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CULINARY ZEST ADDS FLAVOUR AND CHOICE TO HOSPITAL MENU

MBPH HAS INTRODUCED AN EXCITING
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ONE AGENCY A-LEAGUE FESTIVAL OF SPORT MAKES A TRIUMPHANT RETURN

A-LEAGUE TITANS MELBOURNE VICTORY WILL PLAY
ADELAIDE UNITED IN A PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY AT THE
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A MAN OF CONSCIENCE, INTEGRITY AND COURAGE LAID TO REST.

HEARTBEAT

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MILDURA
BASE PUBLIC
HOSPITAL
FOUNDATION

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FROM OUR FOUNDATION CHAIR

The past few months have been incredibly busy for our Foundation as we continue to support and fund a range of new initiatives aimed at improving healthcare services across our region.

One of our most exciting recent commitments is the approval of more than \$220,000 worth of new equipment for the newly established public cardiac unit at Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH).

This investment, together with the launch of the public cardiac service, will give our community access to life-saving care that many previously could not afford.

It's incredibly rewarding to contribute to projects that so significantly enhance healthcare delivery in our region.

Another project we are proud to support is the mobile screening truck, currently under construction in Shepparton, by Shepparton Body Builders.

This multi-million dollar initiative has been made possible through the generous support of in-kind donations, financial contributions, and sponsorships from individuals and businesses throughout our region.

Once operational, the truck will provide skin and breast screening, as well as cardiac checks, delivering vital services directly to communities in regional areas.

We aim to have it fully operational by February 2026.

In other exciting news, we recently announced the return of our A-League Festival of Sport.

This year, Melbourne Victory will face off against Adelaide United in the feature match, with a curtain-raiser tri-series featuring teams from Sunraysia, the Riverland, and Adelaide.

Both A-League teams will also be running children's clinics on Friday, October 3, the day before the main game.

We encourage everyone to come along, enjoy the action, and support this fantastic community event and the Foundation.

Our Gala Ball returns to Willow & Ivie on November 1, with a black and white theme.

This highly anticipated event has become a highlight on the local calendar, and we are expecting another spectacular evening as we raise funds for the many projects we support.

If you would like to support the Foundation in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

A member of our team would be happy to discuss the many ways you can get involved.

Thank you once again for your generous and ongoing support.

It is only through your contributions that we can continue to make a meaningful difference in our community through the many impactful initiatives we are proud to be part of.

Regards,
Ross Lake OAM
Chairman, MBPH Foundation





MELBOURNE VICTORY WILL GO HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH ADELAIDE UNITED IN OCTOBER 2.

A-LEAGUE TOP GUNS HEADING TO MILDURA!

One Agency A-League Festival of Sport to make triumphant return in October.



KIDS SOCCER CLINIC.



THE ADELAIDE UNITED MERCHANDISE STAND DID BOOMING BUSINESS LAST YEAR.



THE SCHOOL KIDS COACHING CLINIC WILL BE HELD AT THE AERO OVALS ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 3



SOCCER CLINIC KIDS RECEIVING THEIR COMPLIMENTARY ONE AGENCY MILDURA GIFT BAGS AT THE 2024 EVENT.



SOME OF THE ACTION FROM LAST YEAR'S BRISBANE ROAR V ADELAIDE UNITED.

A-LEAGUE powerhouse Melbourne Victory will face Adelaide United in this year's charity fund-raiser at the Mildura Sporting Precinct on Saturday, October 4.

The event is expected to draw a strong crowd, with an associated children's football clinic on Friday, October 3, at the Aero Ovals, and hosted by players from both A-League teams expected to be equally popular.

On the Saturday preceding the main game, a 'Tri-Series' match will be staged with the competing teams showcasing the skills of amateur players from Sunraysia, South Australia's Riverland and Adelaide.

This year's gala sports event builds on the success of last year's A-League visit while promising to be bigger and better.

MBPH Acting CEO, Matthew Jukes, is looking forward to having two of the A-League's great teams competing in Mildura in an event, he says, that will raise "valuable funds" for the hospital Foundation.

"It is going to be another great sporting

occasion for the people of Mildura and the wider Sunraysia region to enjoy," he said. "It will also attract people from outside the region who are expected to travel here for the event.

"The excitement is already building, and I think for the families of young football players it will be a fantastic opportunity to attend both the clinic and the matches on Saturday — making a great weekend of it."

Melbourne Victory managing director, Caroline Carnegie, said her Club was thrilled to be involved in the event.

"Melbourne Victory is delighted to be coming to Mildura for what will undoubtedly be a brilliant event," Ms Carnegie said.

"Our Club's focus on community is something we are proud of as we continue to work hard to provide all Victorians with more opportunities to engage with football. To be involved in the MBPH Foundation's A-League charity fund-raiser is a real pleasure for us as it aligns with the values we hold dear as a Club. This project forms an integral part of the

Club's broader strategy to lead, unite, connect and inspire through football in regional communities, with a focus on building the fan base across the State.

"We hope this is the first of many games we can bring to Mildura."

Adelaide United visited last year and their CEO, Nathan Kosmina, says returning to Mildura is going to be a real joy.

"Our players, and all of our coaching and support staff as well as our fans had a ball in Mildura last year," Mr Kosmina remarked.

"Meeting our rivals Melbourne Victory head-on at the Mildura Sporting Precinct will see a highly competitive match played! he predicted.

"We can't wait to be there in October."

The opportunities an event like this brings to Mildura are enormous, Mr Jukes said.

"Accommodation houses, caravan parks, restaurants, bars and attractions like the Trail of Lights will all be major beneficiaries of the One Agency A-League Festival of Sport."

To buy tickets, visit: www.milduraartscentre.com.au.



CELEBRITY COOK STEFANO DE PIERI, LEFT, HAS BEEN WORKING ALONGSIDE MBPH KITCHEN STAFF TO PREPARE THE NEW MENU.

CULINARY ZEST ADDS COLOUR TO HOSPITAL INPATIENT MENU

Mildura Base Public Hospital inpatients can now choose their meals from a new 'build-your-own' menu introduced recently.



MBPH CHEF STUDIES THE MENU REQUEST FROM A PATIENT IN THE SAME WAY IT IS DONE IN A RESTAURANT KITCHEN.



A FRESH CHICKEN SALAD WITH INGREDIENTS CHOSEN BY THE PATIENT.



DAILY CHEF SPECIALS INCLUDE TASTY HOMEMADE SOUP.

By John Dooley

IN an exciting move, Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) has implemented an innovative Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) ordering program in conjunction with the existing Chef Max system, which now features a range of 'Build-Your-Own' meal options—such as customisable Buddha bowls and yoghurts—for greater flexibility and personalisation.

Under this ordering system, any patient, family member, or clinical staff member can potentially order a patient's food from their mobile device by scanning a QR code at the patient's bedside. This means they

will not only see all their menu options but also photographs of the food.

Patients will also be able to modify ingredients to suit their preferences.

"It's about real patient choice," MBPH Services Support Manager, Sarah Lay, explained while detailing the background to the introduction of the innovative menu. "For a very long time, food services have been constricted. We've followed a range of instructions from dietetics and clinicians, together with nutritional guidelines and allergen controls," Ms Lay said.

"So, it's a highly governed area and a difficult one to change to because this

is what we have done for more than 20 years.

"However, the way we've structured the new inpatient menu allows patients to have options and full input into what they eat. The former system didn't allow for the same degree of alternatives."

Apart from the nutritional benefits and the choice it gives patients, the new approach to preparing meals has the potential to deliver enormous cost savings. Prior to the implementation of the new menu, MBPH patients were offered one or two options and the 'food monitor' would go around the wards and ask the patient what they would like.



A DELIGHTED WARD 3 PATIENT KAREN BANNON WAS FIRST TO BE SERVED HER 'BUILD-YOUR-OWN' MEAL AT LUNCH TIME.

Now, despite the new, menu options and 'hi-tech' ordering systems being in place, the food monitor will still visit the wards to assist those patients who can't navigate the 'bring your own device' or BYOD system.

Mildura celebrity cook Stefano de Pieri has been working with the kitchen team at MBPH to establish the new menu.

"I think that there was an acknowledgement at management level that the menu was more than 20-years-old and had been repetitious. The same old thing again and again," he said.

"And what might have been fine 20 years ago is now obsolete and needs reviewing and simplifying.

"Now it's like we have reset the clock, going back to zero and starting again.

"It's not like we are destroying the past because, of course, all those mandatory requirements set down by the Department of Health are still there. It's just resetting the scene, simplifying, ensuring that the food is fresh and simple."

With an emphasis on fresh produce, the new menu will focus on sourcing the freshest available from the region and expanding relationships with local growers and suppliers.



HUMMUS DIP WITH CARROT & CELERY.



MBPH FOOD SERVICES ASSISTANT CHRISTINA BOURGAZAS DELIVERED THE FIRST MEAL TO PATIENT KAREN BANNON.



TUNA SALAD.



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EXCELLENCE GROWS HERE: WHAT SUNRAYSIA GETS RIGHT ABOUT RURAL HEALTH

In health, there's a common assumption that excellence lives in the cities. But Sunraysia continues to reshape that narrative one award, one innovation, and one future leader at a time. From forward-thinking models of care to the kind of mentorship that changes lives, this region continues to punch above its weight.

By GP Pharmacist Brooke Shelly

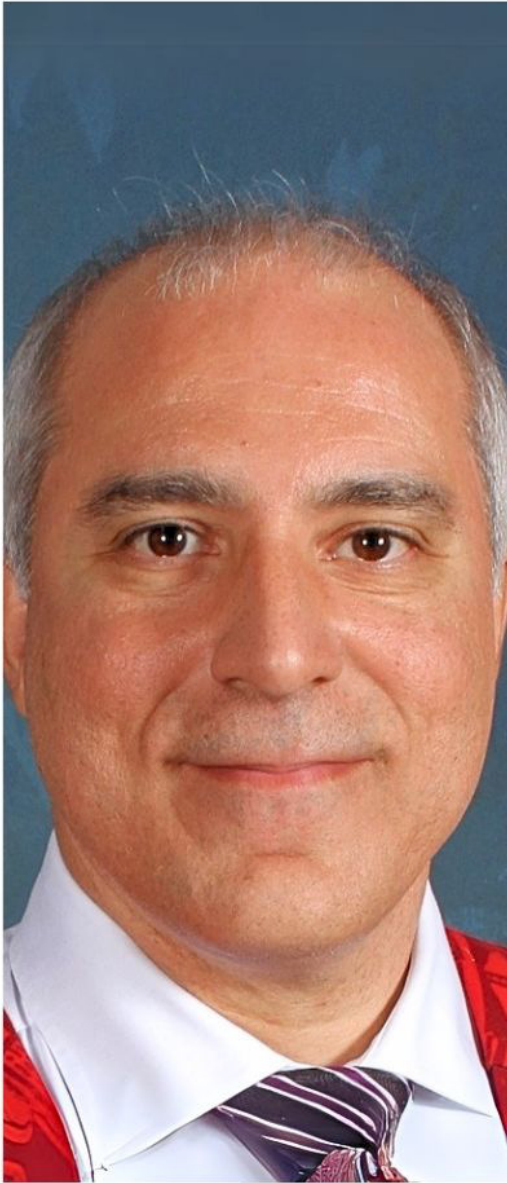
THE recent recognition at the 2025 Victorian Rural Workforce Agency (RWAV) Health Awards is proof: rural isn't just resilient—it's remarkable. This year, four outstanding local health professionals and teams from our region were shortlisted as finalists in the 2025 Victorian Rural Health Awards: Ontario Medical Clinic for their team-based approach to complex care; Dr Mehdi Sanatipour from Sunraysia Medical Centre for his role as a mentor and supervisor; GP Pharmacist Brooke Shelly from Ontario Medical Clinic for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Allied Health; and Dr Anand Patel from Mallee District Aboriginal Services

(MDAS), who was recognised across three distinguished categories — Outstanding Contribution as a Rural GP, Outstanding Contribution by a Mentor or Supervisor, and Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Of those finalists, Ontario Medical Clinic and Dr Mehdi Sanatipour were named winners.

But the nominations themselves speak volumes. These accolades don't just celebrate individuals or programs—they reflect the calibre of rural healthcare delivery in our region. They remind us that excellence isn't reserved for metro postcodes. It's happening here, every day, often ahead of the curve.

Ontario Medical Clinic is a rural teaching practice in Mildura, committed to delivering high-quality, patient-centred care. The multidisciplinary team includes GPs, nurses, an onsite GP Pharmacist and visiting non-GP specialists. As a training site for both RACGP and ACRRM registrars, the clinic is enthusiastic about mentoring the next generation of rural doctors and advancing collaborative models of care. Their award-winning Chronic Opioid Use Cycle of Care is one such innovation. Developed by GP Pharmacist Brooke Shelly and refined by GP Registrar Dr Ryan Sheridan, the model was designed to offer a structured, team-based approach to patients using long term opioids.



Winner of the 2025 Outstanding Contribution by a Mentor/Supervisor Award

Dr Mehdi Sanatipour

Sunraysia Medical Centre, Red Cliffs

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It incorporates shared care plans, regular review cycles, pharmacist-led medication optimization, patient education, proactive opioid rotation and deprescribing conversations. The approach has delivered measurable benefits in safety, quality, and patient satisfaction—and as a result Dr Ryan Sheridan is now one of the only prescribers of opioid replacement therapy in the entire catchment, working closely with PAMS to improve access and support for patients experiencing substance dependence. It's the kind of whole-person, whole-community work that exemplifies what rural general practice can be when it has the right team in place. Ontario Medical Clinic's nomination

and ultimate win also highlights the clinic's commitment to pioneering roles like the GP Pharmacist. The position has extremely limited funding in Australia, and many practices have yet to embrace the model. That OMC not only embraces it, but champions it, is a testament to the clinic's values.

"Multidisciplinary care isn't a concept for me—it's the only way I know how to practise medicine. Collaboration isn't just better for patients; it's what makes rural generalism possible." – Dr Ryan Sheridan, GP Registrar

The recognition of GP Pharmacist Brooke Shelly as a finalist for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Allied Health

also shines a light on what's possible when pharmacists are embedded into primary care teams. This is one of the most competitive award categories, encompassing a vast range of disciplines and professionals across Victoria. Brooke's nomination not only celebrates her individual impact but also confirms the broader potential of integrated pharmacist roles in rural practice.

Meanwhile, at Sunraysia Medical Centre, Dr Mehdi Sanatipour was named the 2025 winner for Outstanding Contribution by a Mentor or Supervisor. It's an honour that recognises over a decade of dedication to teaching and growing the next generation of rural GPs.

Winners of the 2025 Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Multidisciplinary Health Team Award



Ontario Medical Clinic Mildura

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Dr Mehdi Sanatipour has been dedicated to the Mildura region for the past 18 years, making a lasting contribution to the local healthcare community. Since 2012, he has been committed to supervising and training junior doctors. He currently supports GP registrars, international medical graduates (IMGs), FSP registrars, and medical students.

Dr Mehdi is known not only for his clinical excellence, but for his unwavering commitment to education and professional development. He runs regular teaching sessions within the clinic, often inviting external professionals to share their expertise, and facilitates weekly journal clubs that keep his team engaged with current evidence and evolving practice.

His approach to supervision is more than just professional oversight. He takes the time to understand his registrars' learning styles, tailors their training plans, and supports them to not only pass exams but to thrive as rural generalists. In a town like Red Cliffs, registrars gain exposure to the full spectrum of general practice. With Dr Mehdi as their guide, they learn how to manage complexity, navigate limited resources, and build trust with the community.

"He doesn't just train registrars. He builds rural GPs who stay."

And while Dr Anand Patel wasn't named a category winner this year, his shortlisting across three award categories speaks to his wide-reaching impact across disciplines

and communities. His work with MDAS has not only improved access to culturally safe care but has also shaped the way future GPs understand the importance of Aboriginal-led healthcare.

Few professionals are recognised in three separate categories in a single year—let alone across such vital and values-driven domains.

Four finalists. Two winners. One region that continues to lead with heart, innovation, and humility. Sunraysia proves repeatedly that rural communities aren't just keeping up, they're often leading the way.

Let's keep telling these stories.

Because the more we spotlight rural excellence, the harder it becomes to ignore.



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MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL OPERATIONS AND CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICER KATRINA ALLEN WAS OVERJOYED WHEN THE FIRST IVF BIRTH TOOK PLACE.

OH, BABY WHAT A BEAUTIFUL BIRTH!

In June, the Mildura Base Public Hospital was proud to announce the birth of the first baby born under its public fertility program, implemented in 2023.

By John Dooley

THERE was an air of excitement in the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) maternity unit when a greatly anticipated and very special baby arrived.

Although the baby was just one of the 800-plus annual births at the base, this new arrival was something very special.

MBPH Executive Director Clinical Operations and Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Katina Allen recently spoke to Heartbeat about the historic occasion.

"I'd love to go into the absolute details, but the family requested we keep the details of their journey private, which the hospital respects, but I can tell you that we were absolutely thrilled to celebrate the birth of their baby with them," Ms Allen said.

"To have the first baby born in Mildura as a result of our public IVF is truly historic."

The program is a partnership between MBPH and the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne.

"The parents involved were able to have the majority of their appointments here and they only had to travel for the clinical treatment portions of their fertility journey."

"We've worked hard over multiple years to bring this service here, and it's just such a brilliant and happy moment that it's been successful for somebody."

"We now hope that we will have many more people wanting to undertake this treatment, and we'll have babies everywhere!"

For the staff who were intimately involved in the lead-up to the birth, it was also a joyous occasion.

"Apart from the team in the maternity unit at the time of the birth, I think the excitement was heightened for the people who had worked at bringing the service to Mildura," Ms Allen said.

"When you think about it, it has probably been a three-year journey for some of us."

And why would 'little-old-Mildura', as Ms Allen put it, be able to get funding for something like this?

"It's because of the dedication of our small team, really pushing hard and collaborating with the people from the Royal Women's to bring the service here," Ms Allen said.

"It is exciting and immensely satisfying to see the fruits of that labour and determination realised."

"IVF is one of the arrows in the fertility bow



RWH PUBLIC FERTILITY CARE SERVICES LABORATORY.

of care that couples may need to undertake and to have that opportunity open up locally is wonderful.

It has taken some time for the uptake of the public-fertility treatment to increase since the program was launched but that is something, Ms Allen said, that is changing.

"There are more people having appointments now and so we are pleased that the message is getting out the community that the free public service is available in Mildura," she said.

The background to the public-fertility service in Mildura

The Mildura community now has greater access to fertility treatments, thanks to Public Fertility Care which launched a partner site at the MBPH in 2023.

Funded by the Victorian Government, this innovative program is available to all eligible Victorians. MBPH and eight other Victorian health services have partnered with the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne to deliver fertility care closer to patients' homes, reducing the need for extensive travel. Most patients only need to travel to Melbourne for procedures at the Women's embryology lab.

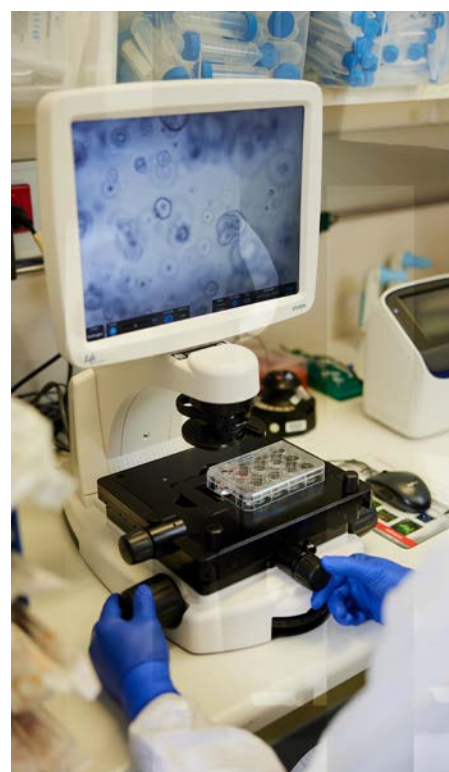
This opportunity marks a significant milestone in public health services for the region, offering eligible individuals access to state-of-the-art fertility options which include IVF treatment, counselling, fertility assessment and fertility preservation for patients with medical needs.

For most patients Public Fertility Care is free however, there may be minimal out-of-pocket costs incurred outside of the

service for some medications, tests, and investigations.

Victoria's Public Fertility Care is available to all people wishing to start a family whose situation or health may prevent or impair fertility or safe conception and/or who have been trying to conceive naturally but have been unsuccessful. It aims to make quality fertility services more accessible and affordable for people who may have previously been unable to afford them.

People wishing to find information about the program and the referral process can visit the MBPH website: www.mbph.org.au/public-fertility-service.





IN 2024 HEARTBEAT SUNRAYSIA'S SECRETARY ELAINE GREGORY AND 'THEN' PRESIDENT JEFF GREGORY PRESENT MBPH CLINICAL NURSE CONSULTANTS GREG PLUMMER AND JOHN KANE WITH A CHEQUE FOR \$8000 FOR NEW ICU EQUIPMENT.

TIME TO RAISE THE HEART RATE

Heartbeat Sunraysia seeks to boost disease awareness and support services while celebrating 40 years of good works.

By Grant Maynard

THE colour pink has become synonymous with breast cancer.

And light blue is rapidly becoming more recognisable as the colour of prostate cancer awareness.

But it is high time heart disease, and its symbolic red became just as well known, according to Heartbeat Sunraysia secretary Elaine Gregory.

She says great things are being done to promote breast and prostate cancer awareness and provide support networks for patients and their families.

"But despite heart disease being the bigger killer it is lagging in both the awareness and support stakes.

"Heart disease (also known as

cardiovascular disease) is the leading cause of death globally and in many regions, including Australia," she told Heartbeat.

A quick fact-check revealed heart disease accounts for 13 percent of deaths around the world annually, and it was the leading cause of death in Australia for 2023.

And, while heart disease is often perceived as a male issue, women are also significantly affected, with increasing risk after menopause.

"We've got to get it out there... I feel it is forgotten about," Elaine said of a disease that she feels is often overshadowed by more popular causes.

If Elaine has her way, heart disease and the colour red associated with awareness efforts will become just as embedded in the public consciousness as pink and light blue.

"There is simply not being enough done to raise the awareness of how devastating heart disease can be, and its wide-ranging effects on patients, their families, carers and the wider community," she says.

Elaine knows from bitter, personal experience just how insidious heart disease can be.

And it is that experience that is driving her concerted efforts to raise the profile of heart disease in Sunraysia and the need for improved social services to assist patients and their families not unlike, she says, those available to breast and prostate cancer patients and their families.

She and husband Jeff became stalwarts of the Heartbeat Sunraysia group after he began having heart problems more than a decade ago.

Sadly, Jeff passed away earlier this year at just 66 years of age and while Elaine struggles to come to terms with his death, she is determined to do something about the lack of public awareness and support mechanisms for patients and their families. "That was the main reason we joined Heartbeat Sunraysia," she said. "For the support it provided by people experiencing what we were, at least initially. But as time went on, we also wanted to raise public awareness of heart disease generally and play our part in being members of a support framework for patients and families."

The Gregorys, along with their fellow Heartbeat Sunraysia members past and present, have fund-raised tirelessly and donated equipment to MBPH and the wider community for decades... four of them in fact.

The group continues to do so, while at the same time offering a vital and welcome social support framework for cardiac patients and their carers. Heartbeat Sunraysia's regular monthly 'Cuppa Catch-ups' and meetings continue to provide great opportunities for cardiac patients and their families to socialise.

To celebrate those achievements and mark the group's 40th birthday, it hosted a birthday celebration on Friday, September 5 - a birthday it shares with the Heartbeat Victoria umbrella organisation.

Heartbeat Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation run solely by volunteers with a unique mission – to create and promote cardiac peer support groups for individuals living with heart disease or a heart condition and their families, and to raise funds for vital cardiac equipment.

We at the Heartbeat magazine are proud to share a name with our local group and honour its work in our community.

Marking the milestone birthday will be bittersweet for group members. Heartbeat Sunraysia has lost members to cardiac events or conditions over the years including Elaine's husband. Regular readers may remember we spoke to Jeff in his role as group president a little over 12 months ago in an effort to raise the group's profile and publicise its achievements.

It was through Jeff and Elaine for example, that we learned the group has been instrumental in placing AEDs in isolated communities all over the wider Sunraysia area.

In fact, Heartbeat Sunraysia's fund-raising



HEARTBEAT SUNRAYSIA SECRETARY ELAINE GREGORY LOST HER HUSBAND FORMER PRESIDENT JEFF GREGORY IN MAY THIS YEAR.

efforts during the past four decades have funded the purchase of a wide range of vital equipment for an equally wide range of recipients. From Pooncarie in the north to the southern Mallee townships of Walpeup and Patchewollock, the branch has left a legacy of vital help.

Other recipients have included Wentworth's Murray House, volunteer ambulance groups at Patchewollock, Murrayville, Manangatang and Nangiloc, and \$10,000 to the Berri Hospital in South Australia's Riverland.

The COVID pandemic put a real dent in fund-raising efforts, but as Elaine explained the organisation was fortunate to have reserves.

"All the money we raise locally, stays here," she told Heartbeat proudly.

Elaine is passionate about ongoing advocacy for heart health and disease prevention and joined her fellow group members as they celebrated the group's milestone 40th birthday at Princess Village.

The event featured several heart disease experts as guest speakers including representatives from Heartbeat Victoria

and Mildura Base Public Hospital.

Speaking to Heartbeat magazine in advance of the 'open to the public' event, Elaine said she saw it the perfect opportunity for people learn more about heart disease, as well as share in an afternoon marking Heartbeat Sunraysia's milestone occasion.

She was also hopeful that attending the celebration might encourage some people to get involved with the good work Heartbeat Sunraysia is doing like its fund-raising efforts. Those efforts over the years have included raffles, fashion parades and sausage sizzles.

But, with an ageing membership of about a dozen, the group is finding its vital fund-raising efforts more challenging, and some activities have had to be shelved, at least for the time being.

The group is certainly keen for some 'new blood', Elaine says.

"Most of our members are in their 80s. We would sure like to see younger people come on board."

Like to know more?

Call Elaine on 0417 058 175 or email elaine.jeff@bigpond.com.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VIBE, FEELING GOOD AND DOING GOOD

Mildura Pharmacist and Chemist Warehouse managing partner Eric Oguzkaya and local mentor, speaker and entrepreneur Carlo Cirillo make interesting collaborators. The pair joined forces to create the healthy lifestyle group 'Good Vibes', and since being established it has attracted a significant following. Mildura Snap Fitness proprietor Joel Coates has also thrown his support behind the concept. Following the group's first event, proceeds raised were directed toward to Sunraysia Cancer Resources. Going forward the group intends to donate to other worthy local charities.



GOOD VIBES IS A GREAT WAY TO GET FIT AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS.



GOOD VIBES IS GOOD FOR THE MIND AND THE BODY.



GOOD VIBES FOUNDERS CARLO CIRILLO AND ERIC OGUZKAYA AT THEIR JULY EVENT.



THE JULY EVENT STARTED WITH A RUN DOWN TO THE CHAFFEY BRIDGE AND BACK TO LOCK 11.



PREPARING THE ICE BATH IS THE PRIVILEGE OF THE FIRST TO DIVE IN!

By John Dooley

It's definitely about the vibe. It's about the need to get out there, and the need to connect.

That is how Eric Oguzkaya described the Good Vibes' July event.

Heartbeat caught up with Eric along with his Good Vibes partner Carlo, at the Sunday afternoon July event held at the Rio Vista - Trail of Lights Park opposite Lock 11, which attracted more than 60 participants.

"We all sit in relative isolation," Eric explained. "We think we're connected with the use of our mobile phones, but I think we're excluding ourselves more and more."

"You know, getting out into nature, getting out into the real community, and getting out into real good vibes... I think it's good for my soul.

"In fact, I would argue it's good for everyone's soul, and I think that's where we all need to be heading.

"Carlo and I are basically facilitating the opportunity for the community to take ownership of a concept that will support nominated charities while building a happier, healthier mindset and body.

"We've both been doing these sorts of things for some time. However, Carlo has been doing it for a lot longer than me, and that inspired me to say, 'Okay, what's my next step? What do I need to do to become the optimal me?'

"We all have this survival default where we just want to survive the day, but that's not living a fulfilling life. That's not what we should be aiming for, and it's not good enough.

"So, I thought let's take it up a gear. Let's think about what it's going to take.

"Carlo's really been leading the way, and I am following that lead. He's definitely inspired me and here we are trying to share those good vibes."

Eric confided to Heartbeat that he had slimmed down in recent times, something he described as the best thing he has ever had done.

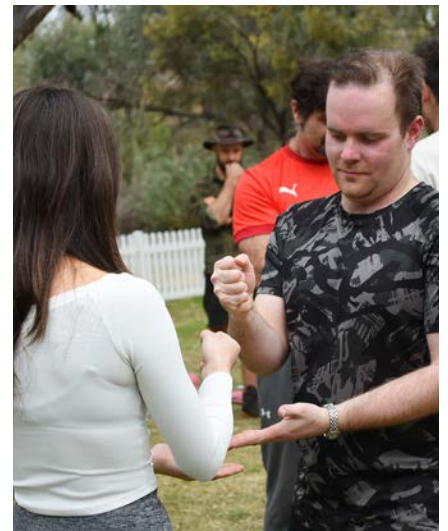
"I have lost more than 27 kilos and counting. It has resulted in a phenomenal change in body weight, but also in mindset and making that best version of myself," he explained.

"My father was ill for most of his life with heart issues, and I didn't want to inflict that same trauma on my kids, so something had to change.

"You know, we all live with some kind of



FOR THAT EXTRA RESILIENCE AN ELITE LIQUID SUPPLEMENT IS ON HAND AT GOOD VIBES.



ONE OF THE ONE ON ONE GAMES PLAYED AT THE EVENT.



ERIC OGUZKALA TAKES PART IN A PLANKING EXERCISE.

delusion – an idea that 'You'll be right, you know'; 'It's not that bad'; 'I've got this'. The fact is that we don't.

"And I firmly believe that life is too hard to do on your own."

Eric's message to the community: "If you've got friends saying to you — you can do it on your own - get better friends - and get the friends who are going to say, 'Let's do this together.' Let's get friends who push each other and try to get the best out of life and the good vibes going."

Good Vibes has a great support team, Eric says, including Chemist Warehouse, Snap Fitness and several other well-known local entities.

"We're going to share the love with our monthly events and the proceeds from each event will be directed toward local groups. Today, in collaboration with the Merbein Football Netball Club, Sunraysia Cancer Resources has been chosen to be the beneficiary.

"And that's the aim. So, you know, different companies, different organisations, and different sporting codes can get involved.

"Anyone out there who wants to jump on board, bring their team, get some team

bonding, do some morale lifting – then we invite the come on board and join in.

"If you're a leader in whatever shape or form; whether that's a business leader, a sports leader or if you're part of a group of friends, bring them down and help share the love."

Heartbeat then spoke with Carlo to explore his passion for wellness, mental health awareness and now Good Vibes.

"I've been doing a lot of work in wellness and mental health space for many years, and I think people are now willing to go to events like ours because there's a lot of mental health awareness out there now... which I think is great," Carlo said.

"While there are a lot of amazing events out there — events that help on a national level — I think there's something special about communities coming together.

"When we got together we acknowledged that rising mental health awareness was great and decided let's do something about it. It was a case of 'Let's take action'.

"And by getting people out of their comfort zone and meeting once a month, we're doing something that's fun for all ages and whatever fitness levels people are at. We



SNAP FITNESS OWNER JOAL COATES GIVING SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO WIN THIS GAME.



GOOD VIBES DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES.



GOOD VIBES' CARLO CIRILLO GIVES THE GROUP A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN AN ACTIVITY.



THE ICE BATHS DEFINITELY TAKE YOU OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE!



SOME MORE ICE AND A LITTLE MORE INFLATION AND THE BATH WILL BE READY.

want people to enjoy themselves, while also connecting as a community and making an impact rather than staying in their 'little box'."

It is clear that the old adage 'Healthy mind, Healthy body' is epitomised by the Good Vibes group.

For many it is likely to also be a meeting of kindred spirits.

"As part of our activities we get people to meet a stranger," Carlo explained. "In doing so, you're going to meet someone new, and you might just make a new friend. Either way, you're sharing something good and you're being around other people that are on the same wavelength of wanting to do something for themselves."

Eric said that you don't wait to teach someone how to swim when they're already drowning.

"The point of a community event like this is to help the people who are 'treading water'. They're reasonably comfortable, but what's the next step? How do they get out of the water and thrive?

"Good Vibes is that next step in helping them to answer 'What's out there? How can I make myself better? Yes, I'm going to be a

bit uncomfortable. I'm going to get touchy feely with my emotions' and for a lot of people that's very scary.

"The fact is a lot of people want to be told what to do and not think about it. Whereas with our approach they realise, 'Okay this is up to me and I'm going to have to push myself and actually get myself out of my comfort zone and then get myself into a better position'."

The afternoon Heartbeat visited, the event started with a warm-up led by Joel Coates, after which the group headed off for a run or walk to the Chaffey Bridge and back — a distance of 3.5kms. Meanwhile, some of the keen joggers took a different route and ran a longer distance. When the group returned, there was a series of activities including stretching, planking, a 'get to know a stranger Q & A', deep breathing exercises and after that, for those with a real sense of adventure, jumping into an ice bath. It was a very cool way to end the session!

"We show people the benefit of controlling their breathing. Holding a deep breath in for a time and then slowly exhaling can help people to control their nervous system," Eric said.

"The ice bath has multiple benefits. There are muscular benefits if you've done a series of exercises and you want to start reducing inflammation, it works well.

"Then there are the positive effects on the vagal nerves and the relaxation aspect, as well as the positive mindset impact. Even just the simple action of being in the ice bath forces you to be present in the moment.

"Therefore, there's no anxiety, there's no stress. That all gets literally frozen out of you, because you have to be in that moment to survive."

If you are looking for something refreshingly, positive in your life and the opportunity to meet people and make new friends, you can register your interest on the group's website at: www.goodvibessocialclub.com. Any organisation or business interested in partnering for future events is encouraged to make contact through the website.

Eric & Carlo recently recorded a podcast with 'Heartbeat of the Mallee'. To listen scan the QR code or visit: mbphfoundation.org.au.



SNAP FITNESS MILDURA
OWNER JOEL COATES.



A MAN OF STEEL

Joel triumphs in the face of crushing adversity.

By John Dooley

He sustained a significant head injury while playing football, which led to a brain stem haemorrhage and, subsequently, a severe stroke. As a result, his vision and hearing were both impaired and he lost most of his mobility.

He was just 23, but by some miracle he survived to fight another day and now owns and runs Mildura's Snap Fitness facility.

That's the Joel Coates story in a nutshell, but amazingly this is just a fraction of his extraordinary life-long tale of adversity and triumph.

Joel takes up the story.

"In late June 2007, I was hit in the head by a teammate while playing footy for Koondrook-Barham. This led to me ending up in the Intensive Care Unit at the Alfred Hospital, where I remained for a month and a half, lying pretty much horizontal, with a gastric tube providing me with nutrition and having saliva cleared from my throat to stop me choking," he told Heartbeat.

"If people can recall the incident involving cricketer Phillip Hughes, when he lost his life after he was hit in the head with a cricket ball, my injury was the same - I shouldn't have lived.

"But eventually, I was able to undertake rehab, where I had to virtually learn to do everything from scratch.

"It has what seems like a lifetime to get back to where I am now."

And where the 41-year-old is now, is quite amazing.

He's a big strong man with a steely determination and a focused mindset.

But it hasn't been plain sailing – far from it. "I am lucky to be alive. Absolutely blessed. I believe someone has been beside me the whole time," he says.

Joel said that he believed some intervening force was at play when he had his near-death experience.

On the question of whether that was divine intervention, while being open minded, Joel's not sure that it was God's hand.

"I have really found my way this year," he says acknowledging an experience like his



does give a person an understanding of their mortality.

"I have always been a Catholic, but I started going to a new church this year - River Edge, on the River Road near Merbein, and it has been unbelievable.

"It has opened my eyes to all the miracles that I have experienced.

"I was born 10 weeks premature to an alcoholic, single mother and no father.

"It wasn't an easy upbringing, but I was fortunate to have my Nan looking after me.

"She was a very religious Catholic and a beautiful lady who raised me and sent me to boarding school at Assumption College in Kilmore.

"The college loved its football, and I was a very competitive player.

"Getting injured in 2007 took me away from the game I loved, but it opened up so many other doors for me in life.

"Before I had my brain injury, when I was 21, I went to see a doctor to check on a lump on my hip.

"The doctor said to just leave it. My Nan said to get it cut out.

"The following week I was in Peter MacCallum where I was diagnosed with a cancer.

"It turned out to be a sarcoma. A rare, aggressive form of cancer. They said if it was not cut out there and then, I would have been dead in 10 months.

"Nan's instinct was right.

"Then, two years later I had the massive stroke.



SNAP FITNESS MEMBER KERROD DAWES RECIEVES GUIDANCE FROM TRAINER JOEL COATES.

“With all of that to me it has been about rebuilding the ‘foundations’.

“When you are in hospital and you go through what I went through, it can be hard to lose sight of your potential.

“I never lost sight of mine.

“I have been able to build those foundations I so desperately needed, but there have been many hiccups long the way – but that’s life.

“I am a strong person, and I have achieved so much in the past 15 to 17 years. I look back on those severe adversities and setbacks as a blessing in disguise – a sliding door moment that made me a unique, stronger person.”

Heartbeat asked Joel if having survived so much, and having come out the other side, effectively being reborn, did he feel obligated to give something back to the community?

“One hundred percent!” he said with enthusiasm.

“Before the stroke I was an apprentice

electrician, working with my uncle – a job I didn’t love. After being on death’s door, I said to myself ‘I will get out and help someone in some way’.

“The football club had raised \$50,000 for me and I decided to use some of that money to complete my personal training course.

“Many people complete a personal training course and do nothing with it, but I was determined not to let that happen.

“I worked hard and followed my heart. Today, I own the Snap Fitness gym and doing something I like.

“I come from a background where I had nothing. My mother had nothing. I had nothing. Now, having the gym, I am helping people every day and I’m helping myself every day. I love my involvement with the gym and it’s turned out to be the perfect career path for me. I’m so fortunate.

“The great thing with Good Vibes, which I am involved with, is the benefits it has for mental health. It is helping people cope with the ups and downs if life.



JOEL IS A MENTOR AND A POSITIVE VOICE AT THE GOOD VIBES HEALTHY LIVING EVENTS.

“With mental health you battle every day. Every single day you battle.

“I use my experiences to help me get through what I have to and also use them to help others.

“I am fortunate to have two beautiful children and God by my side - life is good.”

As Heartbeat went to press, Joel was soon to record a podcast with ‘Heartbeat of the Mallee’ which will be available soon. To listen scan the QR code or visit: mbphfoundation.org.au.

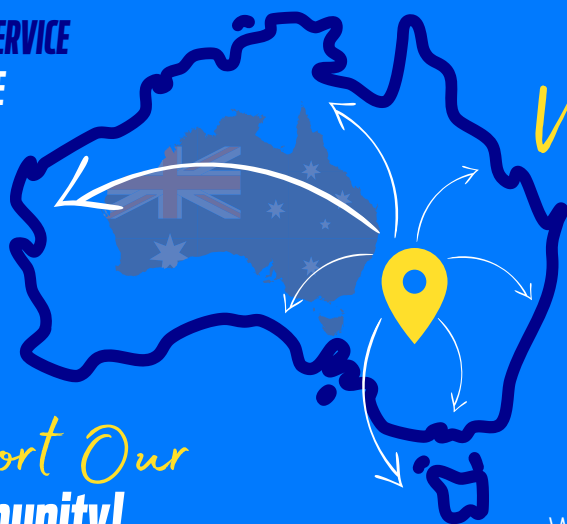


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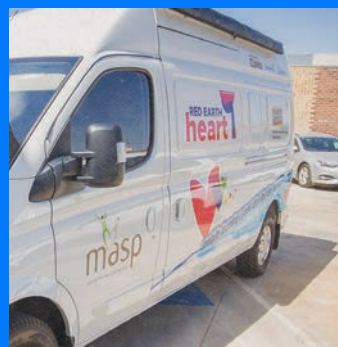
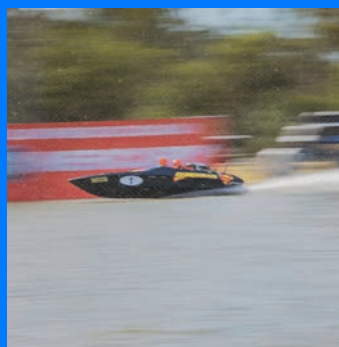


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ON HER WAY TO BEING ONE OF OUR NURSES OF THE FUTURE

MEET SUNITAFE'S GABRIELLE DAVIS

By Samantha Leersen

DURING the past year SuniTAFE nursing student Gabrielle Davis has learned that healthcare is a career path packed with possibilities, opportunities, and rewards. The Swan Hill-based student has had her heart set on a career in nursing since she was a child.

"I've always wanted to do nursing, ever since I was little. I just loved the idea of being a nurse," she said.

"My mum is a foster carer. When she was

caring for a medically complicated foster child, she changed that child's whole life, and in doing that my mum became a really big inspiration for me wanting to spend my life helping people.

"That child was in and out of hospitals often, and after seeing all the different nurses, all the dynamics and the avenues in a hospital, my career goal was set.

"So, I always sort of knew that nursing was something I wanted to do but that was when it clicked for me."

Now entering the second year of her

course, Gabrielle has found her stride and is embracing her new career of caring for others.

"The highlight of my course so far has definitely been the placements and getting that clinical hands-on experience as well as meeting new people," she said.

"I've definitely discovered a lot of new avenues in health that I didn't know existed. I've also faced a lot of fears, mainly about going into new places, meeting new people and had to overcome that."

Gabrielle has completed several placements within the Swan Hill region, including stints of community nursing, district nursing and aged care.

More recently, she travelled to Mildura to complete a placement at Mildura Base Public Hospital.

"The staff have been so welcoming, and they don't make you feel like a student," she said.

"Obviously, in some ways they have to treat us like students, but mostly, as soon as you get in, they introduce you to everyone and they give you instructions on what to do. You're immediately a part of the team.

"Everyone I've worked with has been really inviting and supportive, and the education in the hospital setting is great."

Accessible local pathways in rewarding careers

Gabrielle's pathway into nursing has not always been clear. In secondary school, she found herself disheartened knowing that traditional schooling was not her strong suit, meaning a university degree might not be achievable for her.

"I didn't feel like I was good enough, or smart enough, for university and that really put a big weight on my shoulders during Year 12," Gabrielle said.

"But then I discovered that I could do a nursing course at TAFE, and what really appealed to me was that it wasn't going to be in a big university class because I need one-on-one support and I'm getting that.

"The learning is tailored, interactive, and it's real."

The existence of high-quality and accessible nursing programs in Mildura and Swan Hill means that vital skills demand can be met in these regional areas without young students needing to move away.

"I really liked that I didn't have to move away and change my whole life just to do something I loved," she said.

"The SuniTAFE nursing course is tuition free too, which was massive because at that point I could not afford to do any sort of studying."

Gabrielle has also benefitted from scholarships made available by the Australian Government, SuniTAFE, and local organisations.

At the beginning of 2025, she was awarded a Chances for Children Tertiary Scholarship, created to ensure financial barriers do not prevent young people from pursuing further education.



More recently, Gabrielle was selected by SuniTAFE as the recipient of final round Destination Australia funding, an Australian Government scholarship designed to support students to study in regional Australia with quality tertiary education providers.

"These scholarships are what I live off," she said.

"I live independently, and it's difficult to find a job that provides enough money for me to live off whilst still allowing me enough time to commit to my studies.

"At one point, I was choosing between either fuel or groceries. But now with the scholarships, I can have both while still working towards my dream career."

Gabrielle's course work and placements have given her opportunities to experience different nursing specialties, which has made her excitedly uncertain of what her career will look like at the end of her course.

"The dream is constantly changing because I'm still learning so much. It could change, but at the moment I think I want to do something in regard to wound care, such as a wound care specialist," she said.

"Either that or a job in district nursing would be great. That really interests me. The flexibility and the difference in what the job looks like from day-to-day."

No matter what nursing pathway Gabrielle

chooses, she knows this will be a lifelong career for her and that she can make a difference in the lives of her patients.

"I don't really see it as working. It's kind of just me being myself taking care of others with the reassurance that I know I'm actually helping someone," she said.

"Without nurses our world wouldn't work as well as it does. Obviously, we always need more nurses, but if we didn't have them, life would be whole lot harder."

Take the first step towards becoming a nurse with FREE TAFE

Enrolments for the next intake of SuniTAFE's Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121) will open soon, with the tuition fees for 100 per cent of enrolments covered by the FREE TAFE program.

SuniTAFE Nursing Education Delivery Manager, Jayne Hunt, describes the Diploma of Nursing as the foundation of nursing education because it teaches a broad skillset that produces employable and workplace-ready graduates for a wide range of professional contexts.

It is also the quickest path a student can take to enter the workforce with a formal nursing qualification.

Interested applicants can visit the SuniTAFE website to read more about the Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121) and register their interest.



THERE ARE ROCK STARS... AND THEN THERE IS LENNY KRAVITZ

By Jason Shields

IT'S not just the 40 million-plus records sold, the four Grammy Awards or that he has been a mainstay of the world music scene since his debut album went gold and platinum way back in 1989.

No, it's that at the age of 61 he is still the epitome of cool. He is as instantly recognisable to his rusted-on fans as he is to the new generations discovering his music via streaming services or through his acting roles in movies such as *The Hunger Games*. I mean, what other sexagenarian can post a video of themselves crushing weights while wearing a mesh top, sunglasses and leather pants in a New York gym and still look so damn good that it goes viral?

Only Lenny Kravitz.

And now the rock star renowned as much for his ripped abs as his soaring vocals is coming here to Mildura.

More than 3000 tickets have already been snapped up for the marquee concert event at the Mildura Sporting Precinct on Friday, November 28, after it was announced in June – the majority of those ticket holders being visitors to the region.

Accommodation bookings have skyrocketed for that weekend – up 600 per cent compared to the same period last year. Kravitz is the second major artist to perform in Mildura in the past three years after Kings of Leon wowed around 8000 fans at the Sporting Precinct in 2022, immediately after the state's sixth COVID-19 lockdown. Mildura Rural City Council Manager Economic Development and Tourism, Leesa Merrett, said the Kings of Leon performance injected more than \$2million into the local economy and helped fill more than 7000 rooms and campgrounds at capacity. And, about 40 per cent of the concert-goers travelled from outside the region.



LARGE CROWDS ARE EXPECTED AT THE EVENT, SIMILAR TO WHEN KINGS OF LEON PLAYED AT THE VENUE IN LATE 2022. PHOTO - VISION HOUSE

"So we recognise the Lenny Kravitz concert is going to be a huge driver for us with, we expect, 10,000 plus people to attend," Ms Merrett said on the Heartbeat of the Mallee podcast recently.

"Accommodation was booked out (for the Kings of Leon concert) to the point where we had to open up free camp sites on ovals at the Mildura Rec Reserve to accommodate all the people who were attending."

It will be the first time Kravitz has been back in Australia since 2012 with his world tour including stops in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and, of course, Mildura. The concert will include many of his generational hits like *It Ain't Over 'til It's Over*, *American Woman*, *Fly Away* and *Are You Gonna Go My Way*, as well as new tracks off the *Blue Electric Light* album, which he recorded last year.

Kravitz admitted it was a blessing to still be "doing this at my age".

"I am still young, but I am not 20 of course," he said in a recent article in *The Age*. "But I want to get the most out of each day in life as I can. We spend so much time looking

back and looking forward and forget to be in the moment – yet the moment is all we have, and I am trying to be in it as much as possible.

"My music wouldn't exist without my fans. The fact that for all these years people have enjoyed my music and made it part of their personal lives and given it life, they in turn give me life ... I have more perspective, more gratitude."

Kravitz will be supported on the Australian leg of his world tour by Aussie rock legends Jet.

The concert is backed by the Victorian Government's \$38million regional events fund, set up to attract tourist dollars from interstate and overseas, and to get Melburnians into the regions.

To maximise the tourism interest, Mildura.com has launched a dedicated page on its website aimed at offering a one-stop shop for visitors looking to extend their stay.

From access to tickets, to information about accommodation options and the Trail of Lights on Lock Island, the site shows everything tropical North Victoria has to offer.



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Picture-perfect weather set the tone for a brilliant day's racing as the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Foundation hosted its 'Paddock Club' event at the Mildura Racing Club's bet365 Mildura Cup meeting on Friday, July 18.

There was plenty of socialising in the popular VIP marquees, and around the track, as the attending crowd soaked up the sun and the surroundings.

Special VIP guests for the event were leading thoroughbred racing trainer Wayne Hawkes and famous tipster Jules Valance who added colour to the day with their hilarious banter and a few helpful tips!

The Foundation's exclusive 'Paddock Club' marquee attracted more than one hundred guests, all enjoying sumptuous food and welcome beverages throughout the afternoon. A TAB outlet — conveniently located in the marquee — provided the opportunity for a flutter or two on local races and other meetings around Australia.

And there was no shortage of smiling faces lining up at the terminal to collect!

Another feature of the marquee was a cardiac testing unit, set up so that guests could have an assessment made of their heart health risk factors.

The funds raised from the Foundation's marquee event topped \$10,000, which has been directed toward helping provide equipment for the new MBPH Public Cardiac Unit. The facility is set to open soon.

CARDIO TESTING WAS CONDUCTED IN THE PADDOCK CLUB MARQUEE BY MBPH DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF MEDICINE, DR BERNHARD KUEPPER AND MBPH CARDIAC SONOGRAPHER, AMY STANBROOK.



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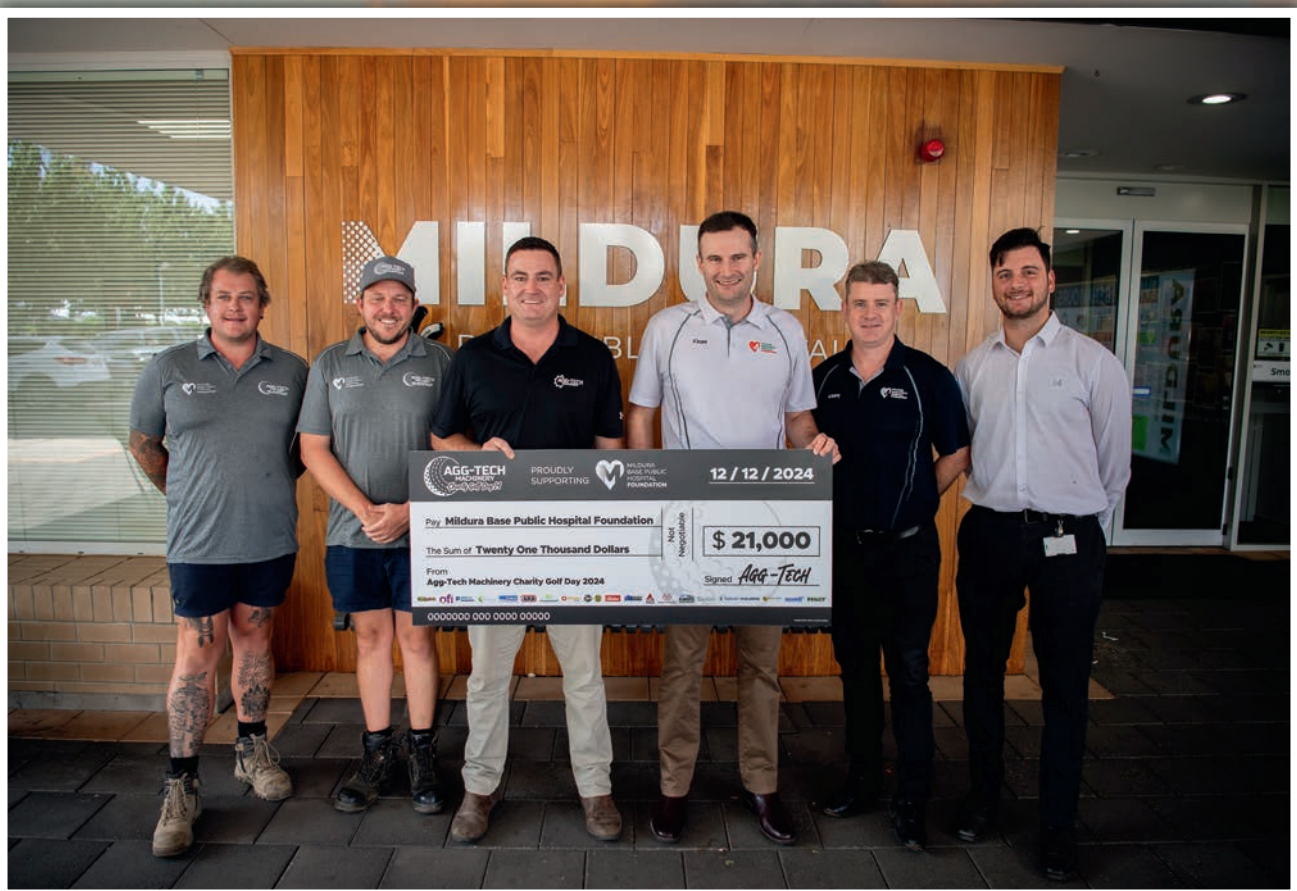
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WHILE LOCAL FORMER SPORTING CHAMPION AND LEGEND JAMES ALOYSIUS WALDER'S DAYS OF PLAYING SPORT MAY BE OVER, IT WOULD BE HARDER TO FIND ANYONE THAT IS A KEENER SPORTING FAN.

THE SPORTING LIFE OF A LOCAL LEGEND

By Phil Kettle

As spring approaches the days begin to grow longer and the birds start to sing as they celebrate the fact that the winter months are coming to an end.

For cricket players spring can only mean one thing - it's time to get out the cricket gear and start preparing for the forthcoming summer season. Once again, cricketers young and old, are excited about a new season.

And this summer is very special for all cricket lovers, because they all know the English team is coming to contest the Ashes. The sound of that hard, red Kookaburra on willow is music to the ears of all cricket loving fans.

Now while local former sporting champion and legend James Aloysius Walder's days of playing sport may be over, it would be harder to find anyone that is a keener sporting fan.

There is without doubt few people in Mildura who are looking forward more to summer than 84-year-old 'Jimmy' as he is known to his legion of friends.

"I love sport! I've loved sport as long as I can remember," he tells me enthusiastically.

"Sport has probably been the most important thing in my life.

"I've been to 52 VFL/AFL Grand Finals of which Essendon, the team I support, has won five.

"The first cricket Test match I watched as a spectator was at the MCG on Boxing Day back in the 1960s. The game was between Australia and the West Indies.

"I remember like yesterday, the crowd, the excitement. There was the great Wes Hall, fast bowling legend he started his run in from what seemed to be the picket fence.

"I have since then, along with my twin brother, watched Tests in every cricketing nation in the world, except for Afghanistan – it is the only place I haven't been to watch cricket."

Jimmy's love for sport began in his formative years on the family fruit block at Merbein where he grew up. One of 11 children - six boys and five girls — Jimmy recalls his early years fondly.

"We never, as a family, had much in the way of money... just like most families in those days. But, that said, we really did have everything.

"Our life was full of fun, full of adventure – that we created. There was never a dull moment. Never time to be bored or be looking for something to do.

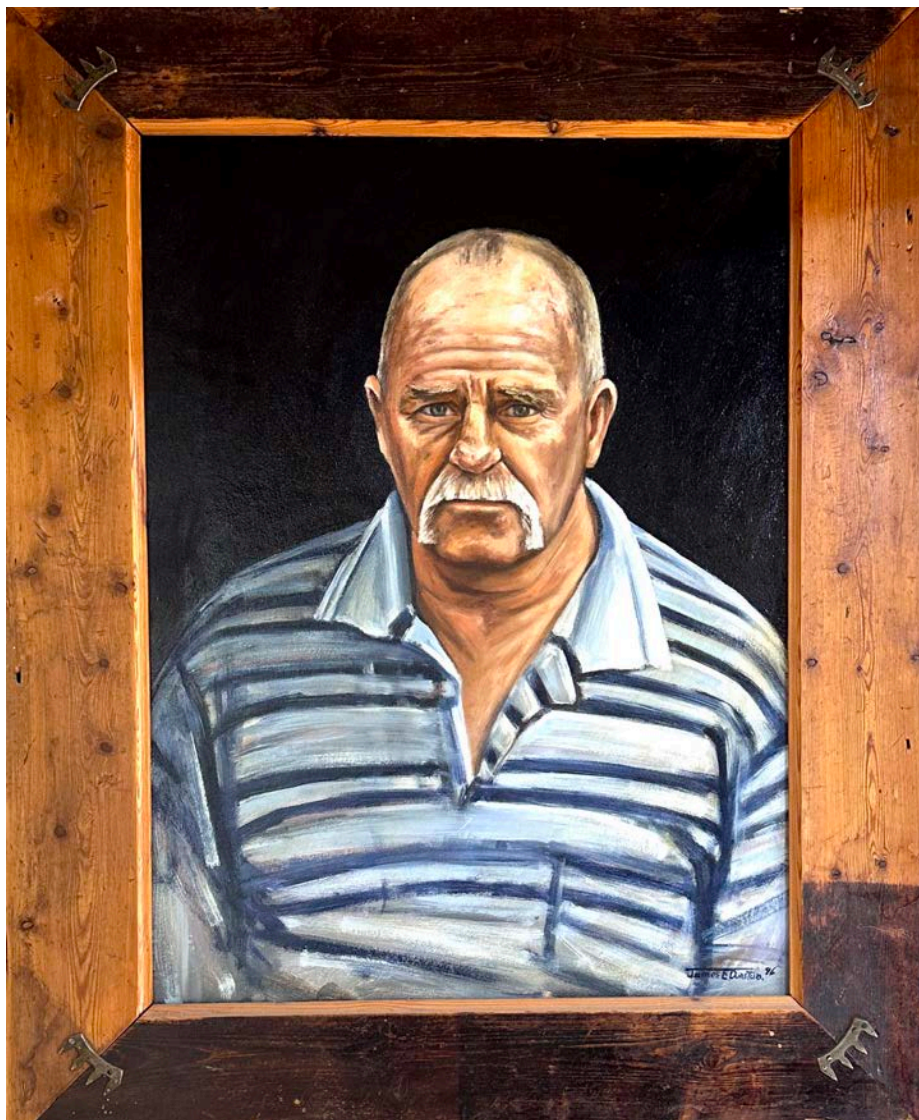
"One of the best things for me growing up was that I had my identical twin brother, who also happened to be my very best mate."

As one would expect with the size of their family, the Walder clan were good Catholics, which of course meant they attended the Merbein Catholic School.

"I've got to say that I was never that interested in the academic side of school," Jimmy confides.

"My focus was more on sport. If you couldn't kick it, hit it, or throw it I just wasn't that interested."

As history tells us, along with the honour boards that adorn the walls of many of



JIMMY HAD HEARD ABOUT AN ARTIST WHO RESIDED IN BOGGY CREEK ROAD HALF WAY BETWEEN MILDURA AND ADELAIDE WHO PAINTED PORTRAITS. HE MANAGED TO FIND THE ARTIST JAMES E. DUNSTAN WHO RESIDES IN NGAPALA SOUTH AUSTRALIA. JAMES TOOK A PHOTO OF JIMMY AND PRODUCED THIS PAINTING CIRCA 1996.

the sporting clubs in Merbein, the Walder name is prominent.

"Dinner table talk at home wasn't about our academic achievements, but about sport," Jimmy says.

"In the summer it was cricket and in winter it was football. I'm not sure what our sisters must have thought, but we boys were totally consumed by our sport. There were enough of us to have our own cricket team."

And it didn't take long for the Walder boys to make their mark on local football and cricket scenes. Not only were there seven boys in the family, there was also a tribe of cousins, with the same enthusiasm for sport.

"At one stage the cricket team that I played with included seven Walder brothers and four cousins.

"Pick on one Walder and you would have to take on the entire team.

"And, I was fortunate enough to play in two

senior premierships for the Merbein Cricket club."

Naturally, when cricket season came to an end, the cricket gear would be put in the cupboard and out came the footballs.

And again, the Walder name dominated the team sheets at the Merbein Football Club.

"I played a total of 120 senior games for the Magpies, amongst those were two premierships.

"I loved every moment of my sporting career in Merbein."

Of course, like everyone else, Jimmy had to work. Firstly, it was with his father on the family fruit block and then the Merbein Co-Op.

"After leaving the Co-op, my twin brother and I started working in outback Australia drilling and road construction. It was what we did for the rest of our working life. We did not retire until we were 73!"



Jimmy and his twin Robert decided whilst working that they would, at every chance, would get to do what they loved – play or watch cricket. It is something Jimmy is still doing.

In Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2020, James attended his 200th Australian men's cricket Test match, sadly it was without his twin brother who had passed away earlier the same year.

"It was a great occasion, sadly it was without my twin brother and best friend. The highlight was when Andrew McDonald – the Australian men's cricket coach – along with players Matthew Renshaw, Michael Naser and Marnus Labuschagne presented me with a signed playing shirt."

"I've been privileged, over a long period of time, to watch some of the best cricketers Australia has ever produced. Ponting is the best batsman I've seen play and

Shane Warne by far the best bowler.

"The best place to watch cricket in Australia is Adelaide.

"And the best non-Australian player in my time has to be (Sir Garfield) Sobers from the West Indies.

"I love watching Test cricket but can't come at watching that T20 stuff... it's just not real cricket.

"I didn't like the pink ball, day/night cricket. But I have relented and now go to these games as well."

Jimmy Walder now has full MCC membership, but sadly he won't be able to enjoy the comfort of the MCC with his twin brother and best mate Robert.

"Watching from the members' stand is certainly a lot more comfortable.

Touching again on football, Jimmy tells me the greatest Essendon player he has seen is James Hird.

"I loved watching him play. His skills were

sublime and played the game the way it should be played, hard but fair.

"Of course, James was coached by Essendon's best ever coach – Kevin Sheedy."

If you're thinking that Jimmy might be slowing down, then think again. Having just returned from the Aussies successful tour of the West Indies, Jimmy is looking forward to the forthcoming Ashes series.

"I love the Ashes more than any other cricket, especially love seeing the Aussies winning and I'll be at every game."

This summer when you are sitting back in your lounge chair cheering on the Aussies and the TV camera's pan around the crowd, keep your eyes peeled. There's a good chance you'll see Jimmy cheering on our boys heartily.

James Aloysius Walder is certainly living his dream.

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AMERICAN ARTIST JOHN FALCON CALLS MILDURA HOME THESE DAYS. PHOTO: ROHAN MORRIS WORKSPACE 3496 RED CLIFFS.

A FALCON TAKES FLIGHT IN MILDURA

John draws inspiration from Mother Nature's rich diversity.

By John Dooley & Grant Maynard

NATURE has been inspiring art for as long as there have been humans to make it. From cave wall daubing 50,000 years ago up until today, Mother Nature continues to inspire an expansive range of creative people in a kaleidoscope of mediums.

One of those creative souls is Mildura's John Falcon, a painter working in acrylic, ink and watercolour, and whose art reflects

his surroundings — typically landscapes, animals, people, flora and fauna.

In April this year, John's latest exhibition entitled 'Walking on Sunraysia' opened at the Mildura Arts Centre (MAC). Hosted in the MAC basement's Gallery 5 (also known as the Rio Vista Ballroom), the impressively colourful exhibition ran until June 15.

In his introduction to those visiting the exhibition, John explained that as he walks on Sunraysia's Latji Latji and Barkinji Country, he experiences vivid images of

the flora and fauna "that speak to me". "Each bird, reptile, tree and animal has a story or a message offering me exquisite deep beauty and abundance. Illumination and alignment with creation are on offer on my journeys," he confided in his audience. "In my own culture (Mexico) we believe that the animal kingdom holds an animal double. Each encounter is an announcement of my relationship with my nahuali, an Aztec word for 'shadow soul' a bond with that animal, bird, tree, or reptile.

"My art is an expression of those deep connections metamorphosed by sounds, body expressions, and vivid colours. I increase my awareness, understanding, respect and appreciation of all living things in those moments. They seek me out by offering me an opportunity to obtain wisdom, guidance and insight into life.

"I grieve that one day most of what I see, and encounter, will be destroyed and this is my chance to connect with, and remember, them.

"We need animals, nature, and wildness, we need their spirit to enrich our lives and the planet," he concluded.

It was serendipitous then that the day Heartbeat caught up with John, he was back in the MAC precinct hosting a workshop for 30 or more budding artists.

After John's tutorial it was not surprising, perhaps, that several chose to gather around the impressive fountain in the MAC grounds to capture the iconic beauty of Rio Vista House, formerly home to one of our city's founding fathers – W.B. Chaffey – and the centrepiece of Mildura's flourishing arts precinct.

It was certainly a fitting venue to get to know John and his art.

Born in the USA, John arrived in Australia in 1988 and has been resident in Mildura since July 2019.

His notable arts education credentials read like a well written script. A Degree of Fine Arts from California's Long Beach City College, and another from California State University, Long Beach.

He also studied at Escuela de Bellas Artes San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, and at The California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California.

Then, after arriving in Australia, John undertook a course in drawing and painting at the Fitzroy School of Art in Melbourne and studied watercolour at the Julian Ashton School of Art in Sydney.

Asked to expand on the inspiration and message behind his MAC exhibition, John was disarmingly candid about what prompted him to spend the past two years exploring Sunraysia environs with a brush in hand.

Much of the focus for the exhibition was the encroachment of urbanisation into once productive farmland, and the destruction of wildlife habitats.

"It's very much about the environment and the danger to the environment," John explained.



SPOTTED CRANE GONE AT LAKE HAWTHORN 2025.



JOHN LEVELLING THE CENTREPIECE WORK OF HIS EXHIBITION.

"I have noticed the transition happening since I arrived here. I've only been in Mildura for five years, and where I come from in Long Beach, California, the same thing happened in the 1950s.

"We had crops of grapes. We had tomatoes. We had canola fields. We had all this wonderfully productive agricultural and horticultural land, but little by little suburbia encroached and killed everything.

"They knocked everything down... burned everything, and I see the same thing happening here. We're not leaving enough spaces here in Mildura for plants and trees to thrive.

"I call it a climate grief. I began to get really sad at looking at some of the birds that are trying to survive, or of species that have been introduced here to Australia that are surviving.

"So that that's why painted these works. I just went around...all over and looked at areas that were really impacted. The idea

was to paint the idea that everything is changing, but not for the better.

"We're losing what we have here in Sunraysia. And I think we can do an integration, a better integration, of new homes and industry and still have keep all the beautiful flora and fauna that we have here."

John was realistic about the ongoing development of our area.

"It's going to happen, but we can do it more mindfully. Be careful that we're taking care of the plants, the birds and the animals and we're not harming them."

Heartbeat was interested to learn more about his art teaching efforts, having seen the enthusiasm and rapt attention of his MAC precinct students.

"Oh, the workshop was inspired as a way to support people who want to learn how to draw or to increase their existing skills," John explained.

"Drawing is really the first step to painting. At first you create the drawing. You get



DEAD TREES WITH GOANNAS 2025.



SPARROWS EATING DATES 2024.



JOHN FALCON'S CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION OF SPECIES WAS THE THEME OF HIS WALKING ON SUNRAYSIA EXHIBITION 2.



MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION DR MARY BETH MACISAAC TOOK PART IN THE MAC WORKSHOP.

the proportion, you get the shape, the gradation of colour and where the sun's coming from. You start thinking about all of that.

"And that's what I do with my work. I do a drawing first, and then I can fill in the colour later.

"And I thought this would be the perfect venue to conduct a workshop to impart some of that knowledge and skill that I have gained over the years.

"And since I had an exhibition running here, MAC asked me if I would do that.

"I've had a good group of people, who may have painted in high school but haven't gone back to it."

Interestingly, John is also a psychologist and over the years he has utilised art to support people with mental health issues.

"We do know through neuroscience, that drawing and painting helps make us feel better and that expressive arts can change our mood and improve wellness," he added.

MARY BETH WORKSHOPS HER ART

WHILE interviewing John, Heartbeat spied one familiar workshop participant — Mildura Base Public Hospital Director of Medical Education, Dr Mary Beth MacIsaac.

"I was aware of John's work, and I wanted to learn how to improve my skills in drawing and painting," Mary Beth said explaining her presence.

"I had never taken part in an outside workshop before, and I was really intrigued by the fact that he was doing the workshop in the open air at the Mildura Arts Centre - just like the impressionists and many other famous artists have worked.

"It's actually really challenging because the light is changing, and your subject might be moving.

"I didn't know how to work with that and that's why it was really amazing to come and be taught by someone who does so much of this beautiful outdoor landscape work."

The MAC hosts a number of workshops throughout the year, something Mary Beth described as "a wonderful idea".

"One of the nicest things is that a group of us who met at this workshop, and who are also a bit new to town and interested in art, intend to attend other workshops together," she said.

Asked whether her sketch was going to end up on canvas, Mary Beth was non-committal.

"I not quite at that stage yet," she said with a laugh. "I really admired John's acrylic paintings, but I don't quite have the skills yet to apply paint to this (sketch) one!"

JOHN HAS AN IMPRESSIVE ARTS CV

John is justifiably proud of his body of work and having exhibited widely.

His works were accepted into the annual Filoli Gardens exhibition in Palo Alto, California, in 2003. And, in that same year, he also exhibited with the Santa Clara Watercolor Society in the USA.

Since then, John has shown his work in numerous exhibitions, including:

- The Laura Golf Course and Western Sydney TAFE, Wentworth Falls (2009)
- The Tree View Estates Art Exhibition, Lithgow NSW (2010)
- The Blackheath Art Society and the

Blue Mountains Art Society, Blackheath NSW (2011)

• The River of Art Eurobodalla Festival (2017 and 2018)

• Solo exhibitions at Workspace 3496 + Gallery, Red Cliffs VIC (2022 and 2023)

• Solo exhibition at the Mildura Arts Centre, VIC (2025)

"Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to receive several awards and commendations," he told Heartbeat. These include:

- Highly Commended, Magenta Art Prize (2021)
- Second Best Painting in Show, Fine Arts Wentworth Show Society (2023)

- Best Portrait, Magenta Art & Photography Show (2024)

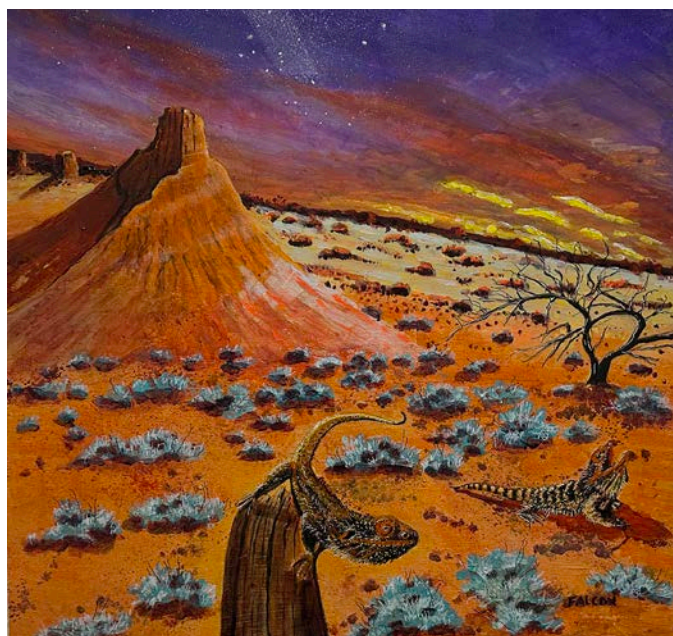
"I have been actively involved in the arts community, previously as a member of the Narooma School of Arts in NSW and the Riverfront Gallery in Mildura," he revealed.

"I am currently a member of GalleryF Creative Arts Inc. in Mildura, and my work has been displayed in several cafés across NSW and is part of an ongoing exhibition at the Billinudgel Photo and Frame Shop in Billinudgel, NSW."

Want to know more? You can find John on Instagram @falconjart; or his website at: www.falconjart.com.



KANGAROOS LIVING ON GRASS IN VINEYARD 2024.



BEARDED DRAGON AT MUNGO 2024.



JOHN FALCON'S MAC WORKSHOP.



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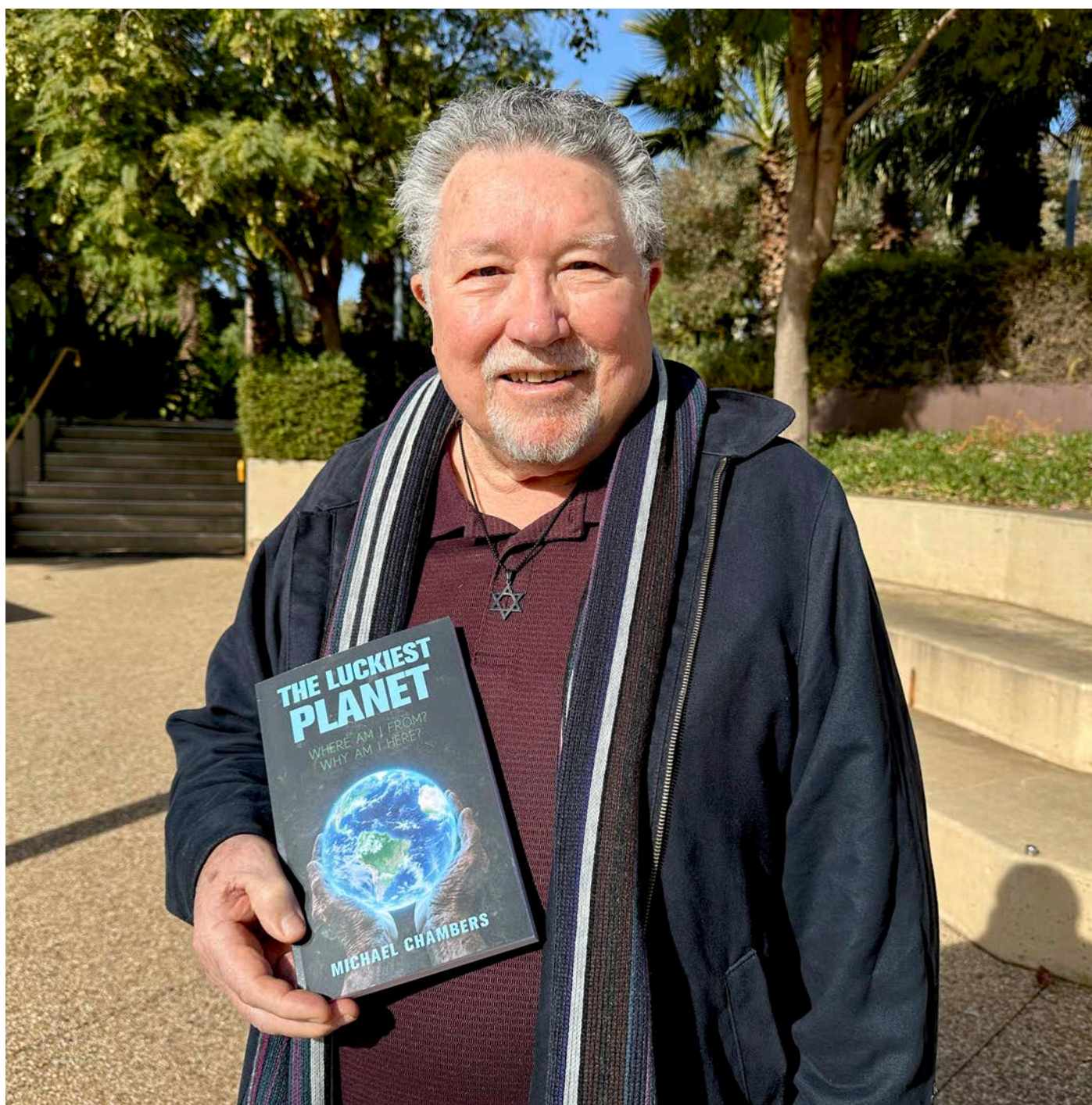
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Readers of our Autumn 2024 edition of *Heartbeat* will recall a story titled: 'A night to remember. One man's story of survival and heart-felt gratitude.' The story was largely written by the person who was the subject of the extraordinary tale, Mildura resident and author Michel Chambers. It was first-person account of a near-death experience that could have ended much differently if not for the skilled intervention of a large cast of health professionals, many of them from Mildura Base Public Hospital. At the time, Michael said the story was his way of honouring and thanking those who saved his life. In our story Michael mentioned that he was about to complete his third book – a non-fiction work titled 'The Luckiest Planet'. *Heartbeat* recently caught up with Michael again — not long after the first anniversary of his near-death experience — to discuss his new book.

THE LUCKIEST PLANET

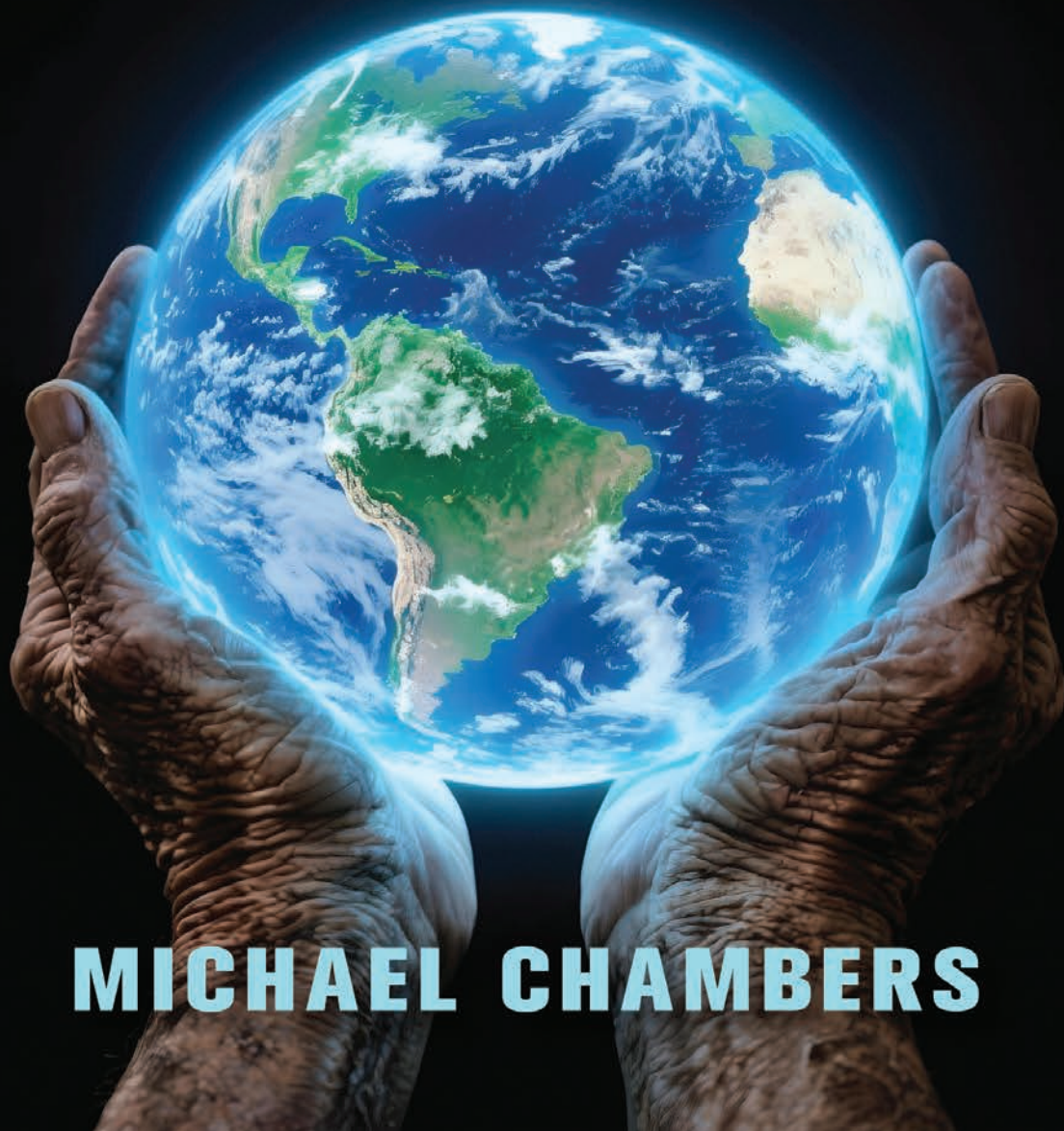
WHERE AM I FROM? WHY AM I HERE?



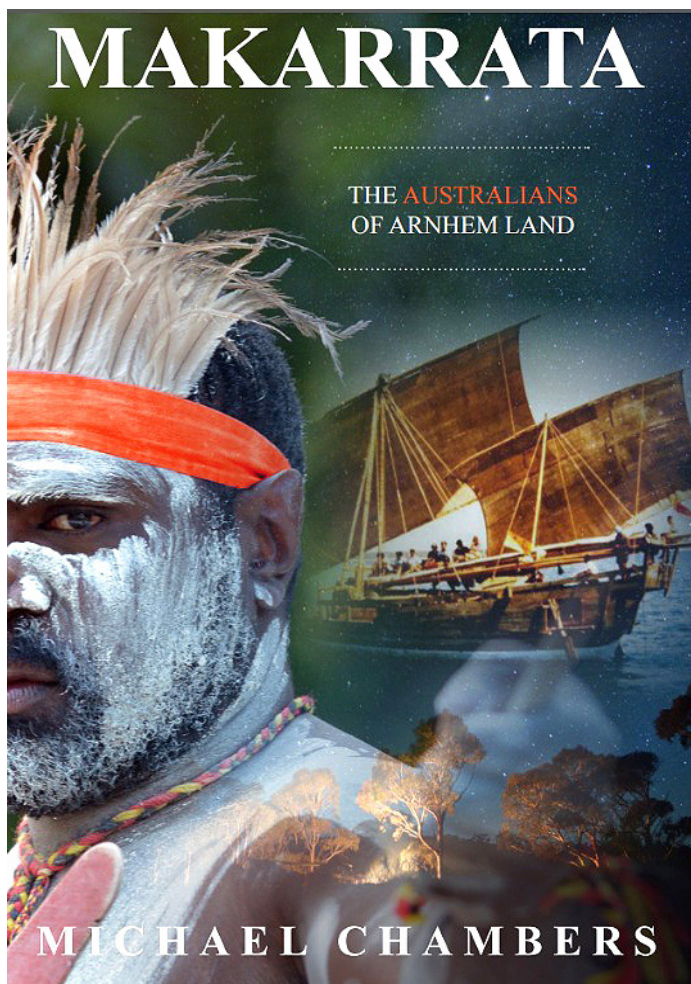
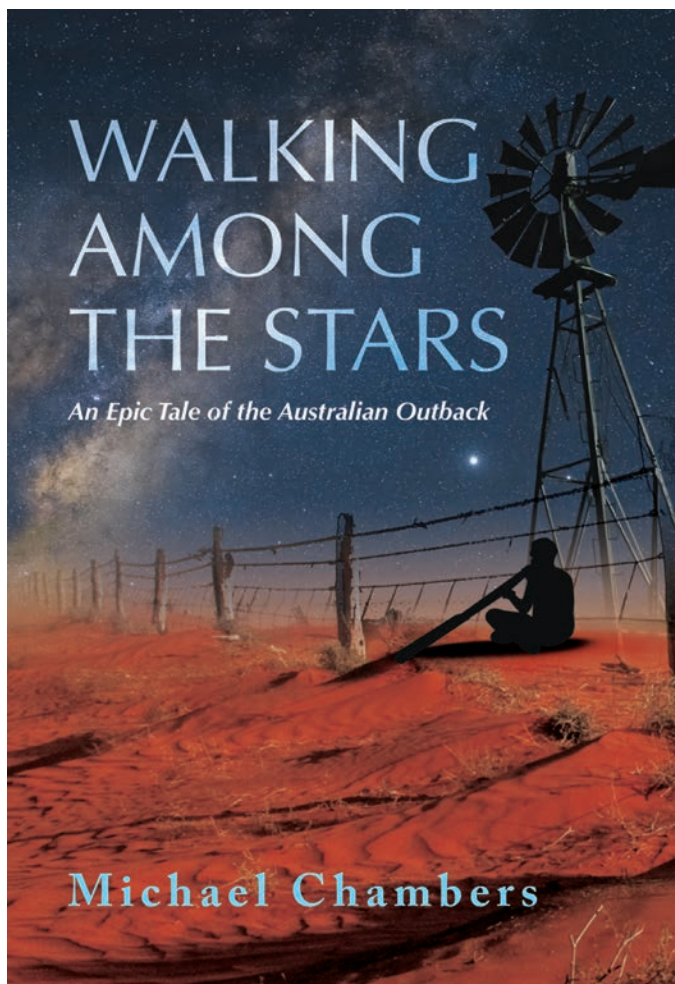
MICHAEL CHAMBERS WITH HIS RECENTLY PUBLISHED THIRD BOOK.

THE LUCKIEST PLANET

WHERE AM I FROM?
WHY AM I HERE?



MICHAEL CHAMBERS



By John Dooley with Michael Chambers

IT contains the answers to questions many of us are afraid to ask. The Luckiest Planet explains modern science with a biblical flavour – science returns to God in these pages full of both ancient wisdom and today's reality.

"The two most important days in a life are the day you are born and the day you find out why!" the author profoundly states on the book's dedicated website.

He continues: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. What does that mean? Is it relevant today? Try viewing the world from a fresh perspective – a better story."

The author's synopsis continues...

"How does the 3500-year-old book of Genesis shed a new light on modern science? What did the fathers of modern science believe? How can the six days of creation be the same as the 13.7-billion-year history of this luckiest of all planets? Where did Adam come from? Are dinosaurs mentioned in Genesis? How has the Darwinian theory of evolution lost all relevance? What can we learn from the study of the smallest things – nanotechnology, and the largest, the universe that surrounds us?

"What is to be our view of the three-legged stool of human misery: slavery, war and discrimination?

"What does the Bible say about humanity's relationship with the planet? Our care of the environment, the flora and fauna and all that means for future prosperity? What about energy, climate change, and the WOKE culture of diversity, equity and inclusion? Where does this new religion come from? What are its roots?

"And where am I from? Why am I here?

"These are all serious questions that deserve serious answers. Join the journey of discovery to find out where and why!"

When Heartbeat met with Michael to learn about The Luckiest Planet, it was inspiring to learn that the man, just a year after his close shave with death, is walking five kilometres a day and looks as fit as a fiddle, while his passion for writing is also admirable and one wonders what might be next?

Michael Chambers has also written 'Walking Among the Stars' Twenty thousand years. Two peoples. One ancient land.

His introduction to this effort reads: "In the vast, unforgiving beauty of the Australian Outback, Walking Among the

Stars weaves together the epic stories of those who dared to call this harsh country home. From the Ngiyampaa people who first learned to find plenty where others saw only poverty, to the waves of settlers who followed – Europeans, Afghans, Chinese – all drawn to the dry country between the rivers."

His final book is 'Makarrata. The Australians of Arnhem Land' and is testimony of his love for the Aboriginal people in a land he describes as the most beautiful part of Australia.

He prefaces it with these words: "The Saltwater People: An Epic of Ancient Australia's Hidden North'. Before European settlement, before the name 'Australia' was even spoken, a mighty people ruled the tropical waters of the far north. The Yolnu were a saltwater people of extraordinary courage and ancient wisdom who built a culture that would endure for thousands of years."

To find out more about Michael Chambers, his fascinating life journey and his books visit: www.michaelchambers.org.

Michael also recently recorded a podcast with 'Heartbeat of the Mallee'. To listen scan the QR code or visit: mbphfoundation.org.au.

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SHEPPARTON MOTOR BODY BUILDERS MANAGER CRAIG COXHELL & MANAGING DIRECTOR ROB COXHELL.

SCREENING TRUCK TAKES SHAPE

Construction is forging ahead on the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Foundation's state-of-the-art mobile health screening truck, with the custom-built tray now beginning to take physical shape.

By Heath Kendall

THE latest milestone includes the installation of the external walls, bringing the ambitious multi-million-dollar initiative closer to reality.

Set to revolutionise healthcare access for people living in regional and remote areas, the project is designed to deliver vital screening services directly to the communities that need them most. Once complete, the mobile clinic will offer skin, breast, and cardiac screening, three areas

where early detection can dramatically improve patient outcomes and, ultimately, save lives.

The specialised tray is currently under construction at Shepparton Body Builders, a highly regarded manufacturer known for its custom-built vehicle bodies. The design process was extensive, involving months of detailed consultation between engineering teams, health professionals, and manufacturers to ensure the truck's configuration meets the specific needs of mobile healthcare delivery.

"This has been a complex design challenge," Acting MBPH CEO Matthew Jukes said.

"We had to balance medical functionality, patient comfort, and mobility without compromising the technical requirements of sensitive screening equipment."

The final design includes three distinct clinical zones within the truck.

A skin screening area, designed for privacy and equipped with dermatological diagnostic tools.

A breast screening suite, housing



FEATURES OF THE MOBILE SCREENING VEHICLE:

WB360 Vectra Scanner



Digital Mammography System



Cardiovascular Health Check



MBPH DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUILDING SERVICES JASON KANE IS OVERSEEING THE PROJECT WHILE THE TEAM AT SHEPPARTON MOTOR BODY BUILDERS HELP TO BUILD THE SCREENING VEHICLE.

mammography equipment in a controlled environment.

A central consultation and cardiac testing area

The mobile clinic will also feature wheelchair access and innovative slide-out sides to increase interior space when deployed, enhancing both patient and staff experience.

Construction of the truck is expected to be completed in early 2026, with full operational deployment scheduled for February 2026.

What makes this project particularly special is its funding model. The MBPH Foundation has secured the capital for the truck through a combination of generous private donations and corporate sponsorships, without relying on government funding. Over the coming months, the Foundation expects to announce additional sponsors to help support the operational costs of the mobile unit, ensuring it remains sustainable and continues to serve the region well into the future.

Acting CEO of MBPH, Matthew Jukes,

emphasised the critical role the screening truck will play in addressing health disparities across regional Victoria.

“This truck is going to be a game changer for how healthcare is delivered in regional and remote communities,” Mr Jukes said.

“Research shows that people living outside metropolitan areas face significantly worse health outcomes, and much of that comes down to access, access to early detection, access to specialised care, and access to follow-up support. This project is a big step forward in closing that gap.”

SALUTING OUR LONG SERVING STAFF

The daily recognition of our wonderful staff at the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) is a core plank of our H.E.A.R.T. values, values which all who work at the hospital live every day.

By John Dooley

THIS year has seen many clinical and non-clinical staff marking career milestones at MBPH. In some cases, those milestones have coincided with members of staff deciding to call-it-a-day on their time at MBPH.

Celebrations have been held, and presentations of Service Recognition Certificates made, acknowledging the long service of staff who have been with the hospital the best part of five decades while and others' tenures have spanned 25 or more years.

The shared commonality has been the dedication these staff have shown to the role they have performed, and the wonderful camaraderie they enjoy with their fellow staffers.

The list of acknowledgements made by management this year is vast, and too many to detail individually here in Heartbeat, but we are delighted to share highlights from this year's list of recipients through this photo gallery.

MBPH ICU Registered Nurse Ann Smith was recognised for 35 years of service.

"I'm celebrating 35 years, but I've probably been at the hospital for 39 years because I did my training at the old Base Hospital, where I started in 1986," Ann said.

MBPH ICU Vascular Clinical Nurse Consultant John Kane was lauded for his tenure of more than 30 years.

"It's about 31 years now. I started at the old base in 1995. They couldn't get rid of me, and I transitioned to the new hospital in 2000! Mildura is such a nice place, and I love the river and so where else would you want to be? And MBPH is a great place to work," John said.

MBPH ICU Acting Nurse Unit Manager Aimee Weir had these words of gratitude to say about her colleagues.

"Today we are celebrating both Annie and



MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH DAVID KIRBY WITH MBPH SENIOR CLINICIAN START TEAM AREA MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SERVICE, ANTHONY 'TONY' NEWTON AND MBPH ACTING CEO MATTHEW JUKES.

John's 30 plus years. They have both been a huge part of ICU and they're very special to all of us. I think they've been fantastic mentors; have worked hard and set a great example for all of ICU."

MBPH Allied Health Registered Nurse Nicole Mammone was honoured for her 20 years at MBPH and a further five years at the old base – a total of 25 years of service.

MBPH Emergency Department Team Leader Patient Services Margaret Valentich 25 years.

On July 15, MBPH said farewell to Vincenzo 'Vince' Fiorenza, one of our longest-serving employees. Vince retired after an incredible 48 years of dedicated service in the Environmental Services Department.

"Vince's contribution to Mildura Base Public Hospital has been nothing short

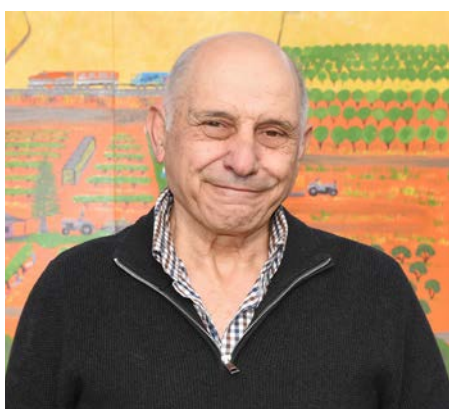
of outstanding. He will be deeply missed by colleagues and the broader hospital team," MBPH Acting CEO, Matthew Jukes, said while paying tribute to Vince's service. Heartbeat spoke to Vince at his farewell, and he reiterated a common theme expressed by retiring MBPH staff.

"The friendships I've made have meant so much to me. I have made a lot of friends... a lifetime friends," Vince said.

"My wife was a nurse, and I met her at the old Base and we've been married for 43 years! That is one of the best things that came out of my working life at the Base hospital.

"I wanted to make 50 years, but the body is saying 'No, you've got go'.

"I might be asked do some weekends occasionally when needed and so you never know, I could still be around!"



VINCENT FIORENZO AT HIS FAREWELL.



MBPH ICU VASCULAR CLINICAL NURSE CONSULTANT JOHN KANE WITH ICU REGISTERED NURSE ANN SMITH.



MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL OPERATIONS KATRINA ALLEN WITH RN NICOLE MAMMONE & ACTING CEO MATTHEW JUKES.



MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL OPERATIONS KATRINA ALLEN, ED TEAM LEADER PATIENT SERVICES MARGARET VALENTICH & ACTING CEO MATTHEW JUKES.



MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL OPERATIONS KATRINA ALLEN 25 YR SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT STEVEN MATULIC & ACTING CEO MATTHEW JUKES.



MBPH ALLIED HEALTH REGISTERED NURSE NICOLE MAMMONE WAS HONOURED FOR HER 20 YEARS AT MBPH AND A FURTHER FIVE YEARS AT THE OLD BASE – A TOTAL OF 25 YEARS OF SERVICE.



MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL OPERATIONS AND CHIEF NURSING MIDWIFERY OFFICER, KATRINA ALLEN, LEFT; AND NURSE UNIT MANAGER RENAL DIALYSIS SERVICES, EDSON AVISADO, ARE PICTURED WITH HOME DIALYSIS PATIENT AND ARTIST MELINDA CAIN.

A STORY OF ADVERSITY INSPIRED ARTWORKS

Melinda Cain is a courageous woman whose life journey is an inspiring tale of determination and optimism in the face of major health issues. Her creativity has nonetheless shone through, and she has produced some beautiful artworks, two of which are on display in the Mildura Base Public Hospital's main corridor.

Told in her own words, this is Melinda's story.

MY name is Melinda Cain. I am an Aboriginal artist and a proud Kamilaroi woman from the rich black soil and waterhole country around Moree, in Northern New South Wales.

My health journey began in 2011 when I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia while 19 weeks pregnant. At just 26 weeks, I gave birth to my youngest child. During that time, I underwent intense chemotherapy and radiation treatment, and I received an unrelated bone marrow transplant. I am grateful to say that I have now been in remission for more than 12 years.

Later, I was diagnosed with kidney failure

caused by a condition called Membranous Glomerulonephritis (MGN), also known as membranous nephropathy. It's a kidney disease that affects the filtering units of the kidneys. I only found out after a biopsy—before that, I had no idea. My doctor had noticed my kidney function was declining and referred me to a specialist. At that point, I was unaware I had kidney failure.

I began to feel constantly tired. Certain foods made me feel unwell, and without knowing what was wrong, it became frightening. I didn't have the energy to work or enjoy time with family and friends. Over time, I built a relationship with my kidney

dialysis care team. They not only supported me but also involved my eldest son in learning how to help manage my condition. He became a key part of our shared journey, helping with my care and understanding the process, including education and preparing for future treatments like a transplant.

At one point, I didn't even know where to begin when it came to nutrition. I was eventually connected with a dietitian, and that became a turning point. I learned that some foods I was eating were hurting me, and I was shown how to make changes that supported my health. That knowledge truly felt like a blessing.

In 2024, I began Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) at home, every night, seven days a week, for eight hours. I am now awaiting a kidney transplant, having undergone multiple tests and evaluations.

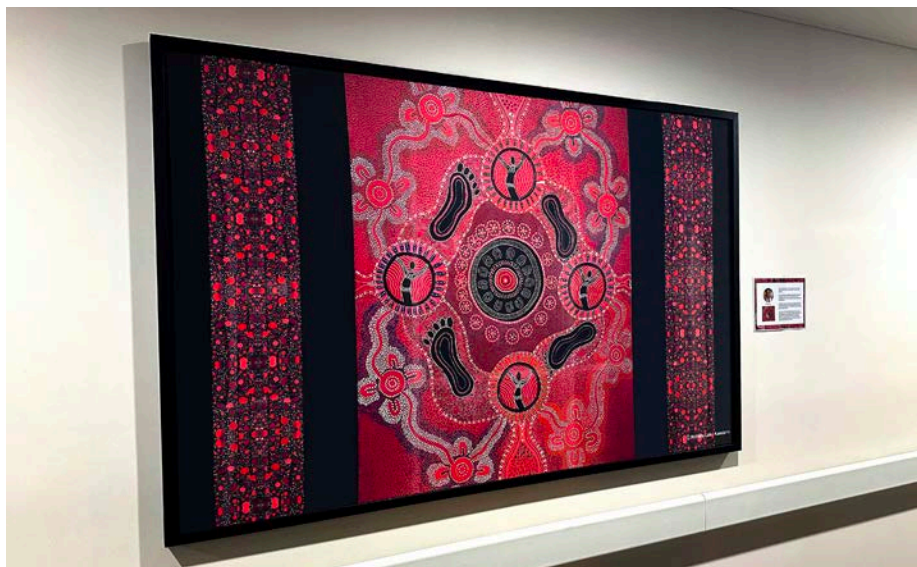
THE STORY BEHIND MY ARTWORK: YANA-Y YINARR MEEI

The title of my artwork, *YANA-Y YINARR MEEI*, comes from the Kamilaroi language:

- YANA-Y means “journey”
- YINARR means “Aboriginal woman”
- MEEI means “Mission River”

Each element in the artwork holds deep personal and cultural meaning.

- The purple background represents the kidneys.
- The symbol of the Yinarr (Aboriginal woman) and the scarred designs reflect the strength I’ve found within myself through hardship and healing.
- The standing figure represents being grounded, resilient, and supported by family and friends. Day by day, we walk this journey together. No matter what you have in life, without help and love, it means little. I had to rise up and say, “I am not going to die” and choose to do



MELINDA'S LATEST CONTRIBUTION TO MBPH IS PROUDLY ON DISPLAY IN THE MAIN CORRIDOR.

what it takes to live a healthy life.

- The tree branches and leaves represent Eura, traditional bush medicine from Moree.
- The blue river symbolises Meei – Mission River.
- Community symbols and their colours represent the places that supported my journey: Mildura Base Public Hospital Mildura Aboriginal Community Health

Royal Melbourne Hospital

- The butterfly represents a loved one guiding me to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. The orange in the butterfly symbolizes Leukaemia, while the designs within it express healing, faith, and hope.

This story is a tribute not only to my health journey but to the strength of culture, family, and community that carried me through it.

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MBPH DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION, DR MARY BETH MACISAAC AND DIRECTOR OF IMG TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT, DR NAZHA NAZEEM, BEING PRESENTED WITH THEIR AWARDS BY PROFESSOR SUNG SUNWOO, CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE.

MBPH STAFF TAKE OUT A TRAVEL AWARD

In April this year, Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Director of Medical Education, Dr Mary Beth MacIsaac, and Director of IMG Training and Assessment, Dr Nazha Nazeem, travelled to Busan in South Korea, to attend the WONCA Asia-Pacific Regional Conference 2025.

By John Dooley

WITH the theme 'Primary Care Transformation: Implementing High-value, High-quality Care!', the conference brought together more than 1,200 family medicine professionals from 41 countries to share their knowledge and experience. From day one of the conference, the passion and energy of participants reflected the value of international collaboration. The conference served not only as a venue for academic exchange and exploring innovation, but also as a meaningful journey of learning and inspiration. The seminars and workshops covered a wide range of topics, including the transformation of primary care systems

in the post-COVID-19 era, the practical application of artificial intelligence and digital therapeutics, training and competency development for family physicians, care models for the elderly and vulnerable populations, integrated mental health services, community-based approaches, and strategies addressing health inequities and global health. These presentations helped participants gain a broader understanding of practical case studies and policy trends from various countries, and provided new insights and perspectives based on accumulated experiences in different healthcare settings. Through these sessions, participants were able to gather valuable inspiration for shaping more inclusive and sustainable

primary care systems in their own contexts. Above all, the academic programs served as a vivid stage showcasing the professionalism, experience, and commitment of healthcare experts across the Asia-Pacific region. It offered participants not just a transfer of knowledge, but an opportunity for mutual learning and growth. Mary Beth and Nazha made a presentation to the conference that was so highly regarded, they were the recipients of a 'Travel Award'. "To have been able to represent MBPH and participate in the event was a wonderful experience and it was so exciting to receive the award," Mary Beth said. Heartbeat congratulates our team on their achievement.



WONCA ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS.



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- **Kids Help Line:** 1800 55 1800
- **QLife** (anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral): 1300 555 727
- **Eating Disorders Victoria:** 1300 550 236 and the **Butterfly Foundation:** 1800 33 4673 - supporting people with eating disorders and body image issues



CASEY MCGUIRE'S JOURNEY INTO TEACHING BEGAN IN AN UNEXPECTED PLACE.

NEXUS - A SUPPORTED STEP INTO THE CLASSROOM

Australia is facing a critical shortage of skilled professionals in key sectors, with education and health high on the list of those found most wanting.

By Rebecca Crossling

AS an example, the national shortfall of secondary teachers this year is projected to exceed 4000, and regional schools are feeling the pressure acutely.

The challenge isn't just about filling vacancies — it's about ensuring that all students, regardless of postcode or background, have access to passionate,

well-prepared educators who reflect and understand their communities.

Historically, the teaching workforce has relied heavily on school leavers entering university immediately after Year 12, but attracting people with life experience, diverse skills, and a strong commitment to educational equity and social justice is becoming essential to building a fairer, more inclusive system.

La Trobe University's Nexus program is answering that call.

Designed to support career-changers and education support workers already embedded in schools, Nexus offers a practical, employment-based pathway into teaching.

Participants earn while they learn, gaining real-world classroom experience while completing their teaching qualifications.

For many, it's a turning point - making teaching a workable and purpose-driven career option, especially in the communities that need it most.

Casey McGuire's journey into teaching began in an unexpected place: an asphalt production plant. After years of early starts and long shifts, she was ready for something more fulfilling.

"A friend half-jokingly suggested I teach science," she recalls. "That planted a seed. I'd actually applied for a Master of Teaching years earlier, but life took me elsewhere."

With a bachelor's degree in analytical chemistry, along with an honours in molecular chemistry, Casey had the academic foundation but transitioning into teaching felt daunting. That changed when she discovered Nexus.

"Without the financial support Nexus offered, I wouldn't have been able to quit my full-time job and reskill," she says. "It removed a massive barrier and gave me the breathing room to focus on becoming the best teacher I can be."

Her placement at Irymple Secondary College brought her full circle — she had once been a student there.

"The Science Faculty has been phenomenal," she says. "They're not just colleagues, they're mentors. I've grown more than I ever expected."

Peter Manno's story is rooted in Mildura. A lifelong local, he spent years working as an Education Support Worker before making the leap into teaching.

"I was off to Adelaide to study Computer Science," he says, "but working in schools made something click. I saw how much of a difference patience and encouragement could make."

For Peter, Nexus was the turning point.

"Going to university full-time while supporting my family didn't feel realistic," he explains. "Nexus made it possible and exciting. I could stay connected to my community, earn while I learned, and gain real classroom experience."

Now at Red Cliffs Secondary College, Peter is thriving.

"There's a real focus on relationships here," he says. "One moment that sticks with me is seeing a quiet student come out of their shell over the term. Those wins matter."

Both Casey and Peter highlight the strength of the Nexus model — an integration of academic learning with real-world teaching.

"It bridges the gap between theory and



PETER MANNO'S STORY IS ROOTED IN MILDURA.

practice," Peter says. "I feel more prepared and confident because I'm learning in context."

Support from La Trobe and the placement schools has been crucial.

"The Nexus team genuinely wants you to succeed," Peter adds. "Mentors check in, offer feedback, and celebrate progress. That kind of encouragement builds resilience."

Casey agrees.

"I've connected with a tight-knit group of fellow Nexus students," she says. "We swap advice, lesson ideas, and support each other through the unique challenges of rural teaching."

In regional communities like Mildura, teachers often wear many hats.

"We're not just educators," Peter says. "We're role models, advocates, and a steady presence in our students' lives."

Casey adds: "We help students see possibilities beyond their postcode. That sense of belief and encouragement can

genuinely change the trajectory of a young person's life."

School leaders see the impact firsthand.

"Nexus has brought passionate, well-prepared educators into our classrooms," says Gregor Allan, Acting Principal at Irymple Secondary College.

"They understand our students and our community, and they're making a real difference every day."

One of the strengths of the Nexus program in Mildura is its leadership, anchored by Kym Barbary, based at La Trobe University's Mildura Campus.

Recognised as a leader within La Trobe's School of Education, Kym was a natural choice to head this sector-leading program. Prior to stepping into the Director role, Kym was responsible for the course coordination of La Trobe's undergraduate education programs across the entire university, which represents more than 1700 students. As a proud La Trobe alum who completed both her undergraduate teaching degrees



and Master of Education with the university, and with nearly two decades of classroom experience both locally and overseas, Kym brings a deep understanding of what teachers need to thrive.

"I work closely with my students to maximise their learning," she says. "And I'm especially passionate about helping them transition into meaningful employment after graduation."

Kym Barbary sees the evolution of Nexus as a transformative shift in teacher education. "We began with the Master of Teaching (Secondary), then expanded to include the Master of Teaching (Primary), both ideal for career changers who already hold a degree," she explains.

"But the real game-changer is the Diploma of Teacher Education (Nexus) which began this year. It's a supported pathway designed specifically for education support staff and Koorie Engagement Support Officers already working in schools, helping them become accredited teachers.

That's the pathway Peter has taken and it's unlocking opportunities for so many who never imagined teaching could be within reach."

For Casey and Peter, the journey is just beginning.

"I want to be the kind of teacher who helps students believe in themselves," Casey says. "Especially the ones who don't hear that message often."

Peter shares a similar hope.

"I'm grateful for the opportunities, the mentors, and the students who remind me why I chose this path. My goal is to contribute to a school culture where every student feels seen, heard, and capable of success," he said.

In communities where passionate educators can change lives, Nexus is proving that with the right support, anyone with heart and commitment can become a transformative teacher.

For more information visit: www.latrobe.edu.au/nexus.



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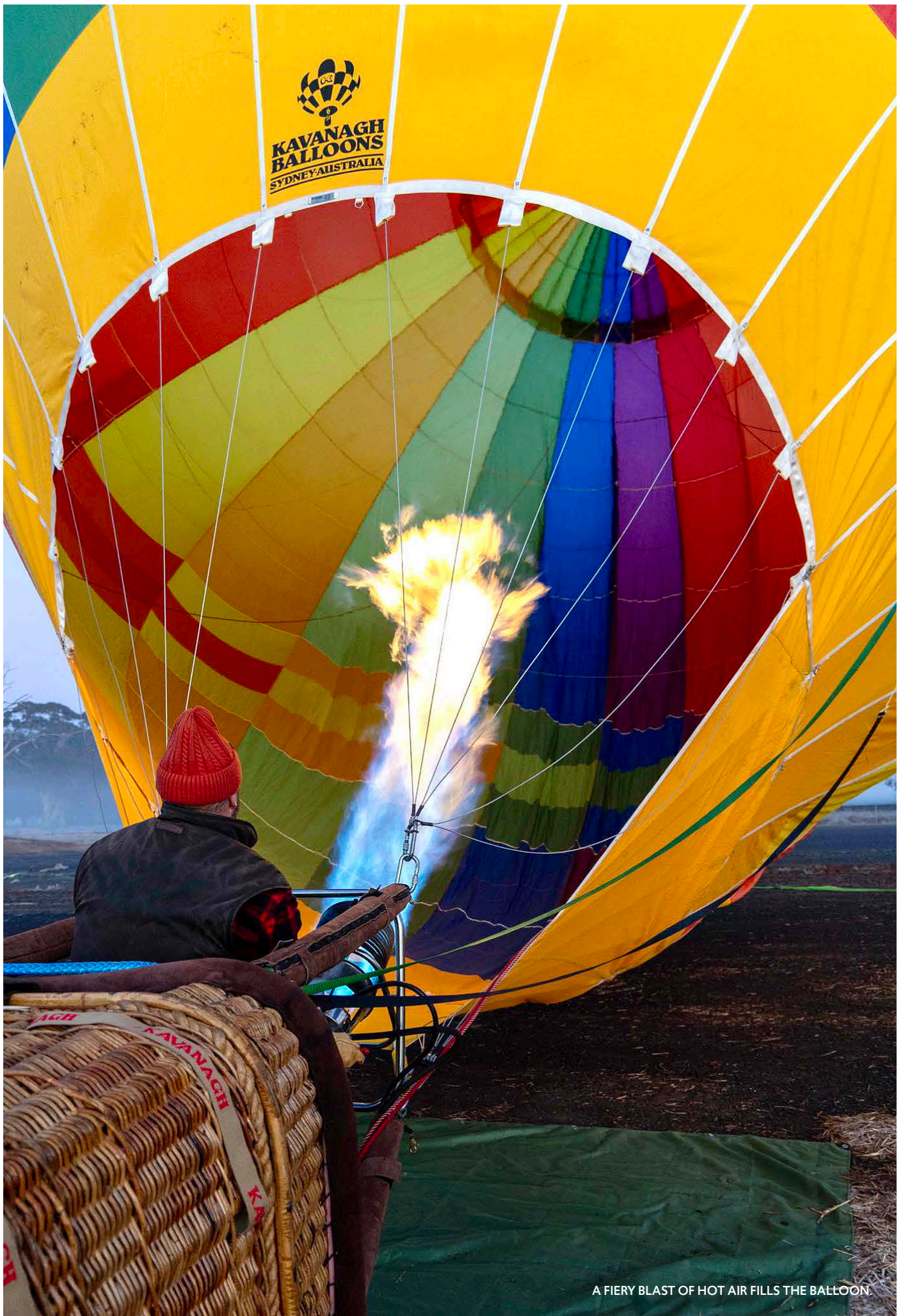
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A FIERY BLAST OF HOT AIR FILLS THE BALLOON.

UP, UP AND AWAY - BALLOONING IN MILDURA HAS LIFT OFF!

Following an extremely successful event in 2024, Mildura has once again become the Australian centre for hot air balloon training.

By John Dooley with Ben Gowers

WITH some of the best flying conditions in the state, Mildura has become a hotspot for ballooning.

The city has witnessed an increase in aerial activities over our region in recent years and hosted a Balloon Training Camp in the second week of the July school holidays this year.

Mildura's newest aeronaut and current Victorian Hot Air Balloon State Champion, Ben Gowers (of Gowers Homes) worked closely with balloon pilot instructor Sarah Ellis from Horsham, to bring the event to Mildura.

"The event would not have happened without Sarah," Ben said.

"As the event organiser, her tireless efforts made it all possible and brought some of the biggest names in Australian ballooning to oversee training throughout the week.

"Events of this scale rely on countless hours of volunteer work, and the dedication of organisers, crew, and supporters ensured a safe, successful, and unforgettable week for Aussie ballooning.

"I am pleased to have worked alongside Sarah to oversee much of the local groundwork and preparation during the lead-up to the event, and I appreciate the efforts of all involved to help bring the event to Mildura.

"It was great to meet so many new faces who share the same passion."

Sarah is a regular visitor to Mildura to train pilots and participate in hot air balloon events.

She says the region is top-of-mind when considering where to host an upcoming training camp.

"Mildura truly has everything we are looking



BEN GOWERS WITH HIS FAMILY AHEAD OF FLIGHT DEPARTURE.

for when considering where to hold a training opportunity such as this," Sarah explained.

"The weather is often beautiful, and July is the perfect time for flying in this region.

"Ballooningists love cold, still air, and open skies.

"There are also plenty of wide-open spaces to take off from and land, and the support from the community has been fantastic.

"These training camps operate on an almost non-existent budget, and to have locals open their homes for accommodation, in particular for the guest speakers and other officials, helps make training camps a success.

"It is fantastic."

"We were extremely excited to host the training camp in our region," Ben added.

"We had 13 registered student pilots, and 20 qualified pilots, mostly instructors, who travelled from all over the country to be part of this training camp.

"Along with them came their families, crew, guest speakers, instructors, examiners and other balloon enthusiasts — all travelling with their equipment to be part of the camp."

The training camp was held at SuniTAFE from Sunday, July 13, through to Saturday, July 19. It was an incredible week that attracted 16 balloons, more than 40 participants, and a vibrant mix of training pilots, instructors, examiners, industry experts, and dedicated crew.



BALLOONS DRIFT ABOVE THE TREE TOPS AS THE EARLY MORNING MIST BEGINS TO CLEAR.

Over the course of the camp, the 13 pilots-in-training logged an impressive 46.6 hours of flight time, with another five hours dedicated to check flights.

The skies over Mildura and Werrimull also saw 14 solo flights, two instructor biennial flight reviews, a night flight and two tethered operations.

Although the camp was held for training purposes — and was not a fiesta or competition that many readers would be familiar with from past years — Mildura residents were treated to a host of ‘sky high’ activity across the week.

Both morning and afternoon flights were

planned each day, and workshops and on-the-ground training sessions were held in between flights.

Subject to weather conditions, it was planned that the bulk of flights would take off from the SuniTAFE grounds in Benetook Avenue, at 7am and 3pm most days.

The highlight of the week was the unprecedented achievement of five fledgling pilots earning their wings – a milestone that may well be a record for a single training camp.

“Congratulations go to Mildura locals Jason and Col Gowers, Paul Gruber from

Melbourne, Colin Thompson from Leeton, and Adam Craven from Canberra,” Ben said.

The success of the ‘Balloons over Mildura’ training camp brings another dimension to Mildura’s growing number of exciting attractions.

And Ben sees the event becoming an iconic, annual spectacular.

“Now we are looking forward to Balloons over Mildura in July 2026,” he added.

To keep up to date with the event and other news, visit local Facebook page: Mildura Hot Air Ballooning for all things ballooning.

Partnership Opportunities



There are a number of levels of involvement you may wish to consider in establishing a partnership with the MBPH Foundation.

Together, we can develop a tailored partnership or sponsorship to meet your expectations with opportunities including individual events, annual community or corporate partnerships and naming and recognition rights.

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MBPH OPENS EIGHTH CANCER CLINICAL TRIAL

Mildura Base Public Hospital's (MBPH) Research and Clinical Trial Unit has achieved another milestone by providing locals with increased access to potentially life-saving cancer treatment.

By Rebecca McLean

THE oncology and trial team has opened an international lung cancer clinical trial that is looking at a potentially new treatment that may improve the care patients with advanced lung cancer currently receive. The first local patient to access this cutting-edge trial has been recruited and is currently under the close care of the trial team.

The trial has also opened at other Australian hospitals including Gold Coast University Hospital and Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital in Perth, as well as globally in hospitals across Europe, the UK, and the USA. Opening a major trial like this highlights the significant growth in the capability of the MBPH unit during the past three years. The clinical trial unit team recently welcomed Tanvi Naik as Clinical Trial

Unit Manager and Nabrees Sinnalebbe as Executive Director of Medical Services and Chief Medical Officer, which includes research and oversight, and leadership of the trial unit, making trials such as these possible in Mildura now. In February, the Research and Clinical Trials Unit marked another significant milestone by opening its first 'tele trial'. Through a partnership with Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Precision



MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL CLINICAL TRIALS UNIT.

ITS tele trial looks at how a person's genes affect their response to common medications used for cancer treatments. The first patients have also joined this trial, taking the number of patients now accessing trials at MBPH to almost 60.

A tele trial is when two hospitals open a clinical trial at the same time, typically a larger and smaller hospital, and where the clinical trial teams communicate through video technology. It's a way to get more clinical trials open in rural and regional hospitals and to improve access to potentially life-saving treatments.

Dr Sinnalebbe said the establishment of the clinical trials unit gives the community the opportunity to participate in trials that can provide potentially lifesaving and life-changing treatments and interventions.

"Clinical trials are critical to healthcare

because they help us to keep improving treatment and care," he said.

"The other benefit is that it is a way to upskill local healthcare professionals, such as research nurses and clinicians, to be able to conduct clinical trials.

"It also opens new jobs and attracts professionals to come and work in Mildura."

Eight trials and studies have opened at MBPH, with almost 60 locals having the opportunity to participate.

MBPH has been supported by three federal and state government clinical trial enabling programs since 2022.

TrialHub, based at The Alfred Hospital, Regional Trials Network-Victoria, and Cancer Trials Australia have been providing financial and intense operational, mentoring and workforce upskilling support to ensure the clinical

trials unit can continue providing the community with trials independently.

"These partnerships have been vital in equipping us to begin our journey into oncology clinical trials. As we are still a relatively new unit, this support is vital while we continue to expand and grow our workforce and capabilities," Dr Sinnalebbe added.

MPBH's first clinical trial opened in September 2024, and this mitigates the need for local participants to go to Melbourne.

With oncology trials now available, the unit is working towards offering much-needed trials in cardiology and mental health to meet the needs of the community.

This has all also been made possible by generous community co-donations through MBPH's Foundation.

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NAIDOC 2025 MARKS A MILESTONE

On Wednesday, July 9, the MBPH community celebrated NAIDOC Week with a colourful event held in the hospital's garden courtyard.

By John Dooley

THIS year NAIDOC Week marked a powerful milestone—50 years of honouring and elevating Indigenous voices, culture, and resilience.

The 2025 theme, 'The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy' celebrated not only the achievements of the past, but the bright future ahead, "empowered by the strength of our young leaders, the vision of our communities, and the legacy of our ancestors".

The NAIDOC journey began as a movement for recognition and rights, sparked by Indigenous communities who saw a future built on justice and equality. Over the decades it has grown into a powerful national celebration, a testament to the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Highlights of this wonderful annual occasion included performances from



ALL AGES PARTICIPATED IN THE NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS AT MBPH.

several local Indigenous dance groups. It is always a special date in the calendar and this year proved to be no exception, providing an opportunity to strengthen community connections and reinforce respect for culture and heritage.

Another highlight of the day was the barbecue lunch prepared and served by the

talented MBPH kitchen and café staff. They created a selection of mouth-watering options including sausages, burgers and kangaroo steaks all served with a delicious medley of vegetables and salads.

We hope you enjoy the colour and vibe of the event captured in the accompanying photo gallery.



MBPH ABORIGINAL HEALTH UNIT DIRECTOR SHARON JOHNSON.



THE DIGERIDOO TOOK CENTRE STAGE FOR A TRADITIONAL MUSICAL MOMENT.



MBPH ABORIGINAL HEALTH UNIT DIRECTOR SHARON JOHNSON ABOUT TO CUT THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLAND NAIDOC 2025 CELEBRATION CAKES.



SMOKING CEREMONY AT THE NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS IN THE MBPH COURTYARD.



NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS INCLUDED TRADITIONAL DANCING.



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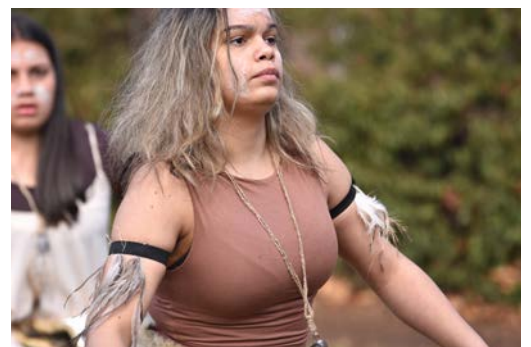
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SMOKING CEREMONY FLAMES ARE STOKED AT NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS IN THE MBPH COURTYARD.



INDIGENOUS DANCERS PERFORM AT THIS YEAR'S NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS.



NAIDOC CELEBRATIONS INCLUDED TRADITIONAL DANCING.





NEW PODCAST TAPS INTO THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

The Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Foundation has launched a weekly podcast series that aims to build on the success of its Heartbeat magazine.

By John Dooley

THE podcast title 'Heartbeat of the Mallee' was chosen to build on the success of the Heartbeat magazine.

It is envisaged the addition of the podcast will further enhance the solid community engagement the magazine is enjoying.

Fully sponsored by TASCO Inland Petroleum, and facilitated by Foundation Partner, Southern Cross Business Advisers, the Heartbeat of the Mallee podcast provides an opportunity for key organisations in Mildura and the wider region to showcase what they do and how they contribute to the community. In addition, Heartbeat of the Mallee features conversations with a variety of well-known and not so well-known

guests from a range of community sectors including the arts, agriculture, business, hospitality, education, industry, local government, politics, entertainment, sports and health.

The first episode, broadcast in early July, featured an interview with Mildura businessman, historian and MBPH Foundation chairman, Ross Lake OAM. Mr Lake was featured in conversation with podcast host and MBPH Executive Director of Engagement and Support Services, Heath Kendall.

It was a fascinating expose of Mr Lake's background — from growing up and going to school in Mildura, before attending Monash University where he studied economics and law with the intention of pursuing a career in the latter.

Along the way Mr Lake also qualified to become a teacher.

As listeners learned he eventually returned to Mildura to work in a local law firm before later joining the fuel supply business his father had founded. The series is produced by Ian MacWilliams, who also the producer of the Frames of History podcast. (www.framesofhistory.com).

Ian has a vast experience in the audio production field and with the benefit of his post-production skills, each episode results in 'highly polished' product.

As this ninth edition of Heartbeat went to press, there had been eight podcasts recorded.

Guests to date include Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) CEO, Martin Hawson; Senior Engagement Coordinator

Heartbeat of the Mallee **PODCAST**

EPISODE 1

**Locals. Legends.
Life in the Mallee**

**A conversation with
Ross Lake
OAM**



**MILDURA
BASE PUBLIC
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Heartbeat of the Mallee **PODCAST**

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**In conversation with
Leesa Merrett
Mildura Rural City Council
Manager of Economic
Development & Tourism**



at the Mildura Campus of La Trobe University and MRCC Councillor, Rebecca Crossling; SuniTAFE CEO, Brett Millington; 'Good Vibes' founders Eric Oguzkaya and Carlo Cirrillo; MRCC Tourism and Economic Development manager, Leesa Merrett; author and near-death survivor Michael Chambers; and 'Man of Steel' Joel Coates, whose fascinating and inspiring life story features in this Heartbeat edition.

To listen to any of the podcasts scan the QR code below or visit: www.mbphfoundation.org.au/heartbeat-of-the-mallee.



DETECTIVE DENIS RYAN
CIRCA LATE 1960S.



A MAN OF SUBSTANCE LAID TO REST

Denis Ryan's legacy of truth and justice will live on.

By Grant Maynard

DENIS RYAN will forever be remembered as the man who lifted the lid on Mildura's most shameful secret – the collusion of a senior policeman, a clerk of courts and the Catholic Church to shield a paedophile priest.

The former Victoria Police detective will also be remembered as a man of conscience, integrity and courage in the face of crushing police force and church pressure not to tell what he knew.

Denis was farewelled in a moving ceremony on Thursday, June 12, at Mildura's Sacred Heart Church where, in a heartrending twist of fate, many of the crimes he fought decades to expose were based.

The irony of the venue considering its past was not lost on many who attended, while those paying their respects included Victoria Police top brass headed by Acting Chief Commissioner Robert Hill.

And fittingly, it was serving Police members who formed a guard of honour outside the church as Denis' coffin made its way to his final resting place.

But who was Denis Ryan, and why does he deserve to be remembered?

Two men who knew him well delivered the eulogy at the funeral service – the first was Peter Hoysted, a writer who helped Denis craft his damning book 'Unholy Trinity' and the second was Vernon Knight, who had met a then thoroughly disheartened Denis as he fought for justice and truth.

Peter told those assembled that he had first met Denis in 2011.

"I had been given an outline of his story from one of the great coppers in this state, the one and only Bryan Harding, who had risen to the ranks of Chief Superintendent in VicPol," Peter said.

"Bryan should have become a Chief Commissioner, and indeed he was groomed for the position, until rough internal politics got in the way.

"Later Bryan would become Secretary of the Victoria Police Association and agitated for the health and safety for the state's police officers, the first of his kind to acknowledge the great risks to mind and body of police work.

"I had wrangled a book deal with the publisher, Allen and Unwin. Contracts had been signed and advance payments made."

An author, Peter said, at this stage may have been inclined to enjoy a little leisure time with no immediate deadline looming.

"But Denis was having none of that. He and his second wife, Norma, jumped in their car, pulling a caravan across the Hay Plain and drove to my country town, taking up residence at the local caravan park.

"For the next 12 weeks we worked on the first draft, six-days-a-week, eight-hours-a-day. The book would become known as 'Unholy Trinity', so named because Day (the paedophile priest Monsignor John Day) was supported in his appalling behaviour by Denis' direct boss, Detective Sergeant Jim Barritt and the senior officer of the court in Mildura at the time - Clerk of the Courts, Joe Kearney.

"The three men ran this city like they owned it!"

Peter also gave some insight into Denis' formative years, before he entered the Police Force and began his long battle seeking justice for victims of sexual assault at the hands of Catholic Church priests.

Denis' life, Peter said, was a link to Australia's rich social history.

"He was born in Sydney and grew up in Sans Souci, then a solid working-class suburb," Peter revealed.

Denis' father was badly wounded on the Western Front and had returned home with a shrapnel injury to his leg that would not heal.

"Denis spoke of the screams emanating from his father's bedroom at every attempt to lance the wound," Peter said.

With Denis' father unable to work, the family was plunged into poverty and received basic help from the local nuns.

"His mother was a Seventh Day Adventist but the nuns' charity so impressed Denis that he became a Catholic," Peter said.

"His Roman Catholic faith was challenged but it never left him. While he refused to cross the threshold of this place (Sacred Heart Church) for many years, he stayed friendly with a number of priests, including his old friend Fr Pat Mugavin. (Fr Mugavin travelled from Warrnambool to lead the service).

"Denis was a talented cricketer, an all-rounder of the strangest type. We used to joke about the utility of being a leg-spinning wicket-keeper.

"As a teenager, he showcased his array of wrong-'uns, leg breaks and top spinners with St George while two Invincibles - Arthur Morris and Ray Lindwall - plied their trade with bat and ball in the adjoining net.

"Denis had a wiry, nimble frame. He was not a tall man. He knew he barely made the height requirements to become a Victoria Police officer, but he fretted he might not make the weight. So, on the steps of the police academy with his assessment an hour away, Denis ate a pound of bananas.

"The scales tilted in his favour, and he joined the force as a cadet."

Later, as a detective with VicPol Denis attempted to prosecute Monsignor John Day for crimes against children, Peter told the assembled, a story that is now well known by many.

"By the end of 1971, Denis had taken statements from 12 of Day's victims and a statement from a motel owner who provided corroboration to one of the victim's claims.

"It was more than sufficient for charges to be laid and for a prosecution to begin.

"Instead, elements within VicPol, all the way to the Chief Commissioner, Reg Jackson's office, buried the evidence.

"Denis was offered a promotion to run dead on the investigation. He refused it. Within a month, he was ostracised within the force, placed on general duties, and ordered not to leave Mildura.

"Courage comes in many forms. It is felt by many Australians under great pressure every day. Often, it is the courage to persist, to simply put one foot after the other. That Denis did so for almost 50 years with the demons of anxiety and panic hovering daily is almost superhuman."

Vindication, Peter said, came through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

"I was there in the gallery at Melbourne's County Court in December 2015, when Denis gave evidence, his son, Tony sitting next to me," he told his audience.

"He was then asked to read a section of a statement made 10 years earlier by a retired Assistant Commissioner of Victoria Police, Jack O'Connor. O'Connor's statement was a fabrication from start to finish, a laughable litany of lies from a man prepared to perjure himself to the grave.

"Counsel for VicPol declined to cross-examine. Denis rose from the witness box to a ripple of applause that grew louder as he made his way back to the public gallery. "Finally, after 47 years he had been believed.

"A year later when receiving a formal apology from VicPol, Denis spoke before senior police and gave them a withering spray. Many of you won't know this story, the once wannabe cop who'd eaten a pound of bananas to get into the force, staring down the most senior policemen and women of the state.

"He told them: 'My own circumstances have been distinctly grim since I left the force but as dark as some of those days have been, they have no parallel with those forced to endure the pain and suffering of sexual abuse. What makes it worse and haunts my dreams to this day, is that if we as a police force did what we were supposed to do, what we were charged to do, what we took an oath to do, so much of that pain and suffering would not exist today.'"

"It is impossible to disagree. Monsignor John Day's many crimes against children went unpunished. And the infamous Gerald Ridsdale had been lurking in Mildura in the late 1960s, abusing children with no sense or expectation of consequence.

"The length and breadth of the Ballarat



DENIS AND HIS WIFE BEV.

Diocese, was infested with clerical abusers.

"The lesson of Denis's forced removal from the job he loved meant that these crimes would continue. Hundreds of victims would have been spared a life of trauma had Denis been supported by his superiors.

"Also giving evidence at the Royal Commission that day was a former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Mick Miller. Mick had read Unholy Trinity and was aghast at the treatment Denis had received. Under oath, Miller told the Royal Commission: 'This entire episode was a shameful event in the history of the Victoria Police Force. It might well be remembered as a definite disincentive to others, confronted by a similar set of circumstances, to emulate former Senior Detective Denis Ryan's peerless, principled performance of his sworn duty.'

"In their subsequent report, the six Royal Commissioners wrote two simple words alongside Miller's statement: 'We agree'.

Demons exorcised, Denis lived a simple life in Mildura with his third wife, Bev.

"I became something of a gatekeeper for him. Many wanted to meet him, be photographed with him and post the images on social media. Denis wasn't

interested in becoming a tourist attraction and I would politely but firmly decline requests on his behalf.

"Denis had done more than enough.

"We spoke by phone often, our conversations dwelling on politics and sport.

"The tumultuous events of his life had fallen into the background. It had all been said and done.

"It was a privilege to know him and call him a mate. Denis Ryan was quite simply the best man I have ever met.

"Truth, as Winston Churchill said, is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it. Ignorance may deride it. Malice may distort it. But in the end, there it is.

"We have lost a great man, a man of unwavering resolve but in his passing, he has shown us the way forward - a metric for our own lives - and that we commit ourselves to the relentless pursuit of truth and justice."

Peter was followed by Vernon Knight who revealed his "close friendship" with Denis dated back 10 years.

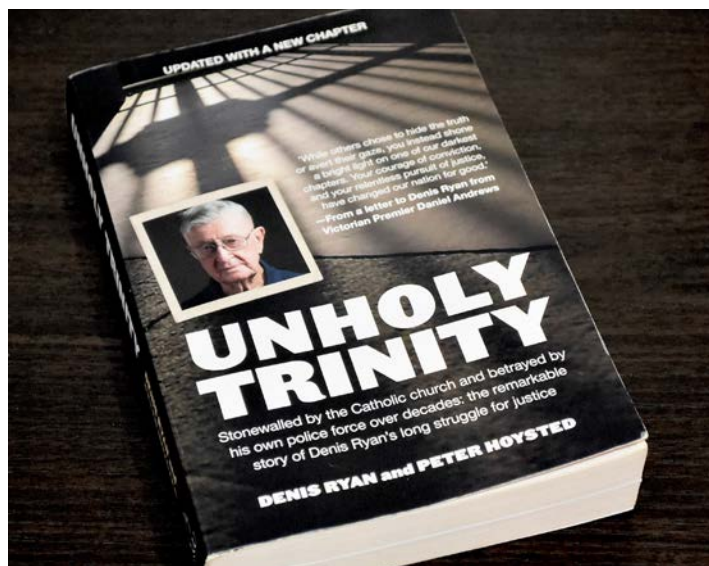
"This was a time when our friend was becoming increasingly disheartened," Vernon said.



THE YOUNG VICTORIAN POLICE OFFICER DENIS RYAN.



MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE FROM VICTORIAN PREMIER JACINTA ALLAN.



DENIS RYAN'S BOOK UNHOLY TRINITY SECOND EDITION.

"Norma had died, and the future looked bleak. He had surely suffered enough in the decades prior.

"Kicked out of the Police Force for doing his job, Denis had lost his retirement benefits and seemed destined to live out his last years as a single pensioner in rental accommodation.

"While my work in child and family welfare alerted me to Denis' brave stance on behalf of the abused, the world had seemingly overlooked another important victim.

"Thankfully, the work of Peter Hoysted was beginning to set the record straight and after Denis had given his evidence to the Royal Commission, he had the joy of hearing those simple words ... "We agree". What followed were the words of apology that had been silent for decades.

"Denis especially valued the formal apology he received from Victoria Police in 2016," Vernon said.

"In my subsequent conversations with Denis he confirmed that it was only recognition and validation that he sought, and the words of the Commission were to herald the possibility of better years ahead."

Vernon then revealed he had worked with

Denis to address his financial suffering and try to ensure he got to enjoy a more comfortable future.

"Looking back, it is hard to imagine now how much better that future could have been," he said.

"When called upon to act, Mildura really did step up and a concerted campaign set out to obtain his compensation. It is a campaign that is again captured by Peter in the revised edition of 'Unholy Trinity'.

"It was a campaign that attracted wide attention, and I well remember the interest of the BBC, the Washington Post and Canada's public broadcaster.

"The enormous public outcry prompted the intervention of the Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, and we were asked to quantify an acceptable compensation package."

While a report commissioned by the Victorian Police Association calculated his loss to be in excess of \$3million, Denis made it clear that he wanted nothing more than the ability to buy a unit where he could live comfortably for the years he had left.

"He had no desire to make an ambit claim and his instructions to me were as clear as crystal," Vernon said.

"As luck would have it, a two-bedroom unit became available at Princes Court Village and Denis was ecstatic when he viewed it. The unit was previously owned by another of our community's heroes - Dudley Marrows."

So, the quantum of Denis' needs was totalled and submitted to the Premier's Office by email on Saturday, May 5, 2018.

"I will never forget the phone call I received from an almost speechless Denis Ryan on the following Monday when he discovered that his bank account had just become very healthy.

"It really was the start of a new life. Not only was he looking at a life without worry, he was also now keeping company with Bev Pillar after their chance meeting at the library. Wedding bells were not far away."

"I was asked to be Denis' best man," an honour Vernon will never forget.

"His compensation not only bought his Princes Court Village unit; it gave him scope for such luxuries as a holiday cruise ship with Bev to New Zealand.

"While little could redress the pain and suffering, he had endured as an 'outcast', Denis was ever mindful that the other victims had fared much worse.

"He always felt that his suffering had been a small price to pay for those whose lives had been destroyed."

But more good things were to come, Vernon revealed, and Denis could never have imagined the accolades that were to follow. In January 2018, Denis was recognised as Mildura's Citizen of the Year and in bestowing the honour, Mildura's Mayor said: "Mr Ryan's advocacy and quest for justice helped change the culture of our community. He taught our community to find its voice and not cower to power and authority in the face of criminal behaviour and injustice".

In April 2018, Denis was invested as a Member of the Order of Australia at Government House in Melbourne.

On hearing of Denis' award, Premier Andrews wrote: "I cannot think of a more deserving recipient. While others chose to hide the truth or avert their gaze, you instead shone a bright light on one of our darkest chapters. Your courage of conviction, and your relentless pursuit of justice have changed our nation for good. On behalf of the Victorian Government and the Victorian people, thank you".

In July 2018, Denis was conferred as Mildura's Freeman of the City. When presenting the award, Mildura Mayor Mark Eckel said: "We have a lot to be proud of in our region, not least of which are the achievements of our residents, and Mr Ryan's courageous and selfless actions over many years are a prime example."

"I'm glad we're able to add to the already numerous and prestigious awards, titles and recognition Mr Ryan has received by bestowing on him our highest honour, and we're certainly proud as a community of his efforts."

Vernon continued: "If Denis was speaking now, he would want to thank Daniel Andrews for his support and he would want to thank Father Paddy Mugavin and Father Mick McKinnon and all those who stood up for him in his friendless hours.

"He would want to thank his wife Bev for her love and care during the last chapter of his life and his sons Michael, Martin, Gavin and Anthony for the challenges they would manage in living out their dad's exhausting struggle.

"Like us, they should be immensely proud.

"He would also want to pay tribute to those he represented for their belief and trust in him over decades."

Vernon said there were other thank yous

The Reader's Digest version of Denis' personal and professional struggles, as well as the 'Unholy Trinity' story, is best described on the book's dust jacket. It reads:

"One policeman's desperate and moving account of his struggle to bring a depraved paedophile priest to justice - only to find himself obstructed by the Catholic Church and betrayed by his own police force. Now, decades later, justice has finally been done and Denis Ryan has been vindicated.

Monsignor John Day died in 1978. He was arguably Australia's worst paedophile priest; his victims counted in the hundreds. Yet when Day died, he was feted by Bishop Ronald Mulkearns as having 'faithfully fulfilled his ministry in God's name'.

The Church had known about Day's activities for years. Unbelievably, his terrible crimes had been committed

with the knowledge and protection of senior members of the Victoria Police as well as the senior officer of the court in Mildura. Together these men cast a shadow over the city that remains today.

Denis Ryan, a young police detective from Melbourne, had transferred to Mildura in the early 1960s. He quickly gained the trust of the people there. One by one the victims started coming forward children who had been molested by Monsignor Day - and their shocked and sometimes disbelieving parents.

Armed with a dozen or more signed statements, Ryan had sufficient evidence to lay charges. Then began his nightmare, as his every step towards bringing Day to justice was blocked.

Over decades Ryan never stopped fighting to have his story, and those of Day's countless victims, heard."



VICPOL'S SENIOR HIERARCHY TRAVELLED FROM MELBOURNE FOR THE FUNERAL

too, including Rebecca Falkingham, Daniel Andrews' Chief of Staff; Denis' mate Bill Lane; Cr Alison Cupper and Jack Forbes.

"Rebecca had the carriage of Denis' compensation, a responsibility she managed with great care and compassion," he revealed.

"Bill has been Denis' weekly visitor for many years and a visitor that meant so much to Denis.

"Alison was Denis' keen supporter when she served as the Member for Mildura and Jack was the one who worked to manage Denis' finances in the critical period of compensation and purchase of his unit.

"I will personally treasure the time I spent with Denis over the years as he shared his current reading, his poetry, and the verses he was pleased to recite from memory. They were invariably wise words.

"While we focus on his courage and determination, we should not ignore a man of significant intellect. He was an avid reader and a keen conversationalist.

"Denis never hesitated to share his love of the Labour Party and his profound faith in God.

"He would want to thank the nuns who supported his family when he was a child. The injuries to his father on the western front had seriously compromised the family's financial well-being.

"It's the reason he was raised Catholic and the reason that we gather today at Sacred Heart church.

"Denis would invariably shout 'Hoo Roo' whenever he left our home.

"Go well my friend. You certainly deserve the best that God has to offer."

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