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SEE STORY ON PAGE 13

Intro to KINDY

While students across NSW count down to the Christmas holidays, more than 60,000 four- and five-year-olds are gearing up to start Kindergarten at the state's public schools.

At Windsor South Public School, children are enjoying weekly Southie Sprouts transition to school sessions, which allow them to become familiar with the school environment, meet their Kindergarten teachers and make new friends.

Principal Belinda Bristol said the transition to school is an exciting time for children, families and teachers and involves navigating and adjusting to several changes.

"Through this program the kids come in ready for learning," Mrs Bristol said.

"Four or five years ago when we didn't run this program the children were coming in and we were spending all of term one just teaching them how to sit, how to hold a pencil, how to write, how to look, how to listen. Because of Sprouts they now come in ready for learning, so from day one they're learning. By this time of year, the end of Kindergarten, they're reading, writing, ready for year one. We're not spending kindergarten as a preschool year."

Mrs Bristol said of the record 60 children enrolled for Kindergarten next year, about 45 are participating in the three-hour Southie Sprouts sessions on Wednesdays this term.

The assistant principal, early intervention teacher and four learning support officers run the sessions, which involve the children enjoying activities and games that challenge and develop their fine and gross motor skills, which are essential for school readiness.

The children have morning tea and lunch and across term four have met their Kindergarten teachers, spent time in the Kindergarten classrooms and main playground and visited the library and the canteen.

"They are so excited to come, they wake up every day and say 'Is it Sprouts day?'" she said.

"We have little Southie Sprouts t-shirts, but they love coming in their uniforms getting ready for school. There are no tears, they're making friends, they're making their social connections and developing a sense of belonging."

Mrs Bristol said as well as the children becoming more confident and comfortable at the school, the sessions are a way for teachers to understand children's interests, strengths and needs.

"We've seen such a difference in the children and can identify early any children with

any specific learning support needs, allowing us to provide targeted interventions and resources to support their development effectively."

The number of children participating in Southie Sprouts this term is up from 35 last term and follows a weekly playgroup in term two.

The playgroup involved parents accompanying their children to the school but attending parent information sessions in the school hall, which covered subjects including behaviour management and how the school teaches children to read and early phonics skills.

School readiness: what should my child be able to do? Source: NSW Department of Education

- Recognise their belongings
- Open and close lunchboxes including packets
- Know how to ask for help when needed
- Be able to separate from parent or carer
- Interact socially with other children
- Put on their uniform
- Know hygiene routines



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

'We acknowledge the traditional Owners and Custodians of the land of the Dharug and Darkinjung People on which we work and pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past, present and emerging'. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the land's first storytellers.

Hills to Hawkesbury

Community News | Local Stories, Local Events, Local People and Local Businesses

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The Hills to Hawkesbury Community News has been serving this area for nearly 40 years. Its name may have changed over the decades but the commitment to providing a free service to the community is still at the heart of what this hyper local fortnightly publication does. Established in 1982 it has evolved into a community news magazine with a big digital footprint. Our aim is to inform, inspire and connect our community. It is a family-owned small business. Our team is local and love what they do.

Please follow us on Facebook @hillstohawkesbury. Printed copies are available at local shopping centres and other outlets. For a full list of drop off points for the Hills to Hawkesbury Community News, visit our website www.hillstohawkesbury.com.au or click on the QR code.



Heat Waves and Health

BY DR KIM LOO

Heat waves in Australia are becoming more deadly. It is more than just a couple of hot days. We are having prolonged heat waves.

I have worked as a doctor for 35 years and seen my patients' lives impacted. Worsening chronic disease and mental health during hot days. Especially those living with less advantage.

The Problem

More people die from heatwaves than all other natural disasters combined. The at-risk groups for death are the over 65s and men between the ages of 24 to 44. (the Australian Institute of health and welfare study 2024).

The three ways to die from heat - cardiovascular collapse, heat stroke or kidney failure. The mental health implication is also significant. A recent study from NSW University showed there is an increase suicidality in children and young adults (12 to 24) and an increase in domestic violence and hate speech during heat waves.

The NSW EPA (Environment Protection Authority) and the Australian College of Emergency Medicine recently published a study showing there is a 30 % rise in the number of hospital presentations during heatwaves.

The Solutions

Most of us feel more uncomfortable and a bit crankier on hot days. It can be exhausting especially if it is humid. So, what can we do?

- Look at our own personal risk. It might require a chat with your GP if you are: taking multiple medications and have a chronic disease, over 65, pregnant, babies and young children, have a mental problem, and immobility
- If you work outdoors. Find out if your workplace has a heat plan for hot days. There are many tradies who are at risk on hot days
- Look ahead if there are hot days coming. Plan so that you have drinks and ice packs. Have an esky ready in case there is a power outage. Have cool foods so you are not heating the house with cooking. Make sure all electronic devices are charged
- Choose a room that is easy to keep cool in your house. A room that you can protect from radiant heat, seal in the coolness, have a fan or air-conditioning
- On a hot day. Try to stay indoors. If you do go out make sure to take adequate water, sunblock and hat.
- For mothers with a baby in a stroller - buy an internal fan for the stroller or pram. Use a moist muslin cloth over the stroller. This reduces the internal temperature .

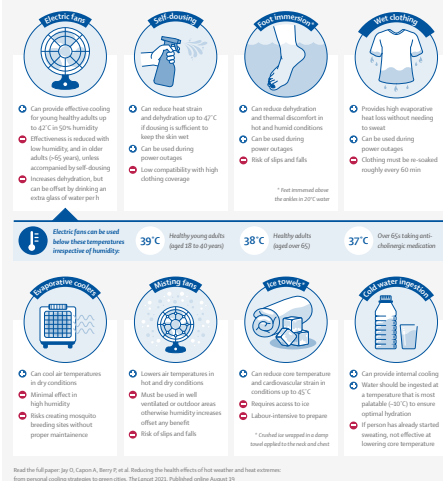
What is needed?

- Improve building codes to avoid building urban heat islands
- Improve green spaces with tree canopy and water – to reduce heat.



Sustainable and accessible ways to keep cool

Mitigating climate change is vital, but inevitable rising temperatures means that identifying sustainable cooling strategies is also important. Strategies at the individual scale that focus on cooling the person instead of the surrounding air can be effectively adopted, even in low-resource settings.



New Plan

The Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan has just been launched. It is a joint initiative of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and Resilient Sydney.

Chair, Kerry Robinson said: "Heat has killed more Australians than fire, flood and storms combined, and has far-reaching impacts on community wellbeing, the economy, infrastructure, and the environment.

"It has been estimated that the cost of heatwaves in Western Sydney alone is \$1.4 billion per year and growing. These costs impact businesses, households and government services. We can't afford not to act," he said.

<https://heatwatch.sydney.edu.au/about>

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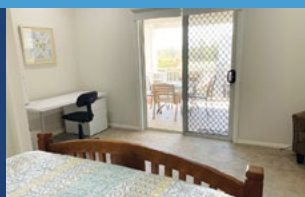
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DRINK DRIVING ARRESTS

On Thursday, 5 December, at around 10:20 PM, The Hills Highway Patrol stopped a 30-year-old driver on Samantha Riley Drive, North Kellyville. He was subjected to a roadside breath test, which returned a positive result.

The driver was arrested and taken to Castle Hill Police Station, where he returned a blood alcohol reading of 0.130, where his license was immediately suspended. Police say the incident serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of drink driving.

At around 3:00 AM on Friday, 6th December, officers from The Hills Police Area Command arrested a 22-year-old individual for drink driving.

The driver was stopped during a routine patrol on Seven Hills Road, Baulkham Hills, and was found to be over the legal alcohol limit.

The driver underwent a roadside breath test, which returned a positive result. They were then taken to Castle Hill Police Station for a breath analysis, which showed a reading of 0.089 grams of alcohol per 210 litres of breath.

His licence was immediately suspended, and he'll appear in Parramatta Local Court next month charged with Mid-Range Drink Driving.

On Friday, 6 December around 10:43 PM, a 35-year-old driver was stopped on James Mileham Dr, Kellyville, for a traffic offence. The driver, in a black Ford Ranger, returned a positive roadside breath test.

The driver was arrested and taken to The Hills Police Station for further testing, which confirmed a reading of 0.139. As a result, the driver's licence was suspended, and they will face court in January 2025 charged with Mid-Range Drink Driving.

VEHICLE BREAK & ENTERS

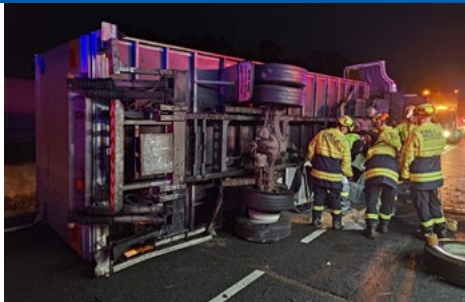
Attention to Beaumont Hills, Bella Vista, and Kellyville residents!

A grey 2004 Lexus IS200 was stolen from Hester Way, Beaumont Hills, between 01:25 and 01:30 AM on 9 December 2024. Police say the vehicle was entered by unknown means, and a spare key was inside.

On the other hand, a white 2020 BMW 218i Sedan was stolen from Bond Place, Kellyville, between 11 PM on 8 December and 2 AM on 9 December 2024 after a break & enter. The vehicle was entered using the keys, and the keys and garage remote were taken from inside the garage.

According to Police, the vehicle was later recovered in Kimberly Court, Bella Vista, where it appears the offenders attempted another break and enter but were scared off.

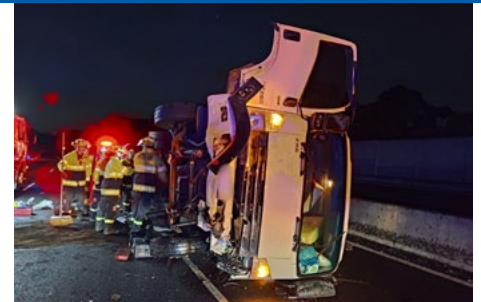
Police remind residents to "lock it or lose it" and follow the 9 PM routine, securing their vehicles and belongings. Police urge residents in adjoining streets to check their CCTVs for any suspicious activity around the mentioned time. Contact CrimeStoppers NSW.



LUCKY ESCAPE

Hills Police attended a crash on the M2 on the early morning of 7 December, involving a truck that tipped over. The top part of the Jersey barrier was chipped off due to the impact.

Luckily, no one was injured, as told by the Police. The incident occurred at around 5 AM when the road had little traffic.



LAST MONTH'S CRASH

A man has died following a car crash that occurred in WPH last month.

At approximately 5:45 AM on Thursday, 14th November 2024, officers from The Hills Police Area Command responded to a single-vehicle accident on Highs Road, West Pennant Hills.

A vehicle traveling northbound lost control around a bend, mounted the gutter, and collided with a tree, causing significant front-end damage.

The driver, a 61-year-old man, was injured. Emergency services, including Police, firefighters, and paramedics, arrived promptly. Firefighters assisted in opening the vehicle to allow paramedics to treat the driver, who was then transported to Westmead Hospital.

Police are saddened to report that the driver passed away on 5th December 2024.

FAILED DUI

In August, Hills Police responded to a noise complaint on Martindale Ave, Baulkham Hills, and encountered a grey Jeep driving erratically without headlights. The driver, a 19-year-old male, was found to be disqualified from driving and exhibited signs of drug influence. Despite a negative roadside breath test, further blood analysis revealed the presence of multiple substances. The individual has now been charged, and the matter is before the court in February 2025.

TEENAGER ARRESTED

On Sunday, 6 December 2024, Hawkesbury Police received three separate reports of Break & Enters to properties in Wilberforce, Cornwallis and East Kurrajong. Proceeds of these offences included trail bikes and trailers. The offences occurred in the early hours of the morning by multiple offenders. An investigation was commenced by Detectives, who took no time at all in cracking the case wide open.

On Tuesday morning, 10 December, a 17-year-old male was arrested for all three offences and charged with Aggravated Break Enter and Steal. He was also charged with other unrelated matters. He has been bail refused until the new year.

KNIFE CRIME ACT

The NSW Government is implementing new strategies to address knife crime and improve community safety. The Knife Crime Act 2024 took effect on 9 December 2024, bringing significant changes to how knife-related incidents are managed.

Key Points:

- **Increased Penalties:** Selling knives to minors under 16 is now subject to stricter penalties. It is also an offence to sell knives to 16 or 17-year-olds without a reasonable excuse.
- **Police Powers:** Police can now use hand-held scanners to detect knives in designated areas without a warrant. These areas include public transport stations, shopping precincts, and sporting venues.
- **Designated Areas:** Senior police officers can declare certain places as designated areas if knife-related offences have occurred there in the past 12 months.

Safeguards:

- Police will use body-worn video when exercising these powers.
- Powers will be exercised in the least invasive way practicable.
- Detention will only be as long as reasonably necessary.

Penalties for Non-Compliance:

- Failing to comply with police requirements can result in fines up to \$5,500.
- Carrying a knife without a reasonable excuse can lead to fines up to \$11,000 or imprisonment for up to 4 years.

PULLED FROM WATER

A man died after being pulled from the water in the Hawkesbury. At about 12:22 PM, Monday, the 2nd of December, emergency services were called to Upper Colo Road, Upper Colo, following reports a male kayaker had been pulled from the water.

NSW Ambulance paramedics attended. However, the 38-year-old man died at the scene.

Officers attached to Hawkesbury Police Area Command established a crime scene and commenced investigations into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

DV Victims Remembered

BY BEV JORDAN

Every one of the 81 roses handed out at the recent Hills Says No to Domestic Violence breakfast represented a victim and carried their name and age and State or Territory.

The annual event organised by the Hills Domestic Violence Prevention Network is a moving event that shows that violence is not restricted to postcode or age.

There were babies and children and there were mums and grandmothers amongst the victims.

Hills Police Commander Supt Naomi Moore told the gathering that violence, fear and control in a relationship is not ok.

Between January this year and the middle of November in the Hills there had been 1,892 DV-related events reported in the Hills PAC.

"Of these, 1,077 also included a Child at Risk incident, accounting for 56.9% of DV events reported," she said.

According to local police figures there were 1,667 individual victims across DV incidents in the Hills PAC in the first 10 months of 2024. In that time, Hills PAC submitted over 500 ADVO applications.

"We have created: 111 charges for Breach ADVO, 220 charges for Domestic Violence (DV) Assault, 62 charges for DV-related Malicious Damage incidents and 114 charges for DV 'Offence against Person Other' incidents - this encompasses stalking, intimidation," said Supt Moore.

She said DV was a priority in the Hills PAC where 4 officers focussed on the area of DV. She said while most DV victims were women not all of them were.

She said on average DV incidents occurred 26 times before police were called.

"Reporting DV is so important, we will do everything we can to protect victims."

Patron of the Hills Domestic Violence Prevention Committee, Hills Mayor Michelle Byrne, said the Hills Council had an important role to play in the area with education and working with stakeholders in the area.

Key note speakers were Rob and Deb Senasi whose powerful testimony spoke about how Rob realised he was a perpetrator after seeing a counsellor and was the one who informed his wife that she was a victim.

Deb said the power imbalance was gradual but the co-ercive control meant she had no access to money and was a second class citizen in her own home.

"It was all about me serving Rob, there was a climate of criticism, I knew it wasn't right."

She said it all came to head when she was offered a job and Rob had a breakdown, throwing things and shouting and went to visit a counsellor who called his behaviour out.

DV Deb and Rob Senasi with members of the HDVPC committee



Rob worked on his issues and is now working with victims and young men as a counsellor and ADHD coach and he and Deb are back together.

Students from Oakhill College spoke about their own experience of supporting The Sanctuary _ The Hills Women's Shelter and what they understood about respect through the Walk the Talk program.

Aileen Mountfield from the Lisa Harnum Foundation who has organised the event for the past 5 years said: "it's very sad the number of people who have lost their life as a result of domestic violence already this year. This is the most roses we have had."

If it's an emergency called 000 (Triple O) or help is available at 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732).



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Dural Cub-Scout ACTIVITIES



Dural cubs have been able to enjoy many exciting activities recently. They took part in several short and long-distance hikes, learning compass, mapping and orienteering skills, challenging themselves over steep ascents and descents in National Parks, enjoying nature and finishing with a great sense of accomplishment. The Parramatta Ramble was a Region event, with 152 Cub Scouts and 48 Leaders and parents taking part. Cubs enjoyed a fun day out walking around Parramatta, using a map, following instructions, looking for clues, answering questions, and finding out about the local history. Cub Scouts who completed the event earned a merit award.

Indoor Rock climbing was a great way for Cubs and Scouts alike to have fun while building confidence and gaining skills in problem-solving. Everyone experienced various climbing routes and fitness levels and the friendly staff at The Edge Rock Climbing Centre were on standby to help them learn new skills.

Over several nights, cubs learned bushcraft living skills such as outdoor cooking, building their own shelter and putting together a survival kit, a first aid kit, tying bandages and more. They visited Mid Dural RFS station and learned about many of the fire-safety aspects during a bush fire and other fire emergencies. Cubs got to see equipment on a fire engine, have a practice with the hoses, discussed evacuation during a fire, the importance of dialling 000 and much more. The visit also taught them how important it is to be part of a community and appreciate the firefighters who help keep everyone safe.

Why not come and join the Dural Scout Group. There are vacancies for girls and boys from 5 to 25 years. Joeys (5yo), Cubs (8yo), Scouts (12yo) and Venturers (16yo). Contact Phirooza: 0411 731 976 or phirooza@bigpond.net.au or Simon: thewolf_1stdural@bigpond.com

Notice of Proposed Termination of Community Title Scheme

The owners of Neighbourhood Association DP285689 unanimously resolved on 1st April 2022 to terminate the current Neighbourhood Plan DP285689 and extinguish the current Neighbourhood Scheme.

The properties within the Neighbourhood Scheme are located at 284A-284F Commercial Road, Vineyard NSW 2765.

Any person having any claim against the Neighbourhood Association or any estate or interest in or claim against any of the lots comprised in the Neighbourhood Scheme are required, on or before 30th December 2024, to send particulars of the estate, interest or claim to: The Neighbourhood Association DP285689, PO Box 7385, Baulkham Hills BC NSW 2153.

It is intended that an application is made to the NSW Land Registry Services to give effect to the termination of the current Neighbourhood Plan.

This notice is given by Allam Property Group in accordance with Section 69(1) of the Community Land Development Act 2021 and may be contacted on 02 4732 2422.

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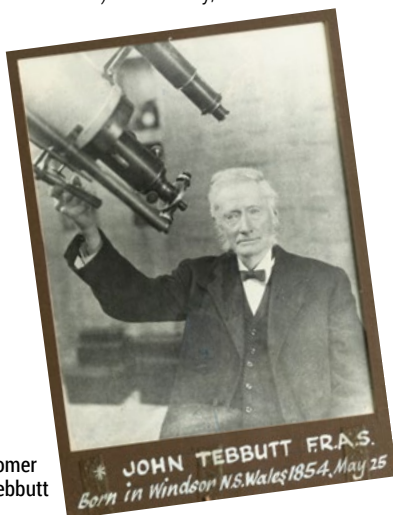
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EXHIBITION ON FAMED EARLY ASTRONOMER **JOHN TEBBUTT** A SCHOOL HOLIDAY MUST-SEE

An exhibition for those with a curiosity for astronomy and history must close at the end of January at Hawkesbury Regional Museum in Windsor.

Starry Night: The World of John Tebbutt traces the life and achievements of the renowned 19th century Australian astronomer, John Tebbutt, who was not only featured on our first \$100 note, but has a moon crater named after him.

After discovering the Great Comet of 1861 (Tebbutt's Comet) on 13 May,



Astronomer
John Tebbutt

when he was just 26, John Tebbutt quickly achieved international recognition and was soon widely considered the foremost astronomer in Australia.

Tebbutt's Comet (C/1861 J1) was classified as a long-period comet because it took 409 years to orbit the sun. Tebbutt's Comet reached perihelion (its closest point to the sun) on June 12 but would not be visible in the Northern Hemisphere until June 30 as it made its closest approach to the earth. At that time, the tail of the comet had become so long and so bright that it cast shadows in the darkness. The comet was visible for three months.

Tebbutt carried out an impressive range of astronomical observations and authored almost 400 publications, all from his observatories in Windsor. He received a Paris Exposition Silver Medal in 1867 in recognition of his paper On the Progress and Present State of Astronomical Science in New South Wales.

Starry Night: The World of John Tebbutt displays many of the scientist's surviving



Framed portrait of John Tebbutt. 1900s. Courtesy Tebbutt Family



John Tebbutt's observatories in Windsor NSW

instruments, which have been generously loaned from the Tebbutt family's private collection. The physical display builds on the extensive online exhibition, which will remain live after the exhibition ends.

If you're visiting the museum, it's worth taking the short (1.1km) drive or walk to see Tebbutt's impressive 1879 and 1894 observatory buildings and heritage-listed residence. Though they are the private property of the Tebbutt family and not open to the public, the picturesque set of buildings can be viewed from Palmer Street, in Windsor.

The Hawkesbury Library is also holding a drop-in exhibition of Southern Sky Astro photography comprising the top entries in the 2023 **David Malin Awards** until February 2025.

To delve into the world of John Tebbutt, visit the Hawkesbury Regional Museum by 26 January 2025 or check out our online exhibition at www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/museum/exhibitions/online-exhibitions2/starry-night-the-world-of-john-tebbutt



Artist's Impression

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Anglicare Op Shop Windsor can be found at Shop 1/235 George Street, Windsor.

(Cake Cutting (Left to Right) – Jeff Drayton, Head of Retail (Anglicare Sydney); Robyn Preston MP, State Member for Hawkesbury; Simon Miller, Chief Executive Officer (Anglicare Sydney); Cllr Les Sheather, Mayor of Hawkesbury; Andrew Ford, Chief Executive Community and Mission (Anglicare Sydney).

GALSTON CWA HAS BEEN PLEASED TO SUPPORT AND SERVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY DURING 2024.

Our fundraising initiatives have been very successful, allowing us to donate to our local charities and to those in need in the greater community.

Although not a big branch, our members have big hearts and great energy, besides sharing the joy of helping others.

Our stalls and specially our Christmas stalls have been well supported and one of the important factors is the assistance of the Galston community. So a big, big thank you to all the members of our shopping centre and local suppliers.

We wish you all the best for Christmas and 2025!
We always appreciate any donations of fruit and vegetables for our jams and relishes.

For more information, contact Anne Chartorisky on 0404 228 209 or Patricia Holdsworth on 0412 948 787.



DOWNTOWN MARKETS Wollundry Park Pennant Hills

Set in the beautiful surroundings of Wollundry Park, Pennant Hills, DownTown Markets has established themselves as the newest pop up shopping and gathering experience in Sydney.

Launching in March this year as an artisan focused markets offering locals on the east side of the Hills District & south side of the Bushland Shire their first regular event. Trading on the third Sunday monthly, DownTown Markets has grown each and every month to become the new local meeting spot. Fastly gaining a 'must attend' reputation, enticing stall holders from all over Sydney to set up shop, just DownTown. Also an opportunity for experienced and emerging local artists, creatives, innovators and merchants of culture to sell their goods. Market lovers and market newbies will find it to be a welcoming space for all, as it is fully accessible with meandering paths through the whole park and a fabulous new play area for the kids. Plus food and beverage suppliers delivering delicious meals, baked goods, condiments and refreshing sweets and treats. Plenty of shaded dining and picnic areas to enjoy live music performed on the Pennant Hills Toyota Stage.

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TWO HUGE XMAS MARKETS - Dec - 15th - 22nd - 9am-3pm...first Xmas market was a massive success so don't miss this Sunday or next for your last minute Xmas shopping or Santa photos in the park.

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Help change the future for sick kids

with the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation Christmas Appeal

Christmas is a precious time that should be filled with laughter, play and joyful memories. Unfortunately, for thousands of sick kids receiving care across Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN), this time of year is filled with appointments instead of playdates and hospital stays instead of sleepovers.

These kids are too ill or injured to be where they want to be - at home surrounded by their family and that magical festive spirit they desperately want to be a part of.

That was the case for Koby and Cooper. When Koby was born, his parents, Amanda and Michael, were shocked to discover their beautiful little boy had suffered three mini-strokes and was struggling to breathe. Instead of heading home with his family, Koby was hooked up to life-saving machines. Thanks to the expert care he received, Koby defied the odds and now thrives as a healthy, happy child.

Just a few years later, Amanda and Michael experienced déjà vu with their second son, Cooper. He wasn't even 24 hours old when little Cooper stopped breathing on Christmas Eve. The incredible team from the Newborn

and paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) were able to stabilise him and in what Amanda described as Cooper's "first sleigh ride," he was airlifted by NETS to receive life-saving treatment.

Thanks to the expert support of these teams, today, they have a happy, healthy little family that is ready to celebrate a very special Christmas.

By supporting the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation Christmas Appeal, you can help families like Amanda and Michael's experience the magic of Christmas with their children. You can help provide new equipment, training and education, groundbreaking research, or state-of-the-art facilities to help get sick kids back to the childhood they deserve.

How can you help?

Donate today to help provide sick kids with the best possible healthcare, whenever and wherever they need it.

Volunteer at one of our incredible Christmas activities and spread holiday cheer.

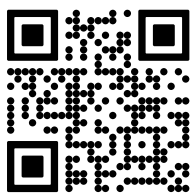
Leave a gift in your will to build a legacy and change the future for sick kids.

For more information about how you can get involved, visit schf.org.au or contact us on 1800 770 122.



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out and about
with MICHELLE BYRNE

Light the World Giving Machines Castle Towers

Christmas is such a joyous time of year. A time to celebrate the meaning of Christmas with family and friends, a time to reflect on the year that has been and to look to the new year with anticipation.

However, for many in our community Christmas is not a happy time. More and more of our community are doing it tough as a result of the cost-of-living pressures, domestic and family violence, poverty, family/relationship breakdowns, death of a spouse etc. It is now estimated that 1 out of 3 households in NSW no longer has enough food on the table.

It is important we all dig deep, where we can and help those in need around us either directly or through the many wonderful charities and community groups that help thousands of people every day.

Light the World Giving machines, an initiative of the Church of Jesus Christ, combine kindness with convenience and offer an innovative new way to help Australians this Christmas and to spread a little joy.

The Giving Machines provide an instant opportunity to provide essentials like clothing,

meals, school supplies, and life-saving medicine for those facing hardship. Much like a vending machine, you simply select what tangible gift you would like to give someone through one of the six partner charities including UNICEF Australia, FOODBANK NSW & ACT, GIVIT, Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation, The Smith Family and CareFlight. Once a donation is made, a card symbolic of the purchased item is dispensed as a reminder of the gift of hope you have given to someone in need. A gift as little as \$5 will make a huge difference this Christmas!

What is even more special about these machines is that 100% of all donations made through the Giving Machines go directly to the 6 partner charities, maximising the impact of every contribution.

The Light the World Giving Machines is a global Christmas initiative in 108 locations including Las Vegas, London, and New York

and has raised over AUD \$50 million, directly benefiting vulnerable communities. These machines also attracted widespread support from high-profile names like Drew Barrymore, Travis Kelce, Paul Rudd, and Dan Reynolds, each advocating for the impact of these charitable vending machines.

Giving Machine Sydney Ambassador and Fox Sports Australia presenter Jemma Barge shares her enthusiasm for the initiative: "Many of us want to help but aren't sure where to begin. The Giving Machines make giving back as easy as buying a snack. With 100% of every donation going directly to those in need, it's a fun and heartfelt way to turn kindness into action.

If you are looking for a fun way to support a charity this Christmas, then make sure you visit the Light the World Giving Machines at Castle Towers.



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Fire Danger, Prepare Now

The CSIRO is warning that Australia is in for a severe fire season with a particular danger on the eastern coastline. This coincides with warnings from firefighting authorities, with the biggest fire danger being the Urban Interface.

Local pump manufacturer, Aussie Pumps, warn that the time to prepare your property is now.

Free copies of the Aussie Bushfire Survival Guide are readily available from pump distributors around the Hills District.

The guide stresses the need for preparation of the site, awareness of animal and livestock precautions and the need to move fast to equip before the fire hits. They claim the best form of protection is the Aussie Fire Chief, claimed to be the world's best lightweight portable fire pump.

The Chief produces 25% more performance than competitors and offers a five year warranty because of its top quality components. The best news for consumers is the current price is \$800 plus GST, a fraction of the prices charged by older brands that are inferior in performance and overall features.

"We see competitors asking super high prices when the fire season is on", said Aussie Pumps Sam Loria. Sam stresses the need for getting set up with the right gear including hose kits and adequate water supply as essential.

Further information is available at Australian Pump Industries at Norwest, or authorised dealers in the Hills District including Hills Irrigation at Castle Hill, Ace Ohlsson at McGraths Hill, Dick Petrikas at North Richmond or Glenorie Stockfeeds in Glenorie.

"They can help with great advice and top quality Aussie products", said Sam



Shellea Lorenz is preparing for the worst!



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Because we care

Sensory Garden at Balcombe Heights Estate

Balcombe Heights Estate is abuzz with excitement as the long-awaited Community Sensory Garden is now in place. This extraordinary project, designed to be a space of inclusion, connection, and serenity, is now open for everyone to enjoy.

The Community Sensory Garden was officially opened on 10 November 2024 by The Honourable Peter Primrose MLC and Dr Michelle Byrne, Mayor of The Hills Shire, and brought together community members, local leaders, and supporters who played a vital role in bringing this vision to life. The Community Sensory Garden was made possible with funding from the NSW State Government, Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program, the hard work and dedication of the Hills Shire Council C355 Volunteer Committee, Hills Community Aid and the Hills Shire Council.

The garden offers something for everyone. Winding paths meander through the garden for people of all abilities to explore, with relaxing places to sit and ponder. There are plants of

different textures, sights and smells and a grass area for meditation and wellbeing.

Mici Beer, Executive Office of Hills Community Aid said 'The garden reflects our core values, Inclusion, Support, Respect, and Trust. Community lies at the heart of everything we do, and this garden offers a place where people can come together, feel a sense of belonging, and build meaningful connections. Our commitment to inclusion is reflected in every part of this garden, welcoming people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. It's a place to engage the senses and find joy in nature. Our focus on support is evident here too, as we've created an environment that nurtures wellbeing, offering an uplifting and caring space for everyone.'

Feedback from community members who have visited the garden includes: "The garden looks great & really adds to the Estate. Well done! A place for contemplation for all members of the community has now been realised. Lovely to see such a beautiful and peaceful spot. Can't wait to see it grow and mature".

The Community Sensory Garden is located at Balcombe Heights Estate, 92 Seven Hills Road (Learning in The Hills Turner Building 4), Baulkham Hills, NSW 2153. Parking is available at the skate park and the garden is a short walk past the dog park.

A Space to Explore, Relax, and Connect with Nature!



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Five Minute Nature Crosswords

Readers of this Hidden In The Hills column each month may recall that I have been a volunteer with the Community Environment Centre at Annangrove for many years. I have frequently made mention of the various activities for which the Centre is well known.

Along with Sustainability Workshops and Demonstration Gardens, one of the other popular services for community members is the availability of a selection of short publications relating to environmental matters, organic gardening practices and bushland awareness. Some of these publications have been prepared with young children in mind, in that the booklets contain puzzles and activities for them to work through, in a fun way, learning more about those things that can be discovered around the home and in our local bushland areas.

As School Holidays approach, the activities contained in these booklets could be an interesting, if not useful, diversion for a rainy day when there may not be a great deal to keep the youngsters busy inside.

One such booklet is entitled "Five Minute Nature Crosswords".

Using the medium of photography, the fourteen crossword puzzles feature birds, wildflowers,

animals and bushland features to provide the clues. Some puzzles may be easy, whilst others could be more difficult. A solution is provided for each one.

In the event of readers being unable to visit the Community Environment Centre in Currie Avenue at Annangrove to pick up a free copy of this booklet, it can be accessed free of charge, on-line, at the following link :-

<https://online.fliphtml5.com/awdd/zypr/>

Simply enter this link into your preferred browser, press "enter" (return) and the book will open as a "flipbook". Click on the arrows at the sides to progress through the book. If you wish to print a selected page or the entire booklet, locate the "print" icon and follow the prompts with my compliments.

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Page 3	ONE WORD BIRD NAMES
Page 4	ONE WORD WILDFLOWERS
Page 5	BANKSIA VARIETIES
Page 6	BLOSSOMING TREES
Page 7	TWO WORD BIRD NAMES
Page 8	TREES HAVE BARK
Page 9	TWO WORD WILDFLOWERS
Page 10	SOME BIRDS LIKE WATER
Page 11	LIZARDS AND THINGS
Page 12	LOOKING AROUND
Page 13	OUT BUSHWALKING
Page 14	TREES HAVE LEAVES
Page 15	BANKSIA BOTANICALS



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The Hills Shire Council News

Illuminate The Hills

Every night the Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Rose Garden, located on Roxborough Park Road, Baulkham Hills, will transform into a spectacular Christmas wonderland up until Thursday 2 January 2025.

The rose garden is adorned with twinkling fairy lights, festive Christmas installations, and a dazzling nativity scene.

Search 'Illuminate The Hills 2024' on Council's website for more information.



Council Operations over the Festive Season 2024/25

The Hills Shire Council's Main Customer Service Centre in Norwest will be closed from Wednesday 25 December 2024 to Wednesday 1 January 2025.

For more information on the operating hours of Council's library branches, childcare centres, JP services, Hills Community Care services and Waves Fitness & Aquatic Centre, visit Council's website.

Council Meetings

The first meeting in 2025 will be held on 11 February, 2025.

'Tis the Season to Recycle



Bin collections will occur as normal, even on Christmas Day and other public holidays.

Please ensure you place your bin out at the kerbside the night before your collection day. If your bin has been missed, please log a request via The Hills Shire Council/ Cleanaway booking portal or call the Cleanaway Waste Hotline on 1800 623 895.

If you have booked in a household kerbside clean-up collection, and it is scheduled to take place on a public holiday, please ensure materials are placed out the evening before as normal. Remember, waste may be collected over two days.

Search 'Waste and Recycling' on Council's website for more information.

Library Amnesty

Make a meaningful impact this Christmas by participating in the Mayor's Christmas Appeal and Library Amnesty.

Library members with overdue books can bring them back and have their fines waived by donating a non-perishable food item. Hurry – the amnesty ends on Sunday 15 December. Search 'Library Amnesty' on Council's website for more information.



CHRG Brings the Spirit of Giving to the Local Community this Christmas

This festive season, Castle Hill RSL Group (CHRG) is focused on making a meaningful contribution to the lives of those who need it most. Across its three hospitality venues – Castle Hill RSL Club, Club Parramatta, and Lynwood Golf and Country Club – CHRG is working to support two vital organisations that are making a difference in the community.

Throughout December, CHRG will donate \$1 from every schnitzel sold to **Foster Care Angels**, an organisation that supports children living in foster care. These funds will help provide practical support and services to children and young people who often face significant challenges in their daily lives.

At **Club Parramatta**, there's an additional effort to help those in need. The club is proudly supporting **Parramatta Mission** with their **"Plate for a Mate" fundraiser**, which provides meals to people experiencing homelessness or hardship. Donations can also be made directly to the cause through Parramatta Mission's fundraising page.

CHRG Group CEO, David O'Neil shared the group's motivation behind the initiative. "Christmas is a time when many of us celebrate with loved ones, but it's also a time to reflect on the needs of others in our community. By contributing to these organisations, we hope to make a small difference in the lives of those who are doing it tough."

For CHRG, this is not just a seasonal gesture but a continuation of its commitment

to supporting the local community. The partnership with Foster Care Angels reflects an understanding of the unique challenges faced by children in care, while the collaboration with Parramatta Mission aligns with the group's long-standing dedication to addressing food insecurity and homelessness.

Guests at Castle Hill RSL Club, Club Parramatta, and Lynwood Golf and Country Club are encouraged to join in this effort simply by enjoying a meal. Each schnitzel purchased helps strengthen the support provided to these two essential organisations.

Let's make this holiday season one of generosity and compassion. Together, we can make a difference, one schnitzel at a time!



CHRISTMAS 2024

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Step into 2025 with Sound Hearing Health

With the festive season in full swing and 2024 coming to an end, we find ourselves pausing to reflect. The last months of this year were packed with changes, growth, and exciting developments for Ear Studio. Now, as we get ready to step into 2025, we're not just turning the page—we're beginning an entirely new chapter. With a strong team of four dedicated clinicians and four talented office administrators, we are growing in both numbers and capability. Next year, we're proud to continue our ongoing investment in cutting-edge equipment and advanced training, ensuring our clients consistently receive care that is second to none.

Commitment to Best Practice Audiological Principles

At Ear Studio, "best practice" isn't just a buzzword; it's the backbone of everything we do. But what does best practice actually mean, and how does it set us apart? Best practice in audiology involves following evidence-based standards to deliver the highest level of care. While many clinics across Australia may follow basic industry guidelines, we go above and beyond, adopting internationally recognised standards from the highly regulated American and European hearing industries. This ensures our clients benefit from a meticulous, thorough process at every step of their hearing care journey.

For us, best practice means:

- **Personalised Assessments:** Every client undergoes a comprehensive hearing evaluation tailored to their specific needs.
- **Optimised Fittings:** Using state-of-the-art equipment, we ensure hearing devices are precisely calibrated for comfort and performance.
- **Continuous Support:** Our commitment doesn't end with the fitting. We provide ongoing care and adjustments to maximize outcomes.

Where some clinics may do the bare minimum—focusing on quick sales or a one-size-fits-all approach—we are driven by the belief that every individual deserves to be treated as one, and we customise our care, depending on individual needs and preferences. At Ear Studio, we change lives through our skills, dedication, and the use of high-quality equipment. We aim to unlock your full hearing potential, helping you reconnect with loved ones, rediscover forgotten sounds, and regain confidence in your everyday life.

New Year, New You

The start of a new year is the perfect time to prioritise your health, including your hearing. If you or a loved one suspect any hearing loss, now is the time to act. There's no pressure to proceed with treatment but knowing where your hearing stands can be life-changing. A comprehensive

Ear Studio Founder & Director, Daniel Fechner, with Client in a review appointment

hearing assessment can provide clarity and set the foundation for better hearing in the future.

Don't wait until hearing loss impacts your relationships, work, or quality of life. Start the year by taking a step toward better hearing. Together, we can help you rediscover the joy of sound and create a brighter, more connected future.

Please note our holiday closure:

- **Last clinic day for 2024:** Friday, 20th December
- **Reopening in 2025:** Monday, 6th January

Book ahead for the new year to secure your appointment early.

Contact us at 02 9159 6122, email reception@earstudio.com.au, or visit www.earstudio.com.au to book your appointment. Our clinic is located at Suite 10, Latwon House, 60 Cecil Ave, Castle Hill, with convenient off-street parking.

Wishing you a joyful festive season and a sound start to 2025. We can't wait to see you in the new year

Merry Christmas
from our team at
EAR STUDIO
Passion for Hearing

Our last clinic day for 2024 is Friday the 20th of December
and we reopen on Monday the 6th of January 2025

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- ✓ Attending your local community event
- ✓ Arranging congratulatory messages
- ✓ Helping you resolve federal issues, including NDIS, NBN and Centrelink

Please contact my office if I can be of assistance.

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ALEX HAWKE MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MITCHELL



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Authorised by Alex Hawke MP, Liberal Party of Australia, 8/23 Terminus Street, Castle Hill NSW 2154.

Christmas: A Time for Hope

Christmas is a time when we come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas is also a season to be grateful for the blessings of peace and prosperity we enjoy as a nation.

As your local member it has been an honour to serve our fantastic community in 2024. In 2025 I will continue to fight for the country we all love and represent your interests in our Federal Parliament.

On behalf of my family, Amelia, Jack, Lachlan, Thomas and Jonathan, I would like to wish you and your family a happy and holy Christmas, and a safe and prosperous 2025.

Christmas can be a difficult time, particularly with the current cost of living pressures families are experiencing. It is important we look after each other and lean into our community during these tougher times. For assistance, please reach out to Hills Community Aid - phone 9639 860



VOLUNTEER GRANTS 2024-25 Submit an Expression of Interest

Local community groups in Mitchell are eligible for federal funding to support their local volunteers. Grants of between \$1,000 and up to a maximum of \$5,000 are available. Community organisations will need to apply under one or more of the following categories to be eligible for funding in the 2024-25 Grants round.

Category 1 – purchase communication or insurance items, that will benefit any of the community organisations' volunteers.

Category 2 – (a) purchase items or services that support an organisation's eligible volunteers or (b) purchase items or services that assist in the delivery of eligible volunteer run activities.

The Expression of Interest (EOI) application to be submitted by 5:00pm, Thursday, 16 January 2025. For information on eligibility and guidelines and to apply online please visit www.alexhawke.au.

To request a hard copy EOI application please email alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au or call my office on 9899 7211.

Supporting the Hawkesbury River Dragons

With the end of the year fast approaching, there's been no slowing down.

There's been lots of local community groups hosting events and making the best use of the warm weather and it's been a real delight to get along and see so much of the good work that so many people, almost all volunteers, have been doing around our area.

In addition to community events, I've been getting around to many local sporting clubs across the area and in some cases, trying my hand at a new sport!

One sport I tried recently was dragon boat racing. I was really grateful to the Hawkesbury River Dragons to get out on the water with them at one of their regular training sessions. I got a crash course in this sport which dates

back 2,000 years and enjoyed one of the most beautiful parts of our local natural environment.

While there, I heard from President Steph Hague, Kavita Kuczynski and Helen Wood, along with Beverly, Jane, Leanne, Ryan, Vio, Martin and so many others about their love of the sport and being on our beautiful Hawkesbury River.

I also heard about the state of their current storage facilities. I saw the old shed where they store their equipment. It isn't what the club needs as more and more people recognise the physical, mental and social wellbeing benefits of being part of an active group like the Hawkesbury River Dragons and as that great club continues to grow. The Hawkesbury River Dragons presented me with an idea – a well thought out, modest but practical storage solution.

Being your local MP I'm fortunate to get a good look at the work sporting clubs do and the positive impact on our community and that's why I'm always keen to back them so they have what they need.

So, while I'm awaiting for the Hawkesbury River Dragons' call up to lead them to success at their next competition—I think I'll be waiting a while for that call!—I'll be working on a plan to support this great local club to get the facilities it needs so it can continue bringing our community together and bringing that great competitive spirit that the 2,000-year-old sport of dragon boat racing has.

As the boat crews at Hawkesbury River Dragons tell me – life's short, paddle hard.



As your Federal Member, I am here to:

- ➡ Assist with accessing Federal Government services
- ➡ Attend your local community event
- ➡ Arrange congratulatory messages

Please contact my office if I can be of assistance.

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JULIAN LEESER MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BEROWRA

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Authorised by Julian Leeser MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Level 11, 423 Pennant Hills Road, Pennant Hills NSW 2120.

Tackling Unfair Surcharges and Protecting Cash for All Australians

As your representative in Greenway and Minister for Communications, my top priority is easing the cost of living for hardworking families, students, and pensioners in our community.

When Labor came into Government inflation was over 6 per cent and rising, but it is now 2.8 per cent with consumer confidence on the rise. While this is positive progress, there remains much to do to ease the pressure on families and residents.

The Albanese Government is taking meaningful steps to address the unfair and excessive costs Australians face daily — and we are now expanding our focus to debit card surcharges.

Australians lose nearly \$1 billion annually to excessive surcharges, with families and businesses in Greenway alone paying up to \$6.4 million each year.

This is simply unacceptable.

Payment providers and banks have been allowed to impose unfair fees for far too long, burdening small businesses and everyday consumers alike.

At a cost-of-living forum in my electorate,

hosted alongside Stephen Bali, the State Member for Blacktown, I heard firsthand how these surcharges impact our community.

Alexis, a local from Stanhope Gardens, shared her frustration about the exorbitant fees she faced.

I took her concerns to my colleagues in Canberra, and I'm proud to say that Alexis's voice has been heard.

The Albanese Government has acted, providing \$2.1 million of new funding to the ACCC to crack down on excessive surcharges and ensure small businesses and consumers see real savings.

I want to see the strongest possible action on curtailing debit card surcharges, to ensure small businesses and consumers benefit from lower costs.

Which is why we are prepared to ban debit card surcharges from 1 January 2026, subject to the consultation undertaken by the Reserve Bank, and sufficient steps and safeguards to ensure both small businesses and consumers can benefit from lower costs.

As your Federal Member for Greenway,
I'm here to help.
Tackling Unfair Surcharges and
Protecting Cash for All Australians.



Scan to complete my
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Surcharge Survey

The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP

PO Box 8525, Blacktown NSW 2148
(02) 9671 4780

Level 1, Suite 101C, 130 Main Street, Blacktown

Authorised by Michelle Rowland MP, Australian Labor Party, Blacktown NSW 2148

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It's time to prioritise the needs of consumers and small businesses over excessive profiteering of banks. We're also committed to safeguarding cash as a vital payment method.

For many, particularly during emergencies, cash is more than just convenience—it's a lifeline.

That's why Labor will require businesses to accept cash for essential goods and services, with appropriate exemptions for small businesses.

This ensures no one is left behind in an increasingly digital economy.

I've launched a survey on my website to hear directly from locals about how debit card surcharges are affecting them.

Your feedback will guide my work in Parliament and help deliver practical solutions.

Labor is determined to make life fairer and more affordable for Australians.

Together, we're building a better future for all.

Complete my Debit Card Surcharge Survey here: <https://bit.ly/4gjzcpb>

Building a Stronger Future for Riverstone: A Year in Review

As we move into a new year, it's a good time to reflect on the milestones and achievements that have shaped the last twelve months for the Riverstone electorate. From investments in critical infrastructure to celebrating the unsung heroes of our community, this year has been one of progress and promise for our growing region.

The Minns Labor Government has taken decisive steps to address long-standing issues in Riverstone, ensuring our community receives the attention it deserves. The Rouse Hill Hospital, set to start construction soon, marks a turning point in healthcare access for the North West Growth Area. This state-of-the-art facility will offer comprehensive services, but healthcare must go beyond buildings. Efforts to address GP shortages and advocate for federal

support in bulk-billing rebates highlight the commitment to holistic, accessible healthcare for all.

Education remains a cornerstone of Riverstone's future. An audit of enrolment trends revealed the challenges posed by the area's rapid growth, with student numbers exceeding projections by decades. The Minns Labor Government is tackling this crisis with a historic \$3.6 billion investment in schools statewide, including upgrades and new schools for Nirimba Fields, Tallawong, Box Hill, and Marsden Park. These initiatives underscore a commitment to equitable education for every student.

Transport connectivity has been another focal point. The extension of the North-West Metro has transformed travel across Sydney, but local challenges persist. Residents have

expressed frustration over inadequate parking and connectivity at Tallawong Station. Efforts are underway to address these gaps, including improved bus services, advocacy for additional parking, and a business case to link the metro line with heavy rail at Schofields.

This year also saw the Riverstone community come together in meaningful ways. The Community Cabinet offered residents a direct line to the NSW Premier and Cabinet Ministers, fostering dialogue on issues like road upgrades, transport, and town centre planning. Similarly, the Riverstone Youth Forum empowered young voices, highlighting their concerns about social connections, environmental health and the cost of living.

As the year ends, it is important to acknowledge these accomplishments while looking ahead with optimism. The challenges faced by our community are significant, but so too is the resolve to overcome them. Together, we are building a stronger, healthier and more connected Riverstone.

My team and I wish everyone in Riverstone a very happy holiday season. May this time bring peace, togetherness and renewed hope for the year to come. Thank you for your support, and I look forward to continuing to serve this incredible community over the coming year.

WARREN KIRBY MP
MEMBER FOR RIVERSTONE

Building a Better NSW

(02) 8883 3499 riverstone@parliament.nsw.gov.au
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AUTHORISED BY WARREN KIRBY MP. FUNDED USING PARLIAMENTARY ENTITLEMENTS.



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PETS OF THE WEEK

The Hawkesbury Companion Animal Shelter (CAS)
is at 10 Mulgrave Rd, Mulgrave.
Call 4560 4644 for opening hours
or visit the new webpage
<https://hawkesburycas.com.au/>



AT A GLANCE

NAME: DIESEL
BREED: American
Staffordshire Terrier
SEX: Male
AGE: 5 Years, 3
Months and 2 Weeks
PRICE: \$99

MEET DIESEL, well-mannered and sweet, Diesel is looking for a family to give him all the love and treats he could ask for! According to the staff at Hawkesbury Companion Animal Centre, Diesel is a food loving boy, and would much rather enjoy a training session with treats than a play session with toys. Staff say he knows basic commands and walks well on the lead. If you would like to spoil Diesel for the rest of his days, be sure to bring any children or dogs down to the shelter to meet him and see if it's the perfect match.

Disclaimer: **All prices include microchipping, lifetime council registration, desexing and 1st Vaccination. Hawkesbury Council's Rehoming Number is: R251000145

MEET PAUL, a curious and endearing cat with a gentle nature, who is currently on a journey to build confidence and trust. According to the staff at Hawkesbury Companion Animal Centre, while he may still be a little unsure in new situations, Paul is full of potential, waiting to flourish in a nurturing and patient home. Paul's sensitive and thoughtful disposition means he appreciates the quiet moments, and with gentle encouragement, he gradually reveals his sweet personality.

Staff say an environment with calm, understanding companions will truly help Paul gain confidence. If you're looking for a feline friend who will reward patience with companionship, Paul is eager to find a calm and loving new family to call his own. Once he feels secure and loved, you'll find no better companion than Paul to share your serene moments.

Disclaimer: **All prices include microchipping, lifetime council registration, desexing and 1st Vaccination. Hawkesbury Council's Rehoming Number is: R251000145



AT A GLANCE

NAME: PAUL
BREED: Domestic
Short Hair
SEX: Male
AGE: 6 Years, 1 Month
and 3 Weeks
PRICE: \$49

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Natalie Burton Memorial Award

20 YEARS OF HELPING HAWKESBURY STUDENTS

The Natalie Burton Memorial Award will this year go to seven students who have overcome adversity from seven Hawkesbury High Schools in a major expansion of the award in this its 20th year.

Natalie Burton was a Hawkesbury woman who achieved many extraordinary things despite a cancer diagnosis at 25 which sadly claimed her life when she was just 32, in 2003.

After finishing school as the Dux of Colo High in 1987, she completed two degrees to become a veterinarian. In 1994, Natalie received a fellowship to Cornell University in the USA where she studied epidemiology with leading academics in the field. In 1995, she was awarded the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists College Medal for her work in epidemiology. Natalie had a profound sense of optimism towards her disease. She continued to follow her dreams, getting engaged, climbing in the Himalayas and cycling around Australia and overseas. She was posthumously awarded a Masters of Public Health degree.

Her family established the Natalie Burton Memorial Award in 2004, awarding one local high school student every year since. This year, the family has decided to expand the award to provide more funds to more students.

Natalie's mother Elizabeth Turner and her fiancé's family, Julie, Alan and Jeff Lawrance, are passionate about the benefits of the award to the community.

"Natalie would have been very happy to know that her legacy has made a difference to young people in the Hawkesbury. Increasing the award's reach allows us to deliver greater impact to more students and honour Natalie's life in new ways," Elizabeth said.

The high schools who will each award a student in 2024 are:

1. Arndell Anglican College
2. Bede Polding College
3. Colo High School
4. Hawkesbury High School
5. Richmond Agricultural College
6. Richmond High School
7. Windsor High School



A young Natalie Burton receiving the Excellence in Science Award from Hawkesbury Agricultural College. Pic courtesy of family

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Marcus And Jackson Off To U12 Baseball World Cup

BY LAWRENCE MACHADO

Marcus Zucconi and Jackson Harris, who are part of the Hills Junior Baseball Association, are celebrating after Australia qualified for the 2025 Under 12 Baseball World Cup.

The talented Hills duo were a part of the outstanding Australia team which won the Oceania qualifying event in Guam from November 29-December 2. They overcame Guam 19-4 in the final, making a terrific comeback after being defeated by the hosts in the first leg.

Australia, the 12th-ranked team in the world, will be challenging for honours in the World Baseball Under-12 World Cup in Taiwan, from July 25 to August 3, 2025.



The champion Australian U12 team which won their Oceania qualifying event. Picture: Courtesy WBSC

Marcus Zucconi and Jackson Harris helped Australia qualify for the U12 Baseball World Cup. Picture: Hills Junior Baseball Association

Marcus, from Quakers Hill Pirates, plays pitcher and in-field, and loves dirt bikes when is not playing baseball.

Jackson is a pitcher, shortstop and catcher for Oakville Raiders Baseball Club, and can't get enough of baseball. According to his Baseball NSW profile, one of his tricks off the field is solving a Rubik's Cube in under a minute.

In their first qualifier, Australia defeated the North Mariana Islands 26-1 before going down to Guam 5-12 in the second. They returned to winning ways in the third game, seeing off North Mariana Islands 19-6 before wrapping up the double leg round with a revenge 16-0 victory over Guam.

Baseball Australia said it was a phenomenal performance by the whole squad in the final, noting that nine different players scored, and eight had hits.

"Everybody chipped in, and we scored in every inning and brought some huge energy all game," BA said. "The boys and girls showed huge resilience after losing to Guam earlier in the week and needing to win their last three games to qualify. Mission completed. We're so proud of you all!"

BEST U16 & U18 TALENT ON SHOW

You can watch some of the brightest baseball players from the Hills, Hawkesbury and around Australia showcase their talents and skills at the Blacktown International Sports Park from January 7-15.

The U16 and U18 Youth Championships are one of the leading events in BA's calendar and are a pathway for Australian players to make the big time.

One of the biggest incentives here will be the presence of talent scouts from several Major League Baseball (MLB) clubs in the USA.

"State pride and passion is on the line, as the best U16 and U18 baseball players from across Australia head to Sydney for the marquee event over seven days," BA said. "Upwards of 15 different MLB teams will have a presence at the event, looking to uncover talent."

"It's a pathway all of Australia's best players have competed in – from past MLB stars like Graeme Lloyd, to current Big Leaguers like Curtis Mead, to recent minor league signings like Max Durrington or Ali Tanner – the country's top talent will be here."



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Bede Polding College student Nate Gubler presented his NRL Premiership Trophy painting to Ivan Cleary, right, watched by school principal Greg Malone.
Photo Courtesy: Bede Polding College Facebook page

Ivan Cleary wows Bede Polding community

BY LAWRENCE MACHADO

Four-time NRL Premiership winning coach Ivan Cleary shared some of his coaching and motivational tips of his amazing journey with the Bede Polding College community recently.

Cleary and his remarkable Penrith Panthers – superbly led by his son Nathan – have been the benchmark for greatness for the past four rugby league seasons and his appearance was eagerly awaited. Ivan Cleary, a highly-regarded motivational speaker, received a warm welcome from the college community at his Achieving Excellence presentation, and also took

questions from the enthusiastic audience.

Cleary, 53, is regarded among the most successful rugby league coaches in the modern era, taking the Penrith Panthers to new heights, never achieved before in their history.

Having seen the worst – the second season he coached the Panthers in 2015, they barely escaped the wooden spoon – and the

best, Cleary certainly has plenty of experience in his bag to inspire students and budding sports stars. He returned to the Panthers in 2019 in a bid to resurrect the glory of the 2003 Premiers, and the rest is history.

Before his coaching career took off at the West Tigers and the New Zealand Warriors, Cleary shone as a centre and full back, playing 186 NRL games for four clubs – Manly Sea Eagles, North Sydney Bears, Sydney Roosters and New Zealand Warriors, scoring more than 1000 career points.

According to the Windsor-based school's social media post, Cleary gave them, "an incredible insight into how we can all perform in life, with a message of 'How you train is how you perform'. We are so grateful to Ivan for sharing his time and expertise with us."

For Year 12 student Nate Gubler, it was an extra special evening because he presented Cleary his beautiful painting of the NRL Premiership Trophy, with details of the four successive titles. This is certainly something the highly-regarded Panthers coach will cherish for years to come.

The ticketed event attracted an audience of more than 250, who were also able to have their photographs taken with the coaching maestro during a busy 'meet and greet' session after his well-received presentation.

New Sports Facilities For Pitt Town

BY LAWRENCE MACHADO

Hawkesbury residents will be able to enjoy a modern sports facility and recreation centre at Fernadell Park, Pitt Town, with cricket and football getting top billing, alongside multipurpose courts.

Hawkesbury is a valuable sporting nursery for NSW and Australia and the new \$11 million first stage at Pitt Town will provide more opportunities for budding sports stars. The multipurpose sports venue will join the 23 sporting fields spread across the vast Hawkesbury region.

Hawkesbury State MP Robyn Preston and Hawkesbury Deputy Mayor Barry Calvert said the new venue will be an exciting new asset in Pitt Town and Hawkesbury.

"Playing sport with your local team is a quintessential part of the Hawkesbury lifestyle,"

Ms Preston said. "This funding will modernise facilities for local clubs, associations and councils, and enable more local residents to enjoy the benefits of sport and active recreation."

"Fernadell Park will be an exciting inclusion to the growing village of Pitt Town and a must-visit park in the Hawkesbury," Cllr Calvert said. "This funding will mean local families will have access to high-quality sporting and recreational facilities a lot sooner."

Interestingly, the sporting fields can be configured to accommodate winter and summer



Fernadell Sport Facility Grant

sports, cricket nets, three multi-use courts and sports lighting.

When finished, Hawkesbury's latest sporting venue will have change rooms for male and female players, outdoor fitness equipment, a youth facility, BBQ amenities, and an integrated community centre among other additions.

The first stage is being funded by \$4.695 million by the Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program, the NSW Government's \$3.3 million Multi-Sport Community Facility Funding, and \$1.68 million from the Hawkesbury City Council. Work is due to begin in 2025.

Meanwhile, the Upper Hawkesbury Powerboat Club clubhouse at Governor Phillip Park, Windsor, which was badly damaged by floods between 2020 and 2024, will be rebuilt. Hawkesbury Council said it is designing a brand-new multi-purpose community facility that would be resilient to any future flood events.



Fernadell Park Visualisation

A 1950s Christmas

Remembering back to my childhood in Britain during the 1940s & 50s after the Second World War, life was hard for many.

Jobs were scarce, wages low and many goods were in short supply whilst rationing of foodstuffs were still happening. My parents, at Christmas time, would try to add a bit of a festive atmosphere to our home. Paper chains were created and strung across the ceiling of the lounge room as were crepe paper ribbons which had been twisted. Pinecones would have had tips painted white and placed around the Christmas tree. The trees were always real pine - artificial plastic or aluminium trees did not exist. Wild holly would have been cut and used as decorations and matchboxes covered with coloured paper to represent Christmas parcels hanging from the tree. Bows were made from coloured ribbon. Yes, many of the tree decorations were made from scraps of paper or material. Such little things helped make Christmas a joyous time for kids in those times. Living as we did in the Northern hemisphere, it would be dark at 4pm and the shopping strips would be lit up by street lamps (there were no shopping centres such as Westfields at the time). Between the lamps would be strings of coloured lights adding to the coloured and joyful atmosphere.

I remember the pedal cars for boys, the dolls houses for girls, the toy guns that had a cork in the end of the barrel and went "pop"

when the trigger was pulled, toy trains that worked by clockwork, the toy prams and the china dolls which could be bought in various colours. There was not the political correctness that is imposed on society today. The dolls represented all races and nationalities. Board games were a popular gift for the youngsters of the day. Snakes and Ladders, Ludo, Draughts and such games made their way into the Christmas stocking hanging at the end of the bed or from the mantle over the fireplace. For those who liked to create working models, they may well have received a Meccano set which they could then use to try and build engineering masterpieces. Handmade and home-made toys such as Teddy Bears, Rag dolls and glove puppets could often be amongst the gifts one received. My father once made me a model farm from pieces of timber which included a duck pond made from a mirror. On another occasion, as he was a welder, he made me a metal sled which I took to the top of a nearby hill and used to slide down in the snow.

During the 1940s and 50s, as I mentioned, many food items were in short supply and rationing was still in force. Poultry such as Chicken and Turkey was expensive so was rarely seen as part of the Christmas fare on the dinner table.



Amongst the favoured presents for parents and grandparents would be bath salts and perfumed soap. The soap may have been shaped as a woman such as "Cussons" soaps often were in the 1950s, I can also recall that at Christmas time my parents would also have bought triangles of creamy cheese possibly of Danish or French origin.

Another memory I have is that my sisters and I would receive a piece, or a couple of pieces, of fruit in our Christmas stocking - perhaps an apple or peach and a handful of nuts such as peanuts or hazelnuts.

And everything stopped for the Queen's speech! In the fifties this was listened to on the radio. It was first televised in 1957.

PODCASTING AT ALIVE

BY LEONIE DIXON

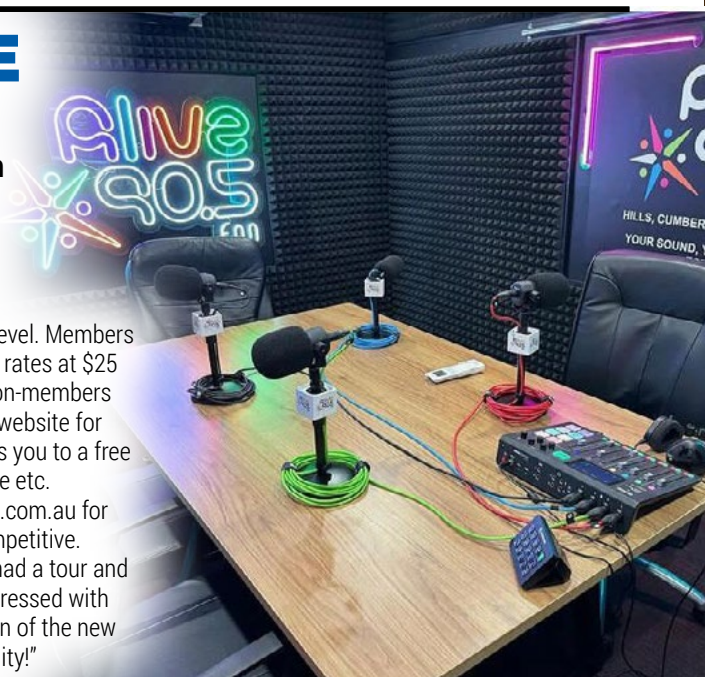
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elevate your podcast to the next level. Members of Alive definitely receive the best rates at \$25 per hour as opposed to \$75 for non-members and it's so easy to sign up on the website for \$36 per annum which also entitles you to a free gift such as a tee shirt, cap, beanie etc.

Contact me at mail@alive905.com.au for regular hiring rates which are competitive. Councillor Mitchell Blue recently had a tour and stated on social media "I was impressed with the refurbishment and the addition of the new podcast studio. What a great facility!"



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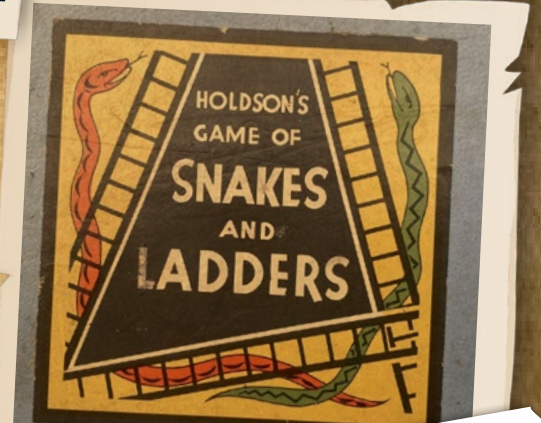
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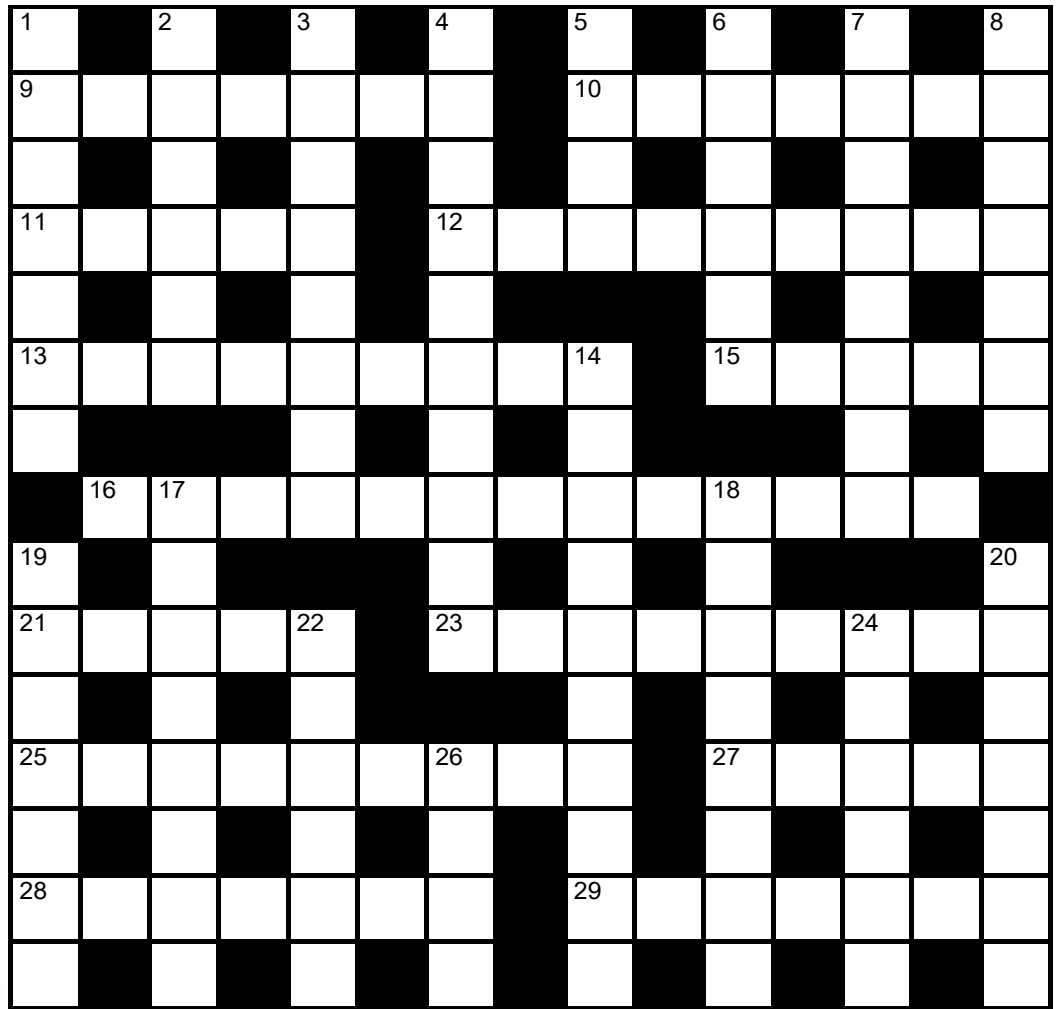
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Across

9. Small carnivorous marsupial of central Australia
10. Visceral
11. Have a little
12. SUV-lite, perhaps?
13. Southern Tasmanian mountain
15. Poe's "Nevermore" bird
16. South Australian site once used for rabbit disease research
21. Pet pests
23. Practised
25. String puller
27. Clean kind of energy
28. Where Steven Bradbury would have practised
29. Awkward nag wins sun shades

Down

1. Incomplete
2. Actor
3. Baby's state after leaving the font
4. Place for stained suits
5. Oil lamp fuel
6. Spoilsport
7. Criminals' transport
8. Tell the truth
14. "The Voice" judge and country singer/songwriter
17. Generally recognized
18. Alison is prepared for illicit affairs
19. Intervenes
20. Formal speech
22. Furious
24. Bone immobilizer
26. The Royal Queensland Show

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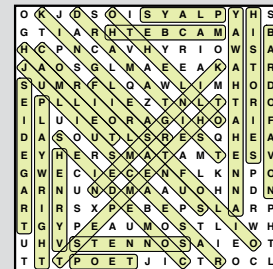
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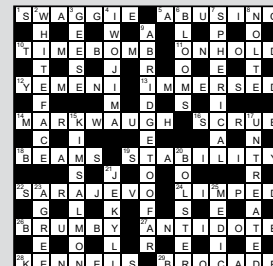
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Answers from last issue

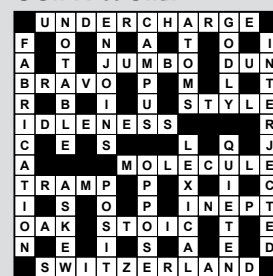
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