

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

March 2026

[www.facebook.com/aberdeenwhisper](https://www.facebook.com/aberdeenwhisper)

## St Catherine's Claims Grand Champion Steer on Debut to Canberra Royal

On their first trip to the Canberra Royal, St Catherine's Catholic College, Singleton has made an impressive debut, returning home with a broad ribbon and the Grand Champion Steer title. Bred on Ross and Wendy Lawrence's "Rockhill" property at Rouchel the Limousin x Angus entry weighed 576 kilograms.

The steer gained further success in the Hook section with a second place award in its class. The result marked a significant achievement for the college with the broad ribbon symbolising the Grand Champion award.

A delighted Jo Towers, Agriculture/Primary Industries Leader of Learning at St Catherine's College praised the students dedication in the preparation of the



*pictured above: St Catherine's Jacob Merrick with breeders Wendy and Ross Lawrence*

steers which started over one hundred days out.

"It makes such a difference in preparation when you have such a good quality steer" "Lots of muscle and fat cover across a broad spine and outstanding hindquarters," she said. Success has also come to St Catherine's College at last year's Beef Bonanza.

## Celebrate Seniors Festival 2026 Across the Upper Hunter

Seniors across the Upper Hunter are invited to embrace connection, creativity and community spirit as the 2026 NSW Seniors Festival comes to town this March.

Upper Hunter Shire Council is hosting two vibrant weeks of FREE events and activities from Monday 2 March to Sunday 15 March 2026, giving local seniors the chance to get involved, try something new and celebrate the journey so far.

Held as part of the statewide NSW Seniors Festival, this year's theme — Live Life in Colour — encourages older residents to look ahead to new adventures while embracing ageing with creativity, confidence and an active lifestyle.

A diverse program of events will take place right across the Shire, offering opportunities to stay active, learn new skills, explore creative interests and connect with others in the community. From social gatherings and workshops to health-focused activities and special interest sessions, there will be something for everyone.

Council is encouraging seniors, their families and friends to explore the full program and start planning their festival experience.

For event details and the complete schedule, visit Council's website at: [www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)

**Supplied.**

## Community Invited to Join Solar Farm Advisory Committee

Upper Hunter Shire Council is calling for expressions of interest from residents to join the Goulburn River Solar Farm Community Enhancement Fund Advisory Committee.

The committee will oversee the administration of the Community Enhancement Fund established under the Goulburn River Solar Farm Voluntary Planning Agreement. Its key role is to assess funding applications from not-for-profit community groups, Council and Crown Reserve Trusts, and make recommendations to Council for projects and programs that benefit the local community.

The committee will include:

- Two Councillors (one Chair) – voting
- One Council officer – non-voting
- Two community representatives – voting
- One company representative – voting

Community representatives must live within the Upper Hunter Shire (and within approximately 30km of the solar farm), have no financial agreement with the solar farm company, and demonstrate relevant skills and experience.

Nominations open: Friday 27 February 2026

Nominations close: 4:30pm Thursday 26 March 2026

Eligible residents are encouraged to apply online via Council's website before the closing date.

**Supplied.**

# Whisper Trivia

1. What is the term for a group of flamingos?
2. Which famous graffiti artist comes from Bristol?
3. Who invented the World Wide Web, and when?
4. How many keys does a classic piano have?
5. The 2026 Winter Olympics, starting February 6, are hosted by which country?
6. Australia has over 750 species of which type of animal, more than any other country?
7. What is the northernmost capital city in the world?
8. In the context of email, what does "CC" stand for?
9. Which popular TV show featured house Targaryen and Stark?
10. Who did Forbes name the youngest self-made billionaire in 2019?



- Answers:
1. Flamboyance
  2. Banksy
  3. Tim Berners-Lee, 1990
  4. 88
  5. Italy
  6. Reptiles
  7. Reykjavik, Iceland
  8. Carbon Copy
  9. Game of Thrones
  10. Kylie Jenner

# Business Directory

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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 5*

### "IMPROPER USE OF FUNDS" AND "A BREACH OF THE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT) ACT"

The 2026 Upper Hunter Shire Council year has certainly started with controversy.

Back in November 2025, Councillors were advised that, in its draft report on the Council's finances from the NSW Auditor General, UHSC had erred by using 'restricted' funds to meet 'unrestricted', or perhaps, general expenses. The Auditor General labelled these issues as "improper use of funds" and "a breach of the Local Government Act". For such actions, there are possibly serious consequences. As part of the November advice, the General Manager acknowledged the problem but said that using the 'incorrect' funds was necessary to meet Council's obligations to the broad spectrum of its creditors, (those to whom Council has a debt), including staff, suppliers and contractors.

So, what are 'restricted funds'?

The largest part of Council's annual income is comprised of various grants that come from the State and Federal Governments. More often than not, these are 'restricted' to a particular purpose. For example, the completion of the Merriwa to Willow Tree Road, (MR358), has come about through a mixture of NSW and Federal government grants to the tune of nearly \$50 million! Our Shire is exceptionally grateful for these grants because that sort of capital expenditure is way beyond our financial means.

However, there is a 'sting in the tail' of this funding generosity from the higher levels of government. In most large project cases, such as MR358, neither state or federal authorities, having advised of grant funding, will send the total grant to UHSC up front. And this creates a significant cashflow problem. After funding is announced, Council needs to go to tender, evaluate tenders and then award a contract to the successful bidder, all of which involves expenditure on the part of UHSC. And the work starts. As the project progresses the contractor(s) will submit invoices for work carried out. Additional grant funding is then sent from whichever funding body, or bodies, are involved. But the grant funding tends to lag behind the actual payments which means that Council needs to dip into its consolidated funds, that might include some, as yet, unused other 'restricted' funds to pay a supplier or contractor or even meet its employment obligations. **As soon as additional funds arrive for the specific project, any funds from other restricted grants are promptly repaid.** What needs to be emphasised, is that there has been no fraudulent misappropriation of funds.

To not manage our cashflow in this manner would require some very unpalatable decisions on the part of Council, such as:

- Cut back on services and probably staff.
- Borrow additional funds to boost our cash reserves
- Delay or postpone works that have been committed to in our annual Delivery Plan/Operational Plan, DPOP.
- Delay or postpone emergency repair works that result from natural disasters.

There are two really disappointing aspects to how this "improper use of funds" and

## 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.



# MACH Energy

## Mount Pleasant Operation

The Mount Pleasant Joint Venture owns & manages the Mount Pleasant Operation.

The Mount Pleasant Operation operates on a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week roster.

Please contact the following **FREE CALL** numbers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you have any questions or concerns.

**COMMUNITY HOTLINE: 1800 886 889**

**BLASTING HOTLINE: 1800 931 872**

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES: 1800 931 873**

For further information, including **BLAST** times and location, visit our website: [www.machenergy.com.au](http://www.machenergy.com.au) or email: [info@machenergy.com.au](mailto:info@machenergy.com.au)

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[www.jtsrealty.com.au](http://www.jtsrealty.com.au)

## Aberdeen Tigers Women's Tackle Raffle Kicks Off to Back 2026 Season

The Aberdeen Tigers are calling on the community to get behind their Women's Tackle side, launching a fundraising raffle to support the team's preparations for the 2026 season.

As the club continues to grow its female program, the fundraiser aims to provide vital financial support to help players with equipment, training resources and competition costs as they build toward another exciting year.

Club representatives said the raffle is not just about raising money — it's about backing the future of women's sport in the region. "This is an important step for our Women's Tackle side as they prepare to join and grow this exciting team," a club spokesperson said. "Every ticket sold directly supports our players and strengthens the future of our club."

A highlight of the fundraiser is a generous contribution from the Albury family — Albert, Caitlin and Simone — who purchased and assembled a substantial prize pack for the raffle. Adding to the community spirit, Scone CRT kindly donated a 19-litre esky to complete the package.

**The raffle winner will take home a picnic-themed prize valued at \$450, including:**

- 19L esky
- Wicker picnic basket
- Insulated picnic basket
- Picnic table
- Two bottles of prosecco
- Two wine glasses

- 3m x 3m picnic rug
- Cheeseboard with knife set
- Tiger statue

Tickets are priced at \$10 per number, following the same format as previous years. Supporters can select their preferred numbers, with multiple purchases encouraged — for example, numbers 1–5 would total \$50. Payments can be made via bank transfer, with entrants asked to include their name and the number of tickets purchased in the transaction description. The winner will be drawn at approximately 8pm on March 24. Club officials say the raffle is already generating strong interest and hope the broader community will rally behind the initiative.

"Women's tackle football continues to grow, and we're proud of the commitment and determination shown by our players," the spokesperson said. "We thank everyone who continues to support our girls and the future of the Aberdeen Tigers."

**Supplied.**



## Upper Hunter Youth Selected for 2026 Young Endeavour Voyage

Four outstanding Upper Hunter students will represent the region on the 2026 voyage of the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme, following a highly competitive selection evening held last week as part of the UHSC Youth Leadership Program.

The special event brought together 15 nominees, their families and sponsors for a memorable night on the Council calendar. With eight male and seven female nominees, the standard was once again exceptionally high. From this impressive group, four young leaders were selected — two female and two male — to take part in the life-changing tall ship experience.

**The 2026 Young Endeavour recipients are:**

- Olympia Magnus – Merriwa, Merriwa Central High School
- Cadence Tudor – Merriwa, Merriwa Central School
- Conner Hyde – Murrurundi, St Joseph's Catholic College Aberdeen
- Will Foley – Scone, Scone High School

More than 40 people attended the evening, which featured a light afternoon tea for guests. Councillor Pat Ryan served as master of ceremonies, guiding proceedings and congratulating all nominees on their achievements.

Sponsors played an important role on the night, drawing the successful names from the barrel. Representatives included Leonie Cantrell from Murrurundi Lions Club, Lindy Hunt from Scone Rotary Club and Carolyn Carter from Scone and District CWA.

The Young Endeavour voyage invites participants to step outside their comfort zones, work together at sea and build leadership, teamwork and resilience skills in a unique maritime setting. The four successful students will now prepare to embark on an unforgettable adventure, proudly representing the Upper Hunter while developing skills that will serve them well into the future.

**Supplied.**

# Awakening quilting workshop

with Brenda from Flip La K

## ALL LEVELS WELCOME!

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## Earle's Column

*continued from page 2*

"breach of the Act" have played out since November.

First, the Auditor General invited UHSC to respond to its draft report with the indication that our defence of our actions would be included in its final report. That was done including detail similar to the above. But the Auditor General chose NOT to publish that defence and to highlight the breaches above. The final report, which goes to the NSW Government via the Minister for Local Government was then released publicly.

This is where the second PM reaction to the Auditor's report became messy. The public release created a minor 'feeding frenzy' on the part of some media outlets, and others, who chose to cause reputational damage to Upper Hunter Shire Council.

Unfortunately, some of that media reaction appears to have been based on a 'leaked' email from Council, highlighting the unpalatable options above as if they had, somehow, become Council policy. Again, that was misused in order to bring our Shire into disrepute.

The upshot of all this is that Rural and Regional Councils statewide, and probably nationwide, are all under severe financial stress because of having large geographic areas often with very low populations, which means low rate revenue, combined with extensive road and asset bases, which means that managing intermittent grant finances becomes crucial to survival.

### "AMALGAMATION IS THE SOLUTION"!

Flowing out of all this was, what must really be described as, a 'thought bubble'. That all these woes can be solved by amalgamating with our neighbour, Muswellbrook Shire Council.

Really? Is there a pot of gold in Muswellbrook at the end of a non-existent rainbow?

## Group 21 Quartet Earn Northern Tigers Selection After Narrow Loss



Four Bengalla Hunter Valley Group 21 Rugby League representatives have been recognised for their strong performances in Mudgee, earning selection in the Northern Tigers squad.

Mitch Taylor, Gabe Stafa, Ben Halliwell and Uiti Baker were standout performers in a hard-fought clash against the Western Rams on a warm day in Mudgee. Despite a determined effort, the side went down in a nail-biting finish, 24-22.

The narrow two-point margin reflected the intensity of the contest, with the Group 21 players pushing the Western Rams all the way in a high-quality encounter. Their performances have now been rewarded with selection in the Northern Tigers squad, with the team set to travel to Tamworth this Saturday for their next fixtures.

Supporters unable to attend will be able to watch the games streamed live on BarTV.

**Supplied.**

This idea was put as a Notice of Motion to the February Ordinary Meeting of Upper Hunter Shire Council. After a relatively short debate, it was not passed by seven votes to one.

The least said, the better!

**Supplied.**

# State Matters with Dave Layzell MP

## WATER GRANTS

Applications are now open for Lower Hunter organisations to lodge their bid for a share of the annual Hunter Water Love Water Grants.

One-off financial contributions up to \$10,000 are available to support water conservation and sustainability initiatives.

Community groups, schools and other not-for-profit organisations, are encouraged to put forward their ideas that help save water or improve environmental outcomes.

Applications will be accepted until Sunday 15 March with more details at:

[www.hunterwater.com.au/about/community/community-support/love-water-grants](http://www.hunterwater.com.au/about/community/community-support/love-water-grants)

## MODIFICATION ON DISPLAY

MACH Energy's application to modify the development consent for the Mount Pleasant open cut coal mine, near Muswellbrook, is currently on public exhibition until 9 March.

The proposed modification involves an extension of time for mining operations until the end of December 2032 and an increase to the approved coal extraction rate from 10.5 Million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) to 12.5 Mtpa.

During the period of the Modification, operational employment would be up to a maximum of 575 personnel.

The modification application and associated environmental assessment documents are available at: [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-8-extension-mine-life](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-8-extension-mine-life)

All public submissions must be made online through the NSW Planning Portal, with assistance available to make a submission or call Service NSW on 1300 305 695.

## DRIVER FATIGUE

Fatigue is one of the leading causes for crash deaths on NSW roads, with the vast majority of fatigue-related crashes happening on regional roads.

With that stark reality in focus, National Driver Fatigue Week is currently underway trying to reduce one of the most persistent and preventable causes of serious injury and death on Australian roads.

Every road user will face the onset of driver fatigue at some point and fatigue is not solved by willpower. For decades, the well-intentioned message to Australian motorists has been "get a good night's sleep" and "take regular breaks." However, the science is clear that the only solution for fatigue is sleep.

National Driver Fatigue Week promotes the Power Nap message encouraging drivers to stop and take a short, planned nap of 15-to-20 minutes when fatigue first appears. For more on this simple, evidence-based, real-time safety intervention while drivers are on the road, visit: <https://powernap.org.au/national-driver-fatigue-week/>



## HOME BIRTH SERVICE

Maitland and Hunter Valley women and families can now access public home birth services with a new pilot program at Maitland Hospital. The public home birthing service operates as part of the Maitland Midwifery Group Practice (MGP), offering planned home birth for eligible low-risk women.

Maitland Hospital has developed the new home birth pilot program in close collaboration with the Women's Health and Maternity (WHAM) Network and following extensive consultation with the community to ensure it is safe, sustainable and meets the needs of the community.

The model of care is in line with the NSW Health Guideline for Public Homebirth Services and will have strict oversight and eligibility criteria requirements governed by Hunter New England Local Health District.

## SENIORS FESTIVAL

The tempo is building ahead of this year's NSW Seniors Festival which is being celebrated from 2-15 March. A limited number of additional Premier's Gala Concerts tickets will be available to book on Tuesday, 24 February, from 9am.

Among the events is the NSW Seniors Festival Expo on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 March, at the International Convention Centre Sydney, Darling Harbour.

Singleton Civic Centre is the venue on Wednesday 11 March for the annual free Seniors Luncheon and Expo with free tickets available from: [www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/seniors](http://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/seniors). Maitland and East Maitland Aquatic Centres have free access as part of Seniors Festival Monday to Sunday, 2-15 March, with more details at: [www.facebook.com/maitlandcitycouncil](http://www.facebook.com/maitlandcitycouncil)

To find out what is happening near you, visit the What's On webpage for more information: [www.nsw.gov.au/arts-and-culture/seniors-festival/whats-on](http://www.nsw.gov.au/arts-and-culture/seniors-festival/whats-on)

## ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications close on 5 March for session three applications of Transgrid's Charles Sturt University (CSU) Engineering Scholarship.

One hundred CSU engineering students will be supported over a four-year period with \$5,000 per year to put towards the cost of their study. Since 2023, three cohorts of students have been supported by Transgrid's multi-focused scholarship, which is open to domestic commencing students undertaking a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) at CSU.

Transgrid is committed to supporting the pipeline of regional engineering talent, including where critical energy infrastructure is being planned or built. Further information, including a link to apply, can be found at:

[www.csu.edu.au/scholarships/scholarships-grants/find-scholarship/equity/transgrid-scholarship](http://www.csu.edu.au/scholarships/scholarships-grants/find-scholarship/equity/transgrid-scholarship)

## YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS

Tertiary students living in social housing are encouraged to apply for the NSW Government's Youth Development Scholarship. Now in its tenth year, the program offers students \$1000 grants to help cover education expenses.

The grants are available to TAFE NSW or university students, as well as those completing an apprenticeship or traineeship, with the grants to fund study-related expenses such as laptops. To be eligible, applicants must be either receiving a private rental subsidy from the Department of Communities and Justice; living in community housing/Aboriginal community housing; supported crisis or temporary accommodation and statutory, supported, or voluntary out-of-home care.

Applications for tertiary students close on Friday, 6 March with more information on how to apply available at: <https://dcjnsw.info/scholarships>

## ANZAC STUDY TOUR

Applications can now be submitted for the Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship (PAMS). Up to 18 NSW students have the opportunity for selection to participate in the study tour visiting historic sites in Greece and Crete relating to Australia's military service during the Second World War.

This year's tour will take place during the Term 3 school holidays departing Saturday, 26 September and returning to Sydney on Thursday, 8 October. The PAMS tour is highly recommended for History and Modern History students in Year 10 and Year 11.

An important change to the application process this year, requires eligible students to submit a five-minute multimedia presentation as part of their online application, along with a letter of recommendation from their school and a parent consent form. Applications close on Monday, 9 March, so visit: <https://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/education/premiers-anzac-memorial-scholarship/>

**Supplied.**

## Contact:

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

## Upper Hunter Shire February Council Meeting

### VALE PHILLIP DUNN

The meeting formally acknowledged the passing of Phillip Dunn, former Shire Engineer and Director Technical Services with Scone and Murrurundi Shire Councils. Phillip served the Upper Hunter from 1982 until 2004 and was recognised for his professionalism, leadership and lasting contribution to local infrastructure and community development.

### RECOGNITION OF 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Bernard Constable was recognised for reaching 20 years of service. Since commencing in 2006, Bernard has contributed extensively to road construction, maintenance programs and emergency response operations, including major works on the Golden Highway in partnership with Transport for NSW.

### UPPER HUNTER BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

A planning agreement offer associated with the proposed Upper Hunter Battery Energy Storage System was considered, ensuring appropriate community benefits for the Upper Hunter Shire if the project is approved.

### REGIONAL ADVOCACY - 2026 NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Motions were endorsed for lodgement at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government through the Hunter Joint Organisation on behalf of the ten Hunter councils. The endorsed regional motions focus on key shared priorities, including:

- Strengthening jobs, skills and workforce development pathways across regional areas
- Increased and more flexible funding for local roads and strategic infrastructure
- Improving long-term financial sustainability for rural and regional councils
- Enhanced emergency management, disaster resilience and recovery funding frameworks

This coordinated approach seeks to amplify the Hunter's advocacy at a national level and demonstrate strong regional alignment on critical issues affecting communities, businesses and infrastructure across the Upper Hunter and wider Hunter region.

### GOULBURN RIVER SOLAR FARM COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND

Council resolved to appoint representatives to the Goulburn River Solar Farm Community Enhancement Fund Advisory Committee and call for expressions of interest from community members to join the committee.

### SCONE INDOOR SPORTING FACILITY

The draft Scone Indoor Sports Facility Masterplan was endorsed by Council and will now be placed on public exhibition for 28 days for community feedback.

**Supplied.**

## Aberdeen Pony Club

It has been a slow start to the year for Aberdeen Pony Club, we had our first rally day organised and at the last minute we had to cancel due to council recommendation.

Our next rally day will be the 7th March with lots of exciting things for the kids to learn and develop their skills in. We are also running Ring 2 at the Muswellbrook Campdraft that is being held at Aberdeen Rodeo Grounds on the 14th March, please come along and compete or we would be very grateful for helpers.

Another event to mark in your diaries is the Rossgole Campdraft from the 6th to the 9th of April. Please let Katrina our secretary know if you will be attending this camp. See you all at the next rally day

**Supplied by Amy Croft.**

## Congratulations Susie!



On behalf of the Directors, staff and Members we would like to extend our congratulations to ASHS Registrar, Susie O'Brien who recently celebrated her 40th Anniversary with the Society. Susie was presented with a gift by ASHS Chairman, Larry Cutler, that will come in handy on her next trip.

There are few people who can boast 40 years with one organisation and no doubt Susie has seen many changes. Susie said that it has been a pleasure to work at the Society for the last 40 years. "It has been great to see the Society grow during this time and watch the ongoing success and achievements of the breed and Members."

**Supplied.**



## The Humble Cow Shed of Aberdeen

In a quiet backyard on Hall Street, Aberdeen, stands a small, weathered cow shed—a simple structure made from ironbark and corrugated metal. It might seem ordinary today, but this humble shed holds stories of a time when many families kept a cow for fresh milk right at home.

Decades ago, residential lots in Aberdeen looked very different. Backyards were alive with activity: beside the cow shed, there was often an outdoor sanitary pan toilet, bread carts rolled down dusty streets, and some homes even had tennis courts. The cow shed, however, was a common sight in many yards, a practical shelter that housed a single cow along with a watering trough.

Imagine the mornings when families would milk their cow, ensuring fresh milk for breakfast. This daily ritual was more than practice—it was a way of life, connecting residents to the land and to each other. Over time, as towns modernized, these sheds vanished, replaced by new homes and shops, their stories almost forgotten.

Today, this lone cow shed remains as a quiet reminder of Aberdeen's past. It tells us about simple living, close community ties, and the humble pleasures of daily routines in a slower world.

**Supplied.**

# It's Hot Out There

by Doctor Dirt



image above: A dam with reduced water levels showing an increase in sediment and algae. Note this is not Blue-green Algae

Due to dramatic changes to the weather over the summer. I think it is timely for landholders of urban and rural properties to be aware of water quality and quantity issues for their animals. Property owners need to adapt and increase their monitor water supplies Water supply monitoring for animals needs to be more frequent in hot and dry conditions. As the pasture dries out, stock will have less opportunity to obtain moisture through grazing. The quantity of water required by animals does significantly increase in heatwaves, hot and dry conditions. Landholders should check the amount of drinking water required for their stock species, number of animals, aged groups, size of the animals and if they are lactating. Evaporation in dams can be approximately 10mm per day in windy and hot conditions.

## LOCATION

Location of watering points is important to reduce stock stress. If the watering points are in the remote areas of the paddock, that requires the stock to walk large distances from water (maybe multiple times pe day) this will cause weight loss, stress, reduced condition and reduce their energy to graze.

The stock will tend to concentrate in the grazing areas surrounding watering points. This will leave these areas more likely to erode due to lack of groundcover. The ground cover needs to be monitored and maintained at least 70 percent and a minimum pasture height to be 8cm. Failure to ensure benchmark groundcover minimum conditions will result in erosion and sediment damage unless the land is flat. In such conditions, up to 100 tonnes of topsoil can be eroded per hectare of expose soils during intense storms. Through well designed and located watering points the paddocks will be grazed evenly. Among the top assets of your property is your soil and water supply. Exposed unprotected soils in such conditions the soils will absorb the heat which results in the decline and death of many soil microbial species. This further reduces the soil quality, this is another reason to keep at least 70 % groundcover and pasture height of 8 cm. It is advisable in heatwaves to mow lawns too short as it will increase plant loss and damage. I suggest checking the weather forecast before mowing the lawn where possible.

## MEASURE WATER TEMPERATURE

Often in hot and heatwave conditions, watering animals using troughs, tubs or bowls, the water often becomes too hot to drink. I strongly suggest measuring the temperature of the water regularly and at different times of the day during hot weather. I have conducted many property inspections where I have found water in troughs temperatures can reach 60 to 70 Celsius in extreme conditions. At these temperatures the water is undrinkable. This occurs predominantly where steel troughs for watering points are used.

Pets and domestic stock require ample good quality water, preferably located in shade or sheltered positions. The poorer the quality of water the more water animals require. However, there comes a point that due

impurities, various types of contaminants or salinity concentrations or in combination of these the water will become undrinkable.

Surface water supplies and groundwater sources will vary depending on season conditions. In catchments that are subject groundwater salinity variations the groundwater needs to be regularly tested. Dams in salinity prone catchments the salinity levels can increase as the conditions change. In such catchments regular water salinity testing is required. Salt tolerance levels for every species of livestock and the age of stock are available from many reliable sources that include Department of Agricultural and Local Land Services.

## SALINITY LEVELS

Landholders need to be aware of the acceptable salinity levels for their animal species for drinking. During my career on occasions, I have been involved investigations along with Livestock Veterinarians of stock deaths due to salinity. One such case 45 cows died. A simple water quality test from the dam would have prevented the losses. Other water quality issues during extended dry periods can occur in dams. The water can become stagnant and contaminated. The nutrients and turbidity levels often increase especially when dam levels drop. Stock will often walk into dams to cool off; they often drop manure into the dam further contaminating the water. Such contamination can also endanger stock and make the water unpalatable.

## ALGAE

A combination of high nutrients, heat and stagnant water may promote algae. Especially this time of the year, and such conditions can promote Blue-green algae. This species of algae is toxic to stock. Please note there are over 700 species of algae, and most are not a danger to stock It is very important not only to monitor the quantity of water available but the quality of the water. It may be advisable to take samples and get a range of comprehensive water tests at a NATA accredited laboratory. In cases of suspected Blue-green algae please seek Veterinarian Advice.

## Supplied by Steve Eccles.

Steve Eccles - [steveecclesconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:steveecclesconsulting@gmail.com)  
Mobile: 0400 808 873



**Easter Service**

<b>Good Friday Service 10:00 am 3 Apr 2026</b>	<b>Easter Sunday Service 10:00 am 5 Apr 2026</b>
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All are welcome to celebrate  
the Resurrection of Jesus.

 **Upper Hunter  
Presbyterian Church**  
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Athletics

# Aberdeen Athletics

by Denise Bell

Results for Aberdeen Athletics members who competed at the LANSW Region 2 Championships 13 – 15 February hosted by the Regional Athletics Centre, Maitland is as below:

Results:

**8's Lily Casben**

Shot Put 1.5kg 8th 3.59m

Long Jump 10th 2.60m

**12's Imogen Falzon**

200m heat 1 4th 30.96, overall 11th

**15's Grace Partridge**

800m 7th 4-41.56

1500m 5th 8-24.84

1500m walk 3rd 14-31.46

Discus 1kg 11th 8.25m

Javelin 500g 8th 9.45m

Triple Jump 5th 6.41m

**15's Archie Sellers-Bentley**

Shot Put 4kg 1st 14.74m

Discus 1kg 2nd 42.09m

Javelin 700g 1st 39.89m

**16's Ruby Brochtrup**

100m final 1st 12.90

Supplied.



Art & Culture

## Finalists for 2026 Muswellbrook Art Prize Announced

Congratulations and best of luck to the talented finalists of the 2026 Muswellbrook Art Prize, one of Australia's richest and most prestigious regional art awards. This year's selection panel – ceramicist Simon Reece, artist and creative producer Suzannah Jones, and Director of the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Elissa Emerson – have carefully shortlisted the works ahead of next month's much-anticipated winners' announcement.

The Muswellbrook Art Prize continues to attract outstanding artistic talent from across the country. With a total prize pool of \$70,000, the award spans three acquisitive categories: Painting, Works on Paper and Ceramics. As an acquisitive prize, the winning works will become part of the Gallery's permanent collection, contributing to the region's rich cultural legacy. The finalists' exhibition will be on display from 19 March to 23 May at the Muswellbrook Regional Gallery, located on Bridge Street, Muswellbrook. The Gallery is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm, offering visitors the opportunity to experience the diverse and compelling works selected for this year's exhibition.

The official exhibition launch and winners' announcement will take place from 4pm on Saturday 21 March. Art lovers, supporters and members of the community are encouraged to attend and celebrate the remarkable creative talent showcased in this year's prize. For more information, visit the Muswellbrook Regional Gallery website.

### Term 1 | 2026 Calendar

Children's Mobile Playgroup ~ 0-6 years of age

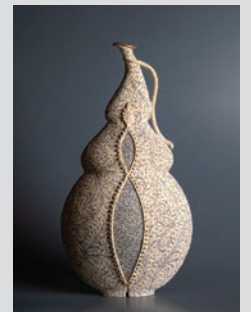
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
February	WEEK 1 2 McCullys Gap Hall	3 Denman St Josephs Hall	4 Gundy Linga Longa Inn	5 Murrurundi Public School	6 Cassilis Public School
	WEEK 2 9 Hebden Hall	10 Ellerston Public School	11 Rouchel Hall	12 Merriwa St Josephs School	13 Wingen Hall
	WEEK 3 16 McCullys Gap Hall	17 Denman St Josephs Hall	18 Gundy Linga Longa Inn	19 Murrurundi Public School	20 Cassilis Public School
	WEEK 4 23 Hebden Hall	24 Ellerston Public School	25 Rouchel Hall	26 Merriwa St Josephs School	27 Wingen Hall
March	WEEK 5 2 McCullys Gap Hall	3 Denman St Josephs Hall	4 Gundy Linga Longa Inn	5 Murrurundi Public School	6 Cassilis Public School
	WEEK 6 9 Hebden Hall	10 Ellerston Public School	11 Rouchel Hall	12 Merriwa St Josephs School	13 Wingen Hall
	WEEK 7 16 McCullys Gap Hall	17 Denman St Josephs Hall	18 Gundy Linga Longa Inn	19 Murrurundi Public School	20 Cassilis Public School
	WEEK 8 23 Hebden Hall	24 Ellerston Public School	25 Rouchel Hall	26 Merriwa St Josephs School	27 Wingen Hall
April	WEEK 9 30 McCullys Gap Hall	31 Denman St Josephs Hall	1 Gundy Linga Longa Inn	2 Murrurundi Public School	3 PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Don't forget to bring your **HAT, DRINK BOTTLE and MORNING TEA!**

**9:30am ~ 12 noon**

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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.

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Call Service NSW on 13 77 88 or visit your local Service Centre.

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[www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/savings-finder](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/savings-finder)



**Dave Layzell MP**  
MEMBER FOR UPPER HUNTER



Authorised by Dave Layzell MP,  
94 John Street,  
Singleton NSW 2330  
Funded using Parliamentary  
entitlements.

# The Latest on Vets Golf

## WELCOMING OUR NEW MEMBER BRIAN EDWARDS

Welcome to new member Brian Edwards to the Vets. Brian was one of the 37 players who played in the Stb event at MbK 18 hole golf course on Tuesday, Feb 24. It was rather hot and humid and a couple of players dropped out, but everyone enjoyed the luncheon sandwiches organised for us by Treasurer Bob Minch. 37 was the winning score as well, with Captain Mick McCormick taking the prize on a count back from John Belfield 37 second, Dave Perfrement 37 third, Brian Edwards 4th 35, Stephen McGhie fifth 34 CB, Glen Standing sixth 34 and Glenn Googe 7th 33 CB.

Balls went to Gav Myers, Tony Pearson, Ross Banks, Paul Constable and Lyn Banks on all on 33, on 32 Bruce Robinson, Charlie Wintle and Mark Middleton and on 31 Christine Smith, Gary Leake, Dave Kerr and Dave Bramley. The Bradman's Trophy, kindly donated by Gary Leake and associates, was won by Graham Turvey yet again. Nearest the Pins: 5th Paul Constable; 8th Christine Smith; 11th Brain Edwards; 14th second shot Mick McCormick; 17th Ros Banks.

## CONDOLENCES TO LES BROWN'S FAMILY

There were 37 players for the Vets' Stb game at Scone Golf Club on Tuesday, Feb 17. All the players were sad to hear of the passing of Les Brown, a fellow player of high esteem and skill, for many years. We all had a minute of silence for Les, and send our heart felt condolences to his family. Thank you to Ross and Lyn Banks for the players' Draw, to Bob Minch for the prize money and to President Lindsay Hodge and Gary Leake for the finalisation of the playing groups, in the absence of the Captain Mick.

George Campbell won the day with 42 points, from Tony Pearson 40

second, third Daryl Dutton 39 CB, fourth Ian Thomas 39, fifth Christine Smith 38 and sixth Brian Harshman 37. Balls went to Steve McGhie, Reg Davidson, Ross Banks, Bob Lawman, Garry Carter, Dave Perfrement, Annie Woods and Garv Myers. The Bradman's trophy, kindly donated by Gary Leake and associates, was won by Robert Ryan. NTPs: 4th Ross Banks 8th Ian Thomas 13th Brian Harshman 17th Sid Collison

## FUTURE GAMES:

- March 10, Stb at Denman
- March 17, Stb at MBK, please book-in with the proshop
- March 24, 2BBB & Ind Stb at Murrurundi
- March 31 at Scone Stb, please book-in with Ross Banks

The week of Golf (WOG) is at MBK, March 9 to 13. New members welcome. Shotgun start by 8.00am

## Supplied.



left: (right) George Campbell won the Vet's Stb event on Tuesday, Feb 17 with 42 points. He is congratulated by Tournament Director Bruce Robinson.



right: Captain Mick McCormick (left) is congratulated by President Lindsay Hodge for winning the Stb event at Muswellbrook Golf Club on Feb 24 with 37 points.

## Sports

# Aberdeen Rugby League

by Jacob Dallah

## TIGERS CALL FOR REGISTRATIONS AS 2026 SEASON APPROACHES

The Aberdeen Tigers are urging players to register as preparations ramp up for the 2026 season, with trial games and key competitions fast approaching.

Registrations remain open, but club officials say numbers must increase significantly in the coming weeks to ensure teams can be finalised and ready to compete.

With the Scanlon Shield and pre-season trial matches potentially kicking off within the next month, players must be registered to be eligible to take the field.

"If you're planning on playing in 2026, now is the time to act," a club spokesperson said. "We need registrations coming through so we can organise teams and hit the ground running."

## FEAR RETURNS FOR 2026

In positive news for the club, Tyla Fear has confirmed his return for the 2026 campaign.

Fear was a member of the Under 18s squad in 2025 before stepping up to feature in the majority of Reserve Grade fixtures. Known for his consistency and impressive kicking accuracy, he is expected to play an important role again this season.

The Tigers have welcomed his re-signing, describing him as a player who continues to prove himself week in and week out.

## WOMEN'S TACKLE SIDE BUILDING

The club is also actively recruiting for its growing Women's Tackle side. With a strong focus on participation and development, the Tigers are encouraging both experienced players and newcomers to get involved. No prior experience is required, with the emphasis placed on enthusiasm,



commitment and being part of a supportive team environment.

Head coaches Caitlin Albury and Albert Albury are leading the program and are available to provide further information to interested players.

As anticipation builds for the new season, the message from the Tigers is clear — register early, get involved and help build strong numbers across all grades for 2026.

## Supplied.

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GREAT NORTHERN SUPER CRISP STUBBIES	\$ 55.00
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HAHN SUPER DRY 4.6% 30PK CANS	\$ 65.00
VB 30PK CANS	\$ 66.00
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