drew on a career in sustainable food to create her award-winning products, which have been recognised at the Clean + Conscious Awards.

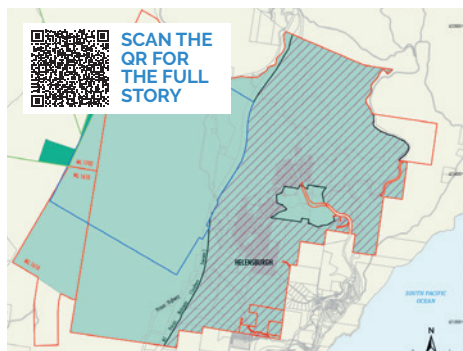
"My background is in global food ingredient sourcing," she explains. "I travelled to fields and farms all over the world talking about and helping to introduce sustainable growing practices.

"When I fell pregnant and became a little obsessed with coffee looking for a gentler brew ... so I organised a family road trip to all the Australian coffee growers that would have me and set out to create my own.

"Turns out not only pregnant and breastfeeding mums were looking for a healthier coffee, as the majority of our customers today come to us because regular coffee doesn't agree with their gut or causes discomfort, where they can enjoy our coffee without any negative side effects." ✨

# Who said what about coal mining in the water catchment

By Genevieve Swart



L to R: The DA area in Peabody's documents; the Woronora Special Area on a WaterNSW map

Feedback on a State Significant Development (SSD) that proposes more coal mining in the catchment was published in September, with over 200 submissions on Peabody's plans for Helensburgh's Metropolitan Mine on the NSW Planning Portal.

In its advice, WaterNSW – the state-owned corporation charged with keeping drinking water safe – has warned that water quality and quantity are at risk, the mining company's ecological assessments "cannot be relied upon" and Aboriginal concerns have been "disregarded".

In a letter from Rob O'Neill, WaterNSW's acting executive manager of strategy and performance, the corporation examines the potentially serious and irreversible impacts of expanding coal mining in the Woronora Special Area, part of the Greater Sydney catchment.

Damage to upland swamps, for example, may result in "persistent" water losses and water level declines, WaterNSW says.

"Complete avoidance of mining beneath Swamp S106 is the only effective protection," its report says of one vulnerable and significant swamp, adding that "impacts might materialise after it is too late to mitigate".

In addition to highlighting threats to safe and reliable drinking water, WaterNSW also criticised the US miner's ecological and cultural assessments.

Its five-page response is studded with some of the strongest terms known to bureaucracy. On water quality conclusions, it says "WaterNSW disagrees"; on impact assessments, it calls out a "lack of robustness"; on aquatic ecology, it slams the "omission or insufficient assessment" of threatened and near-threatened species, such as the platypus, Littlejohn's Tree Frog, and rare dragonflies.

On cultural heritage, with 25 sites at risk of

subsidence, WaterNSW supports the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council's concerns.

"Importantly, this includes that the proposed Modification will result in irreversible damage to Country itself," its report says.

## Woronora supplies drinking water to 8500 people in the Wollongong LGA

Public feedback on this State Significant Development closed on August 26, the day after a Labor versus Greens debate at a Wollongong City Council (WCC) meeting, where Cr Deidre Stuart's motion for an objection was lost. Council staff had already shared their view in an earlier submission and the majority Labor councillors supported elected representatives making "individual, personal submissions".

Of over 200 submissions the NSW Government has since published, 75 support and 140 are opposed to Modification 4, which is to reconfigure Longwall 317 and add new longwall 318 at Helensburgh's Metropolitan Mine.

Only Wollongong Council's submission is labelled as "comment".

Those opposed to Peabody's plans have shared three key concerns: water security, environmental loss and damage to Aboriginal heritage.

Both the longwalls – which the Mining and Energy Union (MEU) says would extend the Helensburgh mine's life by two years "until 2031 as opposed to premature cessation of operation in 2029" – lie in the Woronora Special Area.

Water security here is of special interest to residents of 2508, who rely on the Woronora Dam for their drinking water.

In the Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA), about 8500 people in Helensburgh, Otford,

Stanwell Park and Coalcliff are supplied by Woronora Water Filtration Plant (WFP).

While Woronora Dam is the only water supply to Woronora WFP, the Woronora and Prospect WFP supply networks are interconnected to ensure a reliable supply for Sydney Water customers, even if the dam is taken offline.

### Sutherland Council objected

After its councillors unanimously resolved to object at an August 18 council meeting, Sutherland Shire Council (SSC) filed an objection, saying it was “not satisfied that the proposed modifications will safeguard the long-term security” of its residents’ water supply.

Up to half a million people in the Shire may receive some water from the special area, according to Sydney Water data.

In its submission, SSC writes: “Council has a long history of opposing mining within the Woronora Special Area, beginning with our submission to the original 2008 application. Many concerns raised in that submission have now materialised, including subsidence impacts to swamps and waterways, and increased pressure on water quality.”

Objections also came from the National Parks Association, Lock the Gate Alliance, Protect Our Water Alliance, the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, and Wollongong’s Tomorrow Movement.

While Wollongong Council’s submission is marked as “Comment”, staff share clear views on environmental and Aboriginal heritage impacts and the report uses the phrase “Serious and Irreversible Impacts” so many times it warrants its own acronym (SAII).

### Union supports ‘two more years of certainty’

The Metropolitan Mine produces steelmaking coal and Peabody says that it supports 400 jobs, spends \$217 million with suppliers and contributes \$324 million annually to NSW’s economy.

The MEU South Western District submission described the longwall modification as a “sensible response to discovered geological challenges”.

BlueScope – which employs about 3,000 full-time workers at its Port Kembla Steelworks – also supported the modification, noting the “critical Importance of Local Metallurgical Coal Supply for the ongoing production of iron and steel at the Port Kembla Steelworks”.

Port Kembla Coal Terminal described the mine as “essential to maintain terminal viability”.

Among the objections, 37 were marked “name withheld”, including several from Queensland.

The department of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Wollongong MP Paul Scully, is now awaiting Peabody’s response to submissions. ✨

## Councillors’ words

From discussion at September’s Council meeting, when Labor’s eight councillors all voted against a Greens motion to object and ask that the project go to the Independent Planning Commission



– Greens’ Cr Deidre Stuart

“This is a controversial project because of the proponent, Peabody, and also because of the coal mine’s record of damage and destruction.”



“It’s not simply an abstract planning matter. It does pose a direct risk to the drinking water of people in the north of our city.” – Greens’ Cr Kit Docker



sickening.” – Greens’ Cr Jess Whittaker

“The idea of punching yet another massive hole deep into the ground to connect the coal seam with our atmosphere is actually



go leapfrogging or to even pretend to have a role.” – Labor’s Cr Ann Martin

“It is not our role to make an objection ... It’s up to the state government as the determining authority ... We have no role. It ain’t our gig to



politicised decision about a planning matter.” – Labor’s Cr David Brown

“There is governance peril in interfering with professional decisions of our planning staff ... The danger here is making what can be seen as a



than that ... this is the environmental version of what the anti-vax ‘do your own research’ cooker crowd does, where they cherry-pick information, make tenuous if not completely absurd links, and then demand everyone supports the conclusion that they reached prior to the process.” ✨

Labor’s Cr Dan Hayes criticised the Greens for trying to summarise council staff’s submission as “supportive or not”. “It’s more complex again



SCAN THE QR FOR THE FULL STORY



# End of an era at canoe factory

By Marcus Craft

After more than 40 years of making top-quality watercraft for private paddlers and commercial tour companies, the owners of Australis Canoes & Kayaks are taking a well-deserved retirement.

Started in 1984 by paddlesport-mad brothers John and David Slattery, the business near Bellambi Bunnings is now closing up its shop, with the premises due to change hands soon.

It's the end of one of Australia's greatest manufacturing success stories, an enterprise responsible for designing and making thousands of plastic canoes, kayaks, sea kayaks and sit-on-tops that are used throughout the country, including by our local Illawarra Canoe Club (ICC).

"My brother John and myself first started making canoes in fibreglass when in scouts as young adults," David said. "We then joined the Illawarra Canoe Club during the 70s where we managed the moulds for members to make their own canoes. Australis first started making plastic canoes under the name Aymeast in 1987. We changed the company name to Australis Canoes in 1998 for better brand recognition."

The team built everything used in the manufacturing process, and since they began using the "more robust and durable" polyethylene in 1987, Australis has grown to become the country's largest plastic rotational moulder of canoes and kayaks, sea kayaks and sit-ons.

David said the highlight of his career has been "getting paid to do something you love to do and being able to introduce new people to the sport".

"Meeting customers has always been a highlight with many great friendships being formed over the decades. It is always great to be at a show or out on the river and someone comes up to tell you how great your product is and how much they enjoy using it. Also, when new customers come in and tell me that they used our canoes in scouts and now want to buy one to share the experience with their own family."

There's been time for his own ocean adventures too. "Highlights would have to be two fantastic 10-day sea kayaking trips through the Whitsundays and paddling in Tasmania.

"Competitively, I enjoyed the 100 miler and the Hawkesbury Classic."

David and his wife Heather agree that closure of the business marked the end of an era. But even though it's bittersweet, Heather said they are looking forward to retirement because it meant more time to themselves and with their family.

When *The Flame* spoke to David, he was busy completing final orders but there were still some



David Slattery and his Australis kayaks

new, factory second, and second-hand models available. "The factory site has been sold, and we are now deciding what to do with the business."

"We still have plenty of stock available and everything that is in stock has been discounted to clear. With the warmer weather, now is the time to grab a fantastic bargain before they are gone."

Visit 5 Watts Lane while stocks last or [www.canoes.com.au](http://www.canoes.com.au) or call (02) 4285 2000.

## Club members pay tribute to 'a legend'

ICC members have congratulated the family business on decades of great service, and are now hoping to see more of David on the water.

"We still remember buying our Bushranger canoe when the kids were little – it was the start of so many special adventures," Linda and Conrad shared in a tribute to David's work. "But more than just the gear, we're so grateful for the conversations and the encouragement. You suggested we join the local paddling club, and that one simple recommendation opened the door to an incredible community. The friendships, the laughs, the paddles – it's become such a special part of our lives."

Club kayaker Rhonda Chamberlain thanked David for helping her to relearn technique and meet people when she re-entered the sport after a 35-year hiatus. "You can't launch in the Illawarra without running into a paddler with an Australis canoe. Dave's a legend builder and legend coach, he reads and navigates moving water with grace and precision, he's an outstanding paddler." 🌸

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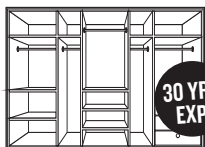


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## NIRAG/ NF3 Report

By Northern Illawarra Residents Action  
Group secretary Ross Dearden

### Homes NSW Proposal at Bulli

Homes NSW Proposal at 6-10 Southview St, Bulli was to replace 3 existing homes with 16 units 3 storeys high, even though this is a R2 zoned area with a 2-storey limit. Maryanne Stuart, Member for Heathcote, attended our last NIRAG meeting and advocated to support residents' concerns. She has achieved a pause in the process and assurances the proposal will be modified in scale and reduced to 2 storeys – a huge success for community action.

We also want Minister Paul Scully to take this opportunity to ensure Homes NSW does not repeat this, that social housing in Wollongong LGA complies with the intent of new State Government policies and does not exceed the requirements of the DCP/LEP that all developers must comply with. It is still a concern that there may still be 13 units and that this site is outside the 800m distance from essential services as required by the Mid-Rise Housing Policy.

You can join the community Facebook group "Sensible Development in The Suburbs" for updates and to give support.

## NF1 Report

By Neighbourhood Forum 1 convenor  
Warwick Erwin

The Engagement Institute (formerly IAP2) defines Community Engagement as "driving change through meaningful engagement – building trust, improving decisions and shaping better futures."

Neighbourhood Forum 1 (NF1) believes council is failing at those three.

The Spectrum of Engagement is the level of public engagement in the process of participation. This is defined as levels of increasing impact on decisions, in this order: Inform -> Consult -> Involve -> Collaborate -> Empower.

For Helensburgh Town Plan, the community participation was at the 'collaborate' level – partnering with Council in each aspect of the decisions and the development of alternatives and identification of the final solutions.

Now, with the proposed new Helensburgh Library and Community Centre, the community is being restricted by Council to not even the 'Consult' level. The chance to place a dot, tick a box

### Roadworks at Station St and Park Road, Bulli

These are now well advanced in readiness of changes to parking, right turn bans and traffic light reconstruction. A permanent 30km/h speed limit will then be introduced on Park Road, Station, Railway and Bank streets and Veigals Lane. During work, single lane closures and a reduced speed of 40km/h will be in place on the Highway.

### Amy Street, Thirroul: DA 2025/374

A DA for a 3-storey dwelling on a small part of Lot 303 zoned R2 is to be determined by the Wollongong Local Planning Committee. The majority of the lot forms a Green Corridor of C2, Environmental Conservation land (about 7ha) between Hewitts Creek and Woodlands Creek, Thirroul. NIRAG is concerned for the potential loss of public accesses to McCauley's Beach, and ongoing management of the C2, Environmental Conservation part of the land.

NIRAG believes that the C2 area needs to be identified in the Wollongong Community Strategic Plan and brought into public ownership. This land is a vital Green Corridor (similar to the Keira and Kembla Green Corridors). Council has not identified the land in the strategic plan as a green corridor. There is huge community support for public ownership and concern for the destruction of habitat that has recently occurred in preparation for a sale on 31 October.

With Council's cooperation, a rezoning of part of

the C2 land to C4 (Environmental Living) could be a way to move forward by separating most of the C2 land from the R2 small 320m<sup>2</sup> residential area, allowing a further subdivision.

NIRAG has met with GM Greg Doyle, Director Planning and Environment Linda Davis, and Director Services Kerry Hunt in Council. They were receptive to our strong case for acquisition or rezoning to enable the land to be public open space, but understandably they gave no assurances.

NIRAG will meet on Wednesday, 12 November, 7pm at Bulli Community Centre upstairs. All welcome. Contact [nirag@bigpond.com](mailto:nirag@bigpond.com) 🌟



A view south to Aragan Circuit showing the extent of slashing and destruction of native and migratory bird habitat. Photo: Ross Dearden

or write a comment against the list of predefined items does not even reach the full 'Consult' level of engagement, as Council has not even told the community the full scope of what Council is dropping on the community.

What we know so far is that the community hall will be far less than what we had.

In 1978, when the (now damaged and closed) Community hall was built, the population of 2508 was about 5000.

In 2025, with a population of about 10,000, Council has awarded a tender to design a facility that is half the size of what was built 47 years ago.

The tender for the Architectural and Subconsultant Services to Sherson Architecture Pty Ltd of Austinmer in the sum of \$1,382,295 has been accepted by Council.

Residents won't have a chance to comment on the plans until after staff are satisfied that the plans meet council's requirements. Has \$1.4m been spent on what the community does not want?

No Community Involvement, No Community Collaboration and certainly no Community Empowering.

Let your elected representative know what you

think of the downgrading of the proposed new community centre and library:

- Lord Mayor Cr Tania Brown, [tbrown@wollongong.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tbrown@wollongong.nsw.gov.au)
- Cr Jess Whittaker, 0491 316 123, [cr.jwhittaker@wollongong.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cr.jwhittaker@wollongong.nsw.gov.au)
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### Pool closed until January 2026

Council indicates work is on schedule.

### Report Issues to Council

Report potholes, drainage problems, blocked drains etc to Council via 02 4227 7111 or the Snap Send Solve app.

Neighbourhood Forums are independent residents' groups, supported by Wollongong City Council. Next meeting: 7pm Wed, 12 Nov at Helensburgh Community Rooms 🌟

# Sea Eels wrap up winter swims

By Peter McDonald, president of Stanwell Park Sea Eels Winter Swimming Club

The Stanwell Park Sea Eels have wrapped up their 38th winter swimming season, with only the Christmas drinks on 6 December left to celebrate. It's been a season of sunny swims, friendly rivalry, and plenty of laughs at Coalcliff Pool.

Water temperatures stayed between 15 and 18°C, perfect for everyone. Six new members joined this year and are already looking forward to 2026.

The Sea Eels' inter-club swims included a visit to the Bulli Sea Lions and the ever-popular day with the Bondi Icebergs ladies, who generously donated \$1000 to the CRAM Foundation. "Bring a Friend Day" with Cronulla and Era swim clubs saw the Sea Eels proudly win the annual relay. The club also welcomed the Jervis Bay Wobbeongs and competed with Kurranulla clubs at Cronulla.

At the South Coast Winter Swimming Association Championships, the Sea Eels finished second overall, with Ben Stacpoole setting two new records in the Open and Over 30s sprints.

The Club Championships showcased talent across all ages: Sam Hobden won the Open, Kerrie-Lee Lord the Women's Open, Ben Stacpoole the Over 30s, Christine McDonald the Over 40s, Kerrie-Lee Lord the Over 50s, Graham Standen the Over 60s, and Peter McDonald the Over 70s, who also took the Slippery Eel for the second year running. Gary Marshall and Cate Burton shared the Soup Excellence award, and the Golden Boot went to Steve Clarke.

Ben Stacpoole was named Club Member of the Year, recognised for his results and encouragement of new members.

Twenty-three members travelled to the Australian Championships at Maroochydore, where Ben added bronze in the Men's Over 30s sprint, with strong performances across finals and relays. The Sea Eels were voted "best dressed," thanks to Christine McDonald and sponsorship from Raine & Horne Real Estate Helensburgh.

Thanks to members and visitors, the club donated \$2000 to the CRAM Foundation this season. A big thank you to all members for their friendship and generosity, and special thanks to Marg and Peter Hunt and Sandra McDonald for all they do behind the scenes.

The Sea Eels welcome all local residents and surf club members, a friendly club that loves a cool swim and a warm laugh. See you at Coalcliff Pool any Sunday from April to September 2026. 🌟



## New season kicks off at Stanwell Park

By Christine McDonald of Helensburgh-Stanwell Park SLSC

The 2025/26 patrol and Nippers season is underway at Helensburgh-Stanwell Park Surf Life Saving Club, with a busy summer ahead both on and off the beach.

Our volunteer lifesavers are back on patrol each

weekend, keeping beach-goers safe and preparing for a strong season of surf sports competition. This year, we're also excited to bring back Senior Pointscore, open to all financial members aged 14 and over. Check out the club's social media or website for full details on how to get involved.

It's been a great start for Nippers with large numbers across all age groups and plenty of enthusiasm on Sunday mornings. We've welcomed a new committee this season, with Chairperson Stuart and Secretary Sharon leading the way.

A big congratulations to Halle and Nate on their selection into the Illawarra Inter-Branch Team, a fantastic achievement and well-deserved recognition of their effort and dedication.

And back by popular demand, Santa Photos return Sunday, 30 November. This is Nippers' biggest fundraiser and a favourite community event. Bookings will open mid-November, so keep an eye out for details.

Thank you to all members, families and volunteers for their continued support – we look forward to a great season ahead. 🌟



# Dive in with Coalcliff Ocean Swim Club

By Brigid Collaery of Coalcliff SLSC

The Coalcliff Ocean Swim Club is making waves in the 2025/2026 season, inviting swimmers to experience the joy and camaraderie of ocean swimming. Proudly sponsored by Equilibrium Healthcare, the club kicked off its first swim on Sunday, 26 October, with 10 sessions scheduled through to March 2026.

This season brings an exciting new addition: select swims will be held at Stanwell Park Beach, thanks to a new partnership with Helensburgh-Stanwell Park SLSC. This collaboration means members can enjoy ocean swims at both Coalcliff and Stanwell Park beaches.

What sets Coalcliff apart is its focus on participation, not competition. Open to anyone over 16 who can swim confidently, the club provides a safe, supportive environment for members to practise their ocean swimming skills. Each session includes practice navigating the surf break, developing ocean swimming techniques, and finding a rhythm to suit you, all under the watchful eye of Coalcliff SLSC's lifesavers. Water safety is paramount and includes support from jetski, IRB, and patrollers on rescue boards.

A season highlight is the iconic Dave Winner 'Beach to Bombie' Swim, coming up soon on 16 November, a 1.2km course that honours the inspiring contribution of Life Member Dave Winner, followed by a festive gathering (with the man himself!) at Coledale RSL. If you weren't part of the swim club last season, you'll need to register for this event separately.

The swim club membership is \$50 for the season and you'll receive a bright club cap for visibility. For details and registration, visit [coalcliffslsc.com.au](http://coalcliffslsc.com.au) 🌟



Above, Seniors (left to right): Steve Rainford, Tristen Hargreaves, Jeremy Keed, Rod Morgan, Christian DeClouett.  
Below, Junior Boys (left to right): Cale Riegler, Logan Frost, Noah Kornek, Oliver Keed, Sam Kornek

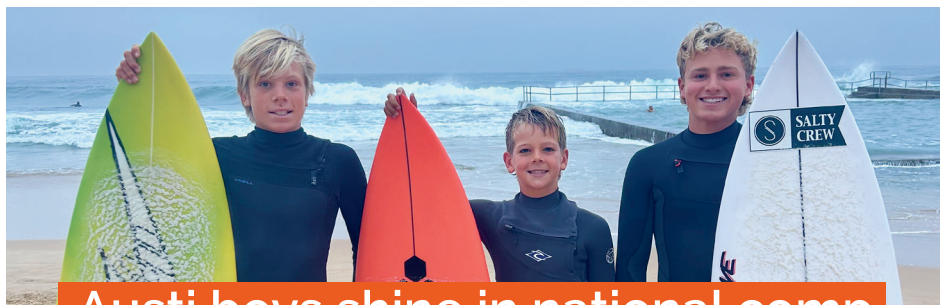
## Juniors take fourth place in surf tag

By Ian Pepper of the Scarborough Boardriders

Massive day of action for our club on Sunday, 20th October, somehow combining our pointscore #9 with participating in a junior boys and masters surf tag series at Curl Curl Beach. Well done to everybody, with our junior boys finishing fourth in the surf tag event and our masters finishing fifth.

The 9th pointscore was run at Stanwell Park's north end with small waves but plenty of opportunities. Congratulations to our A grade winner, Josh Pepper, and our open women winner Zhalia Short. Also, all our juniors who excelled in the small conditions.

One more event to go for the year on Sunday, 2nd November and then the big presentation at Wombarra Bowlo on Saturday, 15th November! 🌟



## Austi boys shine in national comp

By Matt Jolley

Three talented young surfers from Austinmer – Saxon King, Noah Kornek, and Ashton Mekisic – made waves at the 2025 Rip Curl GromSearch National Final, proudly representing their hometown on one of the biggest junior surfing stages in Australia.

The prestigious event, held at Urbnsurf in Sydney, brought together the young surfers from across the nation. Despite fierce competition and challenging conditions, all three Austinmer boys impressed judges and spectators with their powerful and progressive surfing, each earning a spot in their respective finals – an incredible achievement in itself.

Saxon King was the standout performer, finishing 2nd in the Under 12 Boys division, showcasing smooth style and precision well

beyond his years. Noah Kornek claimed 6th in the Under 14 Boys, demonstrating consistency and composure in a stacked field. Meanwhile, Ashton Mekisic battled through a highly competitive draw to also finish 6th in the Under 16 Boys, marking an outstanding result at national level.

With a national presence and an extremely high standard of surfing across all divisions, these results highlight the strength of the next generation coming out of Austinmer. The trio's success is a testament to their dedication, local coaching support, and the growing surf culture along the South Coast.

From the beaches of Austinmer to the national stage, Saxon, Noah, and Ashton have shown that the future of Illawarra surfing is in very good hands. 🌟

## High hopes for Junior Surfing Titles

By Illawarra Sports High surf coach David Hyslop

Illawarra Sports High School (ISHS) will proudly showcase its surfing talent on home turf this December, when the 2025 Australian Junior Surfing Titles come to Wollongong.

The event, which attracts the nation's best young surfers, will see ISHS students from the school's renowned Talented Sports Development Program competing across multiple divisions, all with their eyes set on national glory.

ISHS will field three strong school teams – junior girls, senior girls and senior boys – each aiming to capture an elusive Australian Schools Surfing Title. The competition not only highlights individual talent but also the depth of surfing culture that runs through the Illawarra region and the program at ISHS.

Guiding the surfers is a wealth of experience, with the school's head coach Geoff Latimer leading the program, supported by myself.

Adding further excitement, five standout athletes

– Ruby Neill, Lani Cairncross, Alice Hodgson, Ashton Mekisic and Taj Air – will also compete for individual national honours.

With Wollongong as the stage, ISHS athletes are set to make waves this December, carrying both their school pride and the Illawarra's surfing heritage into the national spotlight. 🌟



# Thistles celebrate 130th year

By Chris Tangye, Senior President of the Helensburgh Thistles Soccer Club

Helensburgh Thistles Soccer Club proudly celebrated its 130-year anniversary this year.

To put that into perspective, the Thistles were founded just 38 years after Sheffield FC, the world's first football club, was established in 1857. This makes Helensburgh's team older than European giants Juventus, AC Milan, Barcelona and Real Madrid – a remarkable achievement for a small mining town an hour south of Sydney.

Formed in 1895 by local mine workers and townspeople, the club quickly became a cornerstone of Helensburgh life. Early matches were played at makeshift grounds including Proud Park, Recreation Park and Walker Street Oval (where Francis St currently meets Walker St).

Founding teams included "Struggle Town", "The Townies" and "Top Town" as well as a combined Lilyvale and Otford team, and by 1903, the foundation year of the Illawarra Football Association, the Thistles' First Grade side completed an entire season undefeated, winning both the first and second grade competitions in that inaugural year.

Through the early 20th century, the club flourished. In 1923 the Thistles claimed the Illawarra District Soccer Association Second Division Premiership, and they were a founding member (and winner of that first competition) of the Illawarra School Boys competition when it was established in 1948. Helensburgh were also a foundation member of the Sutherland Shire Football Association formed in 1952.

Today, Helensburgh Thistles remain

a thriving community club, home to more than 650 players across junior and senior teams. From our highly regarded "Mini Thistles" program for three- to five-year-olds to the senior Premier League squads, the club's vision is to provide an inclusive environment for all players to thrive.

As we reflect on 130 years of community football, it's important to remember the countless players who have pulled on the yellow and black jersey across generations. Imagine what they've achieved and witnessed – through world wars, the Great Depression and decades of social change.

When current players pull on the Thistles jersey, they're not just wearing a shirt, they're contributing to a historical legacy that goes back over 100 years.

From humble beginnings to today, when Rex Jackson Oval is a thriving celebration of football on weekends, the past 130 years have embodied all that the club stands for: proud, welcoming and ready to serve the community for years to come.

## Well done to a champion of women's sport

Helensburgh Thistles Soccer Club's long-time volunteer Gill Lehn has been recognised by Football South Coast with the Dot Reed Stephenson Award for her outstanding contribution to women's football in the Illawarra.

A dedicated member for 15 years, Gill has served on the committee for a decade and as Junior President for the past six.

She has been a driving force behind the growth of female participation, both as an organiser and as a player in the Over 30 Women's team.

A passionate advocate for community football and proud mum to four Thistles Premier League players, Gill's award is fitting recognition of her inspirational leadership. 🌟

Gill in April 2019 when she made club history as the Juniors' first woman president. Below: 1927's Premiership winners and today's Helensburgh U10 Purple team





# Port Kembla Tidal Chart

## November 2025

TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M
<b>1</b> 0532 1.26 1109 0.63 SA 1724 1.51		<b>10</b> 0050 1.20 0607 0.59 MO 1241 1.80 1950 0.28		<b>19</b> 0147 0.48 0821 1.64 WE 1457 0.41 2045 1.26		<b>28</b> 0255 1.17 0811 0.72 FR 1431 1.48 ● 2133 0.42	
<b>2</b> 0001 0.33 0617 1.39 SU 1209 0.52 1817 1.55		<b>11</b> 0158 1.16 0710 0.65 TU 1342 1.68 2055 0.34		<b>20</b> 0219 0.50 0854 1.69 TH 1535 0.38 ● 2125 1.24		<b>29</b> 0353 1.24 0923 0.70 SA 1535 1.45 2223 0.39	
<b>3</b> 0043 0.28 0700 1.54 MO 1305 0.40 1909 1.57		<b>12</b> 0307 1.16 0821 0.69 WE 1447 1.57 ● 2155 0.39		<b>21</b> 0251 0.53 0928 1.71 FR 1613 0.36 2205 1.21		<b>30</b> 0447 1.36 1037 0.64 SU 1641 1.43 2310 0.36	
<b>4</b> 0123 0.25 0743 1.69 TU 1400 0.28 2001 1.55		<b>13</b> 0412 1.20 0935 0.70 TH 1554 1.48 2247 0.42		<b>22</b> 0325 0.56 1002 1.71 SA 1651 0.36 2245 1.19			
<b>5</b> 0204 0.25 0827 1.82 WE 1454 0.19 2055 1.50		<b>14</b> 0507 1.27 1047 0.68 FR 1657 1.41 2332 0.44		<b>23</b> 0401 0.59 1039 1.70 SU 1731 0.38 2328 1.16			
<b>6</b> 0246 0.29 0913 1.91 TH 1549 0.13 ○ 2150 1.43		<b>15</b> 0555 1.35 1152 0.63 SA 1751 1.37		<b>24</b> 0440 0.62 1117 1.67 MO 1815 0.41			
<b>7</b> 0331 0.35 1000 1.96 FR 1645 0.12 2247 1.35		<b>16</b> 0011 0.44 0636 1.43 SU 1247 0.57 1839 1.33		<b>25</b> 0012 1.13 0522 0.66 TU 1159 1.62 1900 0.43			
<b>8</b> 0418 0.42 1051 1.95 SA 1745 0.14 2346 1.26		<b>17</b> 0045 0.45 0714 1.51 MO 1335 0.51 1923 1.30		<b>26</b> 0101 1.12 0610 0.69 WE 1244 1.57 1950 0.45			
<b>9</b> 0510 0.51 1145 1.89 SU 1846 0.21		<b>18</b> 0117 0.46 0748 1.59 TU 1417 0.46 2004 1.28		<b>27</b> 0156 1.13 0706 0.71 TH 1334 1.52 2042 0.44			

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TIMES AND  
HEIGHTS OF  
HIGH AND LOW  
WATERS  
LAT 34° 29'  
LONG 150° 55'

**MOON PHASE SYMBOLS** New Moon ● First Quarter ◐ Full Moon ○ Last Quarter ◑

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## Helensburgh Sunday Social Golf Club

By Robert 'Indy' Jones

Sunday October 5th. Top spot went to Blake with a sizzling 46 (say "hi" to the handicapper), followed by Frank Morgan (38) and Bruce (36). Out there avoiding the hazards and collecting the NTPs, D&Ps and long drives were Frank Morgan, Bruce, Andrew Hodge, Peter Gardner, yours truly (Indy) and Mark O'C with Daniel going from rooster to feather duster from one game to the next to score the chips.

Next events for 2025: November 2nd (8.30am Tee Off) and December 7th (9am Tee Off), followed by our end-of-year celebrations.

Call Tony (0418 863 100) for membership details and remember to register your attendance and cart requirements on the Tuesday ahead of the date of our next event.

Indy signing off: To be imitated is a form of flattery, high praise and admiration of what you do so much that they want to be like you... So, why are some golfers akin to Bondi lifesavers? Because they spend so much time in the sand! ✨

## Tradies Social Golf

By Barry Thompson

A well-prepared Boomerang course resulted in some good Stableford points being scored. Gary Overton was king of the castle with 47, followed by Presso Terry (43) and Keynan Overton (39)

Gary and Terry will be greeted by Cameron, the new owner of Helensburgh Butchery. We thank Jason for his support over the years and wish him well in his new endeavours. Keynan will be

enjoying Gallardo's Pizzeria products, and Dave Tipping will be whacking the Bucket of Balls out at Helensburgh Driving Range.

Keynan and Hayden fought the final of the Match-Play Championship to a tied finish. They agreed on a coin toss, which was won by Hayden. Congratulations to them both.

An investigation has found that there was no truth in the rumour that Geoff deliberately lost his hearing-aid on course as a defence against Terry's banter.

A member, strongly associated with the Melbourne Cup, broke a vow of some months back to never play again. Welcome home, Sparrow. Good to see Gerry Riley take to the course again.

As reigning champions, we downtowners will straggle out of struggle town on November 15th to defend the Uptown Downtown Shield. We will Tee Off at 7am at Boomerang. Please arrive early, and I ask our team to watch for any conniving northern tricks.

Don't forget to book for our Presentation night on Saturday, 29th November. See you then. ✨

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