

t h e a b e r d e e n
WHISPER

February 2026

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**MURRURUNDI
FESTIVAL**

Art in the
Landscape



27th, 28th & 29th March 2026

murrurundifestival.com.au

Easel landscape by artist John Bradley

Whisper Trivia

1. What song did The Wiggles cover for Triple J's Hottest 100 in 2021?
2. What is Australia's oldest chocolate bar?
3. Which American star jumped into the Yarra after winning the Australian Open?
4. Who are the last two Australian, Aus Open men's and women's singles champions?
5. Which country has hosting duties for the 2026 Winter Olympics?
6. The Lunar New Year begins on February 17. It will be the year of which animal in the Chinese zodiac?
7. What company was initially known as "Blue Ribbon Sports"?
8. On which continent would you find the city of Baku?



- Answers:
1. Tame Impala's Horse
 2. Elephant
 3. Nike
 4. Ash Barty
 5. Italy
 6. Cherry Ripe
 7. Asia
 8. Jim Courier
- Edmondson & Mark

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Happy to hear from you

If you know someone in your community that has an interesting story to tell, who's doing some interesting things - we'd love to hear about it. Chances are if you think it's interesting - others will too - and we're always open to ideas for stories, or features here.

Earle's Column

continued on page 8

Although it almost seems like "ancient history" now, as I write this column at the end of January, HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all.

As a Town, part of a Shire, part of a Region, part of a State and part of a Nation, (the very best on the face of the Earth!), we need to work diligently, purposefully and collaboratively to repair the damage that was inflicted on Australia in the ghastly and tragic events of 14th December 2025 at Bondi Beach in Sydney. Ultimately, it is up to us, the 'ordinary' citizens, to drive the changes that will restore the Aussie egalitarian nature that has made our nation famous the world over. Let's do it!

CONGRATULATIONS

Three of our community have been acknowledged for their contribution to Aberdeen at the Australia Day ceremony in Scone on 26th January.

Christine Constable has been recognised as the Aberdeen Citizen of the Year for her 'decades-long' contribution to our town through volunteering and as a sports participant. Our nation runs on volunteers, who get in and make things happen in all sorts of organisations. In doing so, they contribute specifically to some activity, that in its own way then improves the social fabric of our community. This is Christine's story. She has been active at the golf club, the tennis club and the bowling club in Aberdeen. She has served (several) upcoming generations through involvement at both Aberdeen Public School and St. Joseph's Catholic High School. And much of this has simply been a dedicated commitment to contribute to the town in which she lives. Well done, Christine!

Grace Partridge is the Young Citizen of the Year. It seems that Grace runs on sport! She has been a member of Aberdeen Athletics for more than a decade having debuted on the track as a three-year old. Track and field events have been more than a pastime as Grace has trained to qualify for Hunter Zone Championships and the Little Athletics NSW Region Championships in every season since 2018. But she doesn't rest on her laurels in the winter season when she takes to the netball court, often at representative level. However, Grace is not only devoted to sporting activities, choosing to balance that aspect of her life with dance activities. And all this, in a person only fourteen years-of-age! Thank you, Grace, thank you for the example that you are forging for young people of **your** generation.

Veronica Chisholm is the Aberdeen Local Champion for 2026. When it comes to 'decades' of service, Veronica is more than a stand-out, she is outstanding! She was nominated on the back of more than five decades of service to the Parish of St. Thomas in Aberdeen. But far more than contributing to the life of her church family, Veronica has been active in the community as well. And like Christine, Veronica has chosen to serve the 'next' generations by firstly volunteering and then later filling the role of canteen supervisor at St Joseph's Catholic High School. Veronica, thank you, and we need more 'champions' like you!

I finish writing this, having just watched the 2026 Australians of the Year Awards from Canberra. There were thirty-three nominees for four national awards and the vast

Missed the Whisper?

If you live in Aberdeen you should receive a copy of the Whisper but unfortunately, for whatever reason it may not get to your Letterbox. If it does happen you can collect a copy from the Aberdeen Post Office. A digital copy can also be found on the Hunter Valley Printing Website. Thank you for your understanding.

Happy to hear from you

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Australia Day Awards 2026

Upper Hunter Shire Council is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2026 Australia Day Awards, celebrating outstanding community contributions and achievements.



UPPER HUNTER SHIRE

Citizen of the year - Gail Allen

Gail Allen has been honoured as the 2026 Upper Hunter Shire Citizen of the Year for her tireless volunteer work and unwavering commitment to supporting local families and community organisations.

Gail has made an exceptional contribution to the Scone and District Cancer Support Group, where she is a dedicated advocate for people navigating some of life's most difficult challenges. Her compassion, empathy and quiet determination have provided comfort and practical support to countless families across the district. She has long held the role of Treasurer and is deeply involved in fundraising initiatives, including Soup and Damper Days and major morning tea events that are vital to the group's ongoing work.

Her community spirit extends well beyond one organisation. Gail is a consistent supporter of Scone Legacy and Scone Men's Probus, often contributing home cooking or lending a hand whenever functions or events are held. She has also devoted significant time to St Luke's Church, where her organisational skills shine. The annual church fair is a major event on the calendar, and Gail manages the kitchen and catering with ease, coordinating volunteers and ensuring everything runs smoothly.

Known for her collaborative approach, Gail brings people together and leads with generosity, practicality and care. Her voluntary service has had a profound impact on the lives of many, strengthening the sense of community connection throughout Scone and the surrounding district.

The Upper Hunter community can be immensely proud of Gail Allen's contribution. Her commitment to others reflects the values that underpin community life across the Shire, and her recognition as Citizen of the Year is richly deserved.



Young Citizen of the Year (Under 25) - Hallie Croucher

Hallie has been named the 2026 Upper Hunter Shire Young Citizen of the Year in recognition of her leadership, initiative and dedication to supporting others, both at school and across the wider community.

As School Captain at Scone Grammar School in 2025, Hallie played a key role in establishing a new girls' program designed to support student wellbeing. The program focused on addressing feminine hygiene challenges while also creating a mentoring structure that paired senior students with younger girls, helping to build confidence,

understanding and connection within the school community. Her leadership in this space has made a meaningful and lasting difference for students.

Beyond school, Hallie has been an active and influential contributor to community initiatives. She played a critical role in the organisation of Community Wellbeing Week and was a valued member of the Where There's a Will team. Hallie personally approached local businesses for support, followed up to encourage staff involvement and worked to promote the program through local radio, where she spoke with confidence and genuine passion.

Hallie has also been a long-term contributor to Miss Amy's School of Dance, assisting weekly with Year 1 and Year 4 classes and supporting Tiny Tots during performances. Dance teacher Amy Wells has described Hallie as essential to the program, noting her calm guidance, care for younger students and natural leadership, often likening her to a mother duck shepherding students between school and dance commitments.

Her community involvement extends into local sport, where she regularly umpires netball, ran the Net Set Go competition in 2023, assists with the WTAW football round and volunteers in the canteen at football games.

Hallie is widely recognised as an exceptional role model for her peers and younger students alike. Known for her positivity, organisation and compassion, she approaches challenges with determination and a team-focused mindset. Her contribution reflects the very best of youth leadership in the Upper Hunter.

ABERDEEN

Citizen of the Year - Christine Constable

Young Citizen of the Year - Grace Partridge

Local Champion of the Year - Veronica Chisholm



MERRIWA & CASSILIS

Citizen of the Year - Anne-Maree Nairne

Young Citizen of the Year - Katana Magnus

Local Champion of the Year - Merriwa Country Education Foundation

Sustainability in Business - St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa

MURRURUNDI

Citizen of the Year - Del Ross

Local Champion of the Year - Mavericks Rugby League Club Murrurundi

Outstanding Contribution to the Community - Thai Pham

SCONE

Hunter McLoughlin Citizen of the Year - Gail Allen

Young Citizen of the Year - Hallie Croucher

Local Champion of the Year - Scone Grammar School Primary Rugby Team

SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Sophie Anderson, Merriwa Central School

Lauren Stevenson, St Joseph's High School

Lachlan Hails, Scone Grammar School

Hannah Gillett, Scone High School

CREATIVE ARTS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Toby Singleton, St Joseph's High School

Isabella Zizza, Scone High School

Supplied.

Tyre Warning

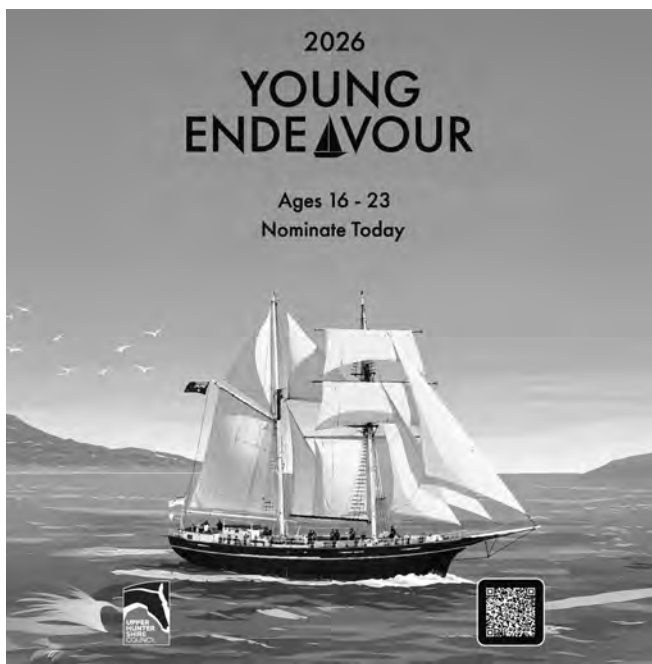
NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is reminding businesses and individuals dealing with waste tyres that they have a responsibility to store and dispose of them legally. Illegal dumping, stockpiling and improper storage of waste tyres is an ongoing issue across the state, with serious implications for public safety and the environment.

Poorly managed waste tyres pose a significant fire risk, particularly in summer, when high temperatures increase the chance of ignition. Tyre fires are difficult to extinguish and can burn for extended periods, producing dense, toxic smoke.

To protect the environment, communities and first responders from harm, discover more about the regulatory requirements for proper storage and disposal of waste tyres:

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Your-environment/Waste/industrial-waste/tyres

Supplied.



Set Sail on a Life-Changing Adventure!

Young people from rural and regional areas have a rare opportunity to take part in an unforgettable ocean adventure aboard the tall ship Young Endeavour. The Upper Hunter Shire Council is now accepting nominations for the 11-day voyage, which challenges participants to develop confidence, resilience, and leadership skills while working as part of a ship's crew.

The program is designed to be hands-on, providing real-world experiences that encourage teamwork, problem-solving, and personal growth. Supported by local businesses and community groups, the voyage gives young people a chance to push their limits and return home with memories and skills that last a lifetime.

Nominations close on 13 February 2026, and participants are selected through a nomination process. For more information about the trip and how to nominate, visit the Young Endeavour page on Council's website. For general information about the program, see the official Young Endeavour website.

If you know a young person ready for a challenge at sea, this is the perfect opportunity to encourage them to apply.

Supplied.



DISCOVER LIFE ACCORDING TO JESUS



Got questions about God, the world, and you?

The 321 course invites you to see life the way Jesus does. Over the course of 4 sessions, we will consider Jesus' vision for life through interactive videos that help us better understand God, the world, and ourselves.

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Hosted by: **Upper Hunter Presbyterian Church**

First session: **7-Feb-2026**

Time: **3pm**

Address: **37 Guernsey St. Scone NSW**

Cost: **Free**

Register at: www.upperhunterpc.com/321



TERM 1 CALENDAR 2026

Children's Mobile Playgroup

0-4 years of age

February 2026

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1	2nd McCullys Gap Hall	3rd Denman St. Josephs Hall	4th Gundy Linga Longa Inn	5th Murrurundi Public School	6th Cassilis Public School
2	9th Hebden Hall	10th Ellerston Public School	11th Rouchel Hall	12th Merriwa St. Josephs School	13th Wingen Hall
3	16th McCullys Gap	17th Denman	18th Gundy	19th Murrurundi	20th Cassilis
4	23rd Hebden	24th Ellerston	25th Rouchel	26th Merriwa	27th Wingen

March 2026

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
5	2nd McCullys Gap	3rd Denman	4th Gundy	5th Murrurundi	6th Cassilis
6	9th Hebden	10th Ellerston	11th Rouchel	12th Merriwa	13th Wingen
7	16th McCullys Gap	17th Denman	18th Gundy	19th Murrurundi	20th Cassilis
8	23rd Hebden	24th Ellerston	25th Rouchel	26th Merriwa	27th Wingen

April 2026

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9	30th McCullys Gap	31st Denman	1st Gundy	2nd Murrurundi	3rd PUBLIC HOLIDAY

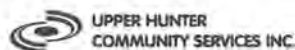
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State Matters with Dave Layzell MP

UNCLAIMED CASH

Almost \$300 million is sitting in the NSW Government's unclaimed money pool as the new year begins and it needs to be returned to the rightful owners. Unclaimed money is money that you are legally entitled to, but where a business has not been able to find you.

Money becomes unclaimed when people forget to update their name or contact details with businesses, have lost paperwork, or when estates are unaware of funds belonging to deceased relatives.

The unclaimed money register, managed by Revenue NSW, includes funds from overpayments, uncashed cheques, dividends, refunds, and other amounts owed to individuals. If you have money owing, you fill in a form and provide identification and your connection to the money with claims typically verified and processed within a month.

To find out if you have any unclaimed money, search the Revenue NSW website: www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/unclaimed-money.

SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARY

June 2026 marks 100 years since the Aberdeen Rail Disaster and Upper Hunter Shire Council is preparing to remember the tragedy. Expressions of interest are currently being invited from community members interested in participating in the Aberdeen Rail Disaster Commemoration Committee.

The commemoration will focus on recognising and honouring the remarkable response of Aberdeen community members who came together in the aftermath. Any resident of the Upper Hunter Shire Local Government Area is welcome to nominate.

Nominations close on Friday 6 February with more information available at: www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au/Public-notice/EOI-Members-of-the-Aberdeen-Rail-Disaster-Commemoration-Committee

SAFE STORAGE REMINDER

The NSW Police Force Rural Crime Prevention Team has renewed its reminder to firearms licence holders about the safe storage requirements for weapons.

Officers continue to see examples of non-compliant safes including flimsy lockers which do not have a three-point locking system and are only secured by an externally fitted lock and hasp, or pad bolt secured with a padlock.

If firearms are found to be stored in safes such as these, firearms may be seized, and license holders may have their firearms license suspended.

The firearms legislation sets out the responsibilities as a firearms owner in relation to safe storage including ensuring that the



firearm is kept safe, is not lost or stolen and does not come into the possession of a person who is not authorised to possess the firearm.

If you have recently moved and not had your safe inspected, please contact your local police for a Safe Storage Inspection to be conducted: https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/firearms/safe_storage

ALLOWANCE INCREASE

Foster and kinship carers of vulnerable children in out-of-home care across NSW have received a 20 per cent increase to their care allowance. The tax-free allowance rise, which commenced from 1 January, is designed to help carers manage rising cost of living pressures and support the children and young people in their care.

The increase benefits all authorised carers receiving statutory care, supported care, guardianship or adoption allowances supported by either the Department of Communities and Justice or non-government organisations. This lift in the day-to-day expenses of caring for children, will see a carer of a typical 14-year-old receive \$4,576 more per year, and a carer for a typical 5-year-old receive an additional \$3,411 per year.

For more information, visit the NSW Government Community Services website: www.nsw.gov.au/community-services/foster-relative-and-kinship-care/caring-for-children-and-young-people/financial-assistance/foster-care-allowance-uplift-from-1-january-2026

REGISTER NOW!

The Upper Hunter will be one of the first locations this year to host the Rural Women's Network Skills Roadshow.

Sixteen workshops are planned for the opening half of 2026, with Scone scheduled for 20-21 March. Over 300 women participated in the free workshops last year, which empower regional and rural women with essential skills in first aid, and mental health crisis support through fee-free training with St John Ambulance.

The workshops include skills to respond

effectively in emergency situations, recognise mental health issues, recognise situations where people may be in imminent crisis, provide appropriate interventions and learn where to direct people for further support.

A full day workshop will be offered for both First Aid and Mental Health in each location with registrations for Scone now open: www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/women-nsw/rural-womens-network/rwn-events/rural-womens-network-skills-roadshow-2026

TICKET TIME

Free tickets are available for Seniors from Tuesday 27 January to the upcoming Seniors Festival concerts in Sydney.

A glittering lineup of performers are set to grace the stage during the four performances at the TikTok Entertainment Centre Darling Harbour (formerly ICC Sydney Theatre) on 11 and 12 March at 11am and 2.45pm.

The line-up includes Dami Im, Nathan Foley, beloved entertainer Jay Laga'aia, rising star Olivia Fox and powerhouse performer Tarryn Stokes. Concerts will be livestreamed to ensure seniors unable to attend in person can still enjoy the festivities.

Tickets for the Premier's Gala Concerts are available from 9am on 27 January at: www.nsw.gov.au/arts-and-culture/seniors-festival/whats-on/premiers-concert

The NSW Seniors Festival Expo will also return this year with exhibitors offering services and support to seniors, including interactive workshops, food and fitness tips.

TIDY LITTLE EARNER

The former NSW Nationals and Liberals Government litter reduction initiative, Return and Earn, continues to be nice little earner for people across the state. Latest figures show recyclers have now received \$1.5 billion in refunds by returning a record 15 billion containers.

Enthusiasm for Return and Earn has seen the tally of bottles, cartons and cans returned through the network soar from 14 billion to 15 billion containers in less than six months.

Return and Earn has also become a key fundraising platform for charities and community groups, with over \$91.5 million in container refund donations and fees from hosting return points since December 2017.

Preparations are underway to expand the scheme to accept wine and spirit bottles and larger drink containers from mid-2027.

Supplied.

Contact:

94 John Street Singleton 2330
upperhunter@parliament.nsw.gov.au
6543 1065

Climate Canaries, Human Fingerprints and NET ZERO

Community Climate Talk | Saturday 21 February, 2–4pm, Muswellbrook RSL, Bridge Street, Upstairs – Conference Room 2

With ongoing confusion around global warming and Net Zero policy, this community presentation aims to provide clear, science-based insight into the human role in modern climate change, the rationale behind Net Zero, and its potential consequences. Attendees will be guided through evidence and research not often covered in mainstream media. Guest speaker: Dr Dennys Angove, atmospheric chemist and former CSIRO Principal Research Scientist. All welcome. Questions encouraged. Free admission. Presented by Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group Inc. **Supplied.**

Art & Culture

Upper Hunter Artist Gail Southwell Showcases Her Work at Small Forest Wines

Small Forest Wines is kicking off its 2026 exhibition program with the work of local artist Gail Southwell, a long-term resident of Scone. The exhibition, which closes on Sunday 29 March 2026, showcases Gail's skill and passion for capturing the beauty of the Upper Hunter and Australia's unique landscapes.

Gail's art is deeply influenced by her upbringing along the banks of the Hunter River, inspiring her to explore themes drawn from nature and her local environment. Over the past 20 years, she has honed her craft across a variety of media, from soft pastels and acrylics to pen, ink, and more recently oils and watercolours. Her work has been recognised in numerous local exhibitions and competitions, including winning the Viola Bromley Award for works on paper in 2022 at Muswellbrook Regional Gallery.

Art is not only a creative outlet for Gail—it's also a way to give back to the community. She is an active member of Scone Arts and Crafts and the Pastel Society of Australia, fostering connections with fellow artists and contributing to the local arts scene.

Small Forest Wines, located at 5052 Jerrys Plains Road, Denman, is open Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 4pm. Visitors are invited to explore Gail's works in a relaxed setting, surrounded by the winery's picturesque landscape. For more information, visit the winery's Facebook page.

Supplied.



pictured above: photos of Gail Southwell's artworks courtesy of Small Forest Wines



Barnaby's Opinion Piece

When The Prime Minister called parliament back early to vote on Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026, it was such a missed opportunity to focus, laser like, on the scourge of antisemitism so vilely exhibited in the mass murder at Bondi Beach. Instead, the Federal Parliament has voted for restrictions on the rights of farmers and recreational shooters and then passed a bill where a cornucopia of issues, current and in the future, were given the same gravitas as antisemitism under the mantle of "hate crimes".

Where this becomes specifically concerning is on page 12 of the Hate Bill where it states and I quote: A hate crime is also conduct (whether engaged in before or after this section commences): (ii) would constitute an offence against a provision of a law of a State or Territory as is in force at the commencement of this section.

This law comes with a possible 15 year jail term. So does this mean that if the ACT Legislature determines something is "Hate" that, for instance, a Facebook post could have someone in dire legal trouble anywhere in Australia even though they had zero involvement in anything antisemitic but merely an affront to other issues that the ACT Legislature had determined was hate. This was all new and had not been examined in an inquiry before the bill was guillotined, that is forced to a vote after only a couple of hours of us getting to see it. This is Bill is dangerous, misleading as to the expectations of the public and ultimately chaotic.

Sadly, only seven voted against the bill.

Supplied.

Applications Open

People interested in providing input into the future management of NSW national parks can now apply to join the National Parks and Wildlife Service's (NPWS) regional advisory committees.

There are eight committees, one for each of the NPWS operational branches such as Hunter Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Northern Inland, with each committee having 12-17 members. The committees have an important role as the voice of the local community and interest groups to help inform park management. Current committees will see their term end on 30 June 2026 with prospective applicants for the next four-year term to apply by Monday 16 February.

To learn more and submit an expression of interest head to: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/advisory-committees/regional-advisory-committees make this sound like an article

Supplied.

The Silent Forests Part One

by Doctor Dirt

I hope everyone had a very good festive season.

Prior to Christmas I had the privilege to visit our nearby New Zealand neighbours. Apart from being called "The Land of the Long White Cloud" it is also known as the "Land of the Silent Forests". There is a pronounced difference when travelling through forests, mountainous areas, farmland and urban areas. Pardon the pun the silence is deafening. The bird life and bird songs are nearly nonexistent. Across most locations and ecosystems introduced European Bird Species such as sparrows, black birds and indian-miners are often the only or dominant bird species.

There are several reasons native bird species have been decimated. Apart from relatively late human settling on the islands and their impact, climate change, clearing, loss of habitat and invasive weeds. The overwhelming killer of the native bird life are the introduced feral animals.

It was explained during my discussions with scientists and experts during my visit. Feral animals' impact is so significant it has driven many species to the edge of extinction.

All the native birds and other wildlife have evolved in an isolated environment and as such their unique closed environment has left them prone to the various introduced feral mammals.

Factors that caused their vulnerability to feral animals are as follows. A number of bird species became flightless as they had no native mammal predators and no need to fly to escape and evolved to fill gaps that normally mammals would take. The only land-based mammals in New Zealand are two bat species there are no carnivorous animals. A major defense of most of the New Zealand native birds against their native predators is to stay still. Raptors were their main predator and freezing still is the preferred defense. Historically, this instinctive behaviour served the birds well. Introducing feral animals into the environment, the native birds became inquisitive and often approach the noises to investigate. They have no instincts to relate noise generated from feral animals to danger. This made them very easy targets. Several of the native bird species also emit strong odours. This assists the native birds in locating each other in the dense forests. However, this makes it easy for feral animals to follow their scent. They also often roost and nest on the ground and low hollows where they are easily found by predators making especially nesting birds and their eggs.



pictured above: the amazing Kakapo

All the above native bird traits have made them very vulnerable to the many introduced mammal predators. Many of these predators were introduced to control other feral animals. The consequences were mass extinctions and many other native bird species critically endangered. Five of the Kiwi subspecies are endangered or classified as vulnerable. I was lucky to see a wide variety critically endangered bird species close-up. This occurred when I visited Stewart Island, one of the main safe breeding

island reserves, the at Te Anau Breeding Sanctuary and Auckland Zoo. The two birds that really captivated me were Kakapo and Takahe.

The Kakapo is a flightless parrot, the heaviest parrot on the planet. It is up to 64cm long and can live close to 90 years. The Kakapo population numbers dropped to just thirty individuals. They have recovered to 236 individuals by 2026. In the wild they rely on Rimu Berry abundance that assist as a breeding trigger and a nutritional boost. The Rimu Berry Tree fruiting cycle varies; often high yields are 3 to 5 years apart; this season it is producing a high yield. Scientists expect most of the breeding age females (about 60) will produce quite a number of young. This will assist greatly with the very vulnerable population.



The Takahe is a flightless swamp hen that was once thought to be extinct but rediscovered in mountainous areas of the South Island in 1948. In the 1980s their numbers dropped to 118 known individuals. They now number about 500 birds.

In the next edition (Part 2) I will cover in detail the New Zealand Predator Free 2050 Program developed in 2015 to eradicate the wide range of feral animals that include Feral Cats, Possums, Rats, Stoats, Ferrets and Weasels. A wide range of accomplished wildlife killers.

Both countries can learn from each other on methods, research, type and number of resources, programs and technology to control and eradicate feral animals from our environments.

pictured above: Photograph taken by me a Takahe Mother and Newley Born Chick

Supplied by Steve Eccles.

Steve Eccles - steveecclesconsulting@gmail.com

Mobile: 0400 808 873

Earle's Column

continued from page 2

majority of those individuals were 'ordinary' people who recognised a need and then set out to develop a solution to benefit their target audience.

Now, I'm not sure how many blokes read "The Aberdeen Whisper". But it seems that amongst the recipients of this year's local awards there is a significant gender imbalance. So, brothers, how about looking around you and taking note of the blokes of Aberdeen, (and there are plenty of them!), who would be worthy recipients of the 2027 honours bestowed by their community.

Friends, nominations for these awards 'kind of' sneak up on us towards the end of the year. If you know someone now, in February, who you think might be a worthy recipient in 2027 make a note on your calendar, either digital or physical, to 'rattle the bars' of Upper Hunter Shire Council's 'cage' and get a nomination form in September/October and make your case. You may well be able to bask in the reflected glory another citizen's achievement.

Well, that's it to kick-off 2026. To each of you, Sally and I wish a healthy and rewarding 2026 that delivers what each person desires, and maybe a little bit extra on top!

Supplied.

Join the Aberdeen Rail Disaster Commemoration Committee

Upper Hunter Shire Council invites expressions of interest from community members to join the Aberdeen Rail Disaster Commemoration Committee.

This committee has been established to plan and coordinate the centenary commemoration of the Aberdeen Rail Disaster, marking 100 years since the event in June 1926. The focus of the commemoration is to recognise and honour the efforts of the Aberdeen community members who responded to the disaster. This is an opportunity to represent your community and contribute directly to how this important historical event is acknowledged.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The Aberdeen Rail Disaster Commemoration Committee is a subcommittee of the Community Advisory Committee – Aberdeen District and will operate as a sunset committee, dissolving after the commemorative event.

THE COMMITTEE WILL BE MADE UP OF:

At least one (1) member of the Community Advisory Committee – Aberdeen District.

Up to nine (9) community representatives

The committee will determine its own meeting frequency, with a minimum of two meetings per year, and will report back to the Community Advisory Committee – Aberdeen District.

WHO CAN APPLY

Any resident of the Upper Hunter Shire Council Local Government Area may apply to be appointed as a community representative on the committee.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations open: Friday 9 January 2026

Nominations close: 4:30pm Friday 6 February 2026

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION

Complete your application online via Council's website

Supplied.

Athletics

Aberdeen Athletics

Hope everyone has enjoyed the break. The second half of the season resumes on Friday 6 February, 6pm, Harrison Oval, Jefferson Park.

Results from carnivals over the break:

Hunter Zone Championships held at Cook Park, Singleton on 13-14 December 2025.

8'S LILY CASBEN

100m heat 7th 19.59; final 7th 19.65

700m P/S 6th 3:19-06
Long Jump 2nd 2.72m
Shot Put 2nd 3.90m

10'S ISSY CASBEN

70m heat 10th 14.49
400m 11th 1:48-88
Long Jump 10th 1.98m
Shot Put 6th 3.33m

12'S IMOGEN FALZON

100m heat 4th 15.12; final 4th 15.04
200m heat 4th 32.36; final 3rd 31.50
Long Jump 5th 3.33m

13'S PENNY BROCHTRUP

100m heat 8th 15.19; final 7th 15.79

From the above results Lily, Imogen, Penny, Grace & Archie have all qualified to represent Aberdeen at the Region 2 Championships to be held in Maitland on 13-15 February 2026.

NSW Country Championships held at Dubbo 16-18 January 2026

15'S ARCHIE SELLERS-BENTLEY

Hammer Throw 1st 41.90m
Discus 2nd 42.20m
Shot Put 2nd 13.59m.

Many thanks to all the above athletes for representing Aberdeen at these Championships.

Supplied by Denise Bell, Secretary.

Long Jump 9th 3.50m
Shot Put 5th 5.85m

15'S GRACE PARTRIDGE

800m 3rd 4:11-59
1500m 3rd 9:46-87
1500m race walk 1st 13:47-73

Triple Jump 2nd 5.97m
Discus 2nd 8.49m
Javelin 3rd 6.55m

15'S ARCHIE SELLERS-BENTLEY

Shot Put 1st 13.74m
Javelin 1st 38.19m
Discus 1st 43.07m



left: It's a Wrap by local artist Peter Morris



right: Duo Bosco classical guitar duo

Murrurundi Festival – Art in the Landscape

Over three days (27, 28 & 29 March) the Murrurundi community invites everyone to come up to the Murrurundi Festival and join us in celebrating the performing and visual arts.

The theme for the 2026 Murrurundi Festival is Art in the Landscape.

For both residents and visitors, the most compelling aspect of Murrurundi is the landscape. Situated between Mt Helen to the north and The Five Fingers sandstone formations to the south, the natural beauty of the locale dominates. The 2026 Festival will celebrate the valley by taking the art into the landscape.

The Festival is family focussed and includes Puppetry, Art Exhibitions and Concerts.

- Little Wing Puppets will perform for the local schools
- Art Trail - over dozen Galleries + Studios will be open displaying the work of local artists
- Recognisably Murrurundi is a new Landscape Art Prize. It is open to all artists and the subject matter of their art piece must be recognisably of the Murrurundi district. The Exhibition is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday
- Art of the Motorcycle showcases some great custom designs
- Art of the Kite returns to Wilson Oval on Saturday, everyone is invited to Come Fly a Kite!
- the popular Fairy Picnic returns to Paradise Park on Sunday morning
- Sunday afternoon concert featuring classical guitarists Duo Bosco at the historic St Paul's – the acoustics are amazing!
- Saturday Night Disco & Light Show at Rosedale
- Random Art in the streets including It's a Wrap and the Big Easel
- Murra County Markets on Saturday and Sunday

For more information, please see www.murrurundifestival.com.au

Supplied.

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MEMBER FOR UPPER HUNTER

HOW I CAN HELP YOU

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THE NATIONALS
for Regional NSW



Authorised by Dave Layzell MP, 94 John Street, Singleton NSW 2330
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**As your State MP I can make enquiries and
representations on your behalf for matters involving
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Lorn
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Maitland Vale

The Latest on Vets Golf

PERFECT SUMMER GOLF FOR SCONE VETS

The 37 Vets at Scone Golf Club on Tuesday, Jan 20 enjoyed ideal summer conditions on this excellent course.

Thank you to Captain Mick McCormick for finalising the Draw compiled by Ross Banks. Thank you too to Lyn Banks for all the up to date handicaps.

Andy Medway won the event with 43 points from Paul Constable second 40, Garry Carter third 38 CB, June Jukes 38 fourth, Red Palmer fifth 35 CB (Glad you are fit enough to play again Red), Lyn Banks sixth 35 CB and Bob Lawman seventh 35 CB.

Balls went to Glen Standing 35, Gary Leake, Mick Alsleben, Dave Bradshaw and Mark Middleton 34, Annie Woods and Louise Mathews 33, and on 32 George Campbell, Robert Colbert, Captain Mick McCormick, Bruce Hutchison, Ross Banks and Tony Pearson. The Bradman's trophy was won by Graham Newton.

Nearest the Pins: 4th Louise Mathews 8th George Campbell 13th Brett Dann 17th Gary Leake.

Captain Mick McCormick will be sounding out our individual members over the coming weeks and months, concerning possible venues for our future annual championships.

SOLID SCORING DESPITE HEAT AT MBK VETS DAY

There was the usual good attendance of 26 players for the Vets' Stb event at the top 18 holes course in the area, MBK, on Jan 27 on a day of high temperatures forecast.

Dave Kerr won the event with 40 points from Steve McGhie 36 CB second CB, Reg Davidson 36 third, Garry Carter 35 fourth, Andy Medway fifth 34 and sixth Mick Alsleben 32 CB. Balls went to Captain Mick McCormick 32, and on 31 Lyn Banks, Des Partridge, Glenn Googe, Alan Flanagan, Dave Perfrement and on 30 Red Palmer.

Thank you to the Proshop for handling the cards and the scores, and to Treasurer Bon Minch for the great lunches and the beers/drinks he arranged. The Bradman's trophy, kindly donated by Gary Leake and associates, was won by Ross Banks. Nearest the Pins: 5th Garry Carter 8th Alan Flanagan 11th Tony Pearson 14th (second shot) Mick Alsleben 17th Andy Medway.

FUTURE GAMES:

- Feb 3, at Aberdeen 2BBB&IND Stb
- Feb 10, Stb at Denman Medal round
- Feb 17, Stb at Scone, please book-in with Ross Banks
- Feb 24, at MBK, Stb, please book-in with the Proshop.

New members welcome. Shotgun start by 8.00am. (We hope you are well again soon Terry Mitchell.)

Supplied.

Sports

Aberdeen Rugby League

by Jacob Dallah

2026 GROUP 21 REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN

As preparations ramp up for the 2026 season, the club is calling on players and volunteers - new and familiar faces alike, to be part of what promises to be a memorable year both on and off the field.

Registrations are now open, with fees set at \$280 for Senior Men and \$180 for Ladies and Under 18s. Whether you're pulling the boots back on, joining for the first time, or returning as a valued volunteer, the club prides itself on being a welcoming, community-driven family in black and orange.

With momentum building and excitement already in the air, now is the perfect time to lock in your place for 2026 and help shape a season to remember. Registrations can be completed online at: <https://profile.mysideline.com.au/register/>

The countdown to 2026 has begun, and the club looks forward to welcoming everyone back for another big year.

ABERDEEN TIGERS CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS AHEAD OF SEASON

The Aberdeen Tigers are inviting community members to step forward and play a vital role in the club's 2026 season, with volunteers sought to fill League Safe and Trainer positions.

As the new season approaches, the club is keen to welcome both experienced helpers and those considering volunteering for the first time. These roles are essential to the smooth and safe running of the club and offer a rewarding way to be involved behind the scenes.

An information and meet-and-greet evening will be held at McKinnon Oval on Thursday, 29 January, starting at 6:30pm. The evening will provide an opportunity to meet the coaching staff, engage with players, and reconnect with fellow volunteers in a relaxed and friendly setting.

For those unable to attend, the club encourages interested parties to contact them directly for further details. With strong volunteer support forming the backbone of the Tigers, the club looks forward to another successful season built on community spirit and commitment.

MILTON AND FOOT SHINE AS TIGERS' YOUTH DEPTH COMES TO THE FORE

The Aberdeen Tigers celebrated a proud moment recently with Casey Milton and Harry Foot selected in the Northern Tigers Laurie Daley squads. The pair took on the Riverina Bulls at Pirtek Park in Singleton, earning representative honours as a reward for their hard work and dedication.

Despite several players moving on for study and work, the Tigers' Under 18s remain in a strong position, with the majority of last season's Grand Final squad returning alongside a highly successful 2025 Under 16s group stepping up. The blend of experience and emerging talent has created healthy competition within the squad. With more teams and familiar faces back in the competition, the Tigers are shaping as a competitive force once again.

Supplied.

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A big thank you to the Warrior Disability Service staff, parents and participants for delivering your Whisper. The service offers people with disabilities choices through group activities, one-to-one support, and in-home support. NDIS registered. Sally Pereira is the Director of Participant Services. The office is situated at Shop 12 Brook Street Plaza, Muswellbrook, 0432 680 936.

Cellarbrations

JUST SOME OF OUR SPECIALS COMMENCING
MONDAY 9TH FEBRUARY TILL SUNDAY 22ND FEBRUARY 2026

CARLTON DRY MID 3.5% STUBBIES	\$ 52.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 50.00
TOOHEYS NEW/ULTRA STUBBIES & CANS	\$ 56.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 54.00
GREAT NORTHERN SUPER CRISP STUBBIES		\$ 57.00
MILLER CHILL STUBBIES		\$ 58.00
BETTER BEER MIDDY ULC 30PKCANS		\$ 60.00
XXXX GOLD 30PK CANS	\$ 60.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 58.00
HAHN SUPER DRY 4.6% 30PK CANS	\$ 66.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 64.00
VB 30PK CANS		\$ 70.00
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CANADIAN CLUB 4.8% 10PKS	\$ 48.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 46.00
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WOODSTOCK 6% 10PKS		\$ 52.00
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GRANTS SCOTCH 700ML		\$ 49.00
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JAMESON IRISH WHISKY 700ML	\$ 54.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 52.00
KRAKEN RUM 700ML		\$ 63.00
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WYNNS CORE RANGE WINES	\$ 17.00 EA OR 2 FOR	\$ 32.00 – 2 FOR \$ 30.00 LOYALTY
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JUST SOME OF THE PRODUCTS NEW TO OUR CELLAR SAVERS PROMO
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XXXX GOLD STUBBIES & XXXX ULTRA STUBBIES		\$ 50.00
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KIRIN ICHIBAN STUBBIES		\$ 60.00
ASAHI STUBBIES		\$ 64.00
CRUISER 4PK BOTTLES	\$ 20.00 4PK OR 2 4PKS FOR	\$ 36.00 OR \$95.00 CTN
BUNDY UP & RED RUM 1LTR		\$ 70.00
JACOBS CLASSIC RANGE WINES	\$ 10.00 EA OR 2 FOR	\$ 18.00
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