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MEDICAL STUDENT OLIVER SHARMAN SPENT HIS SUMMER BREAK WORKING AS A TEAM MEMBER IN THE MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL KITCHEN.



DARETON MEN IN A SHED MEMBER GREG WOOD HAS BEEN WORKING ON THE RESTORATION OF A SABRE JET FIGHTER FOR MORE THAN THREE YEARS.

## YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME!

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## FROM OUR FOUNDATION CHAIR

Welcome to 2025, a year full of hope, progress, and opportunities. On behalf of the MBPH Foundation I am delighted to share with you some of the great initiatives we have instigated. We are proud to say that 2024 was a year of significant achievement, and none of it would have been possible without the unwavering generosity of our community and many sponsors.

Through your kind donations, we have been able to fund crucial initiatives that are making a real difference in the lives of countless individuals in our region. The funds raised have gone directly toward supporting students pursuing careers in healthcare, enabling them to further their studies and contribute to the future of healthcare services. This is an investment in the health of our community, and we are excited to see the future healthcare leaders who will emerge thanks to your support.

One of our most exciting projects is the building of the MBPH Foundation Mobile Screening Truck. This state-of-the-art vehicle will be equipped with the latest technology in skin screening and will offer a variety of essential health services to our community. It's a critical step in bringing accessible, high-quality healthcare directly to those who need it most, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This mobile unit will not only provide vital screenings but will also play a role in educating the public on preventative health measures.

As we look ahead to the year, we are thrilled to announce some exciting events that will help us continue this important work. Our annual Golf Day at Coomealla Golf Club is fast approaching, and it promises to be another fantastic day for golfers of all skill levels. We invite you to join us for this fun event, as we come together to raise funds for the Foundation's initiatives. But that's not all, there are many more events on the horizon throughout the year, and we can't wait to share them with you.

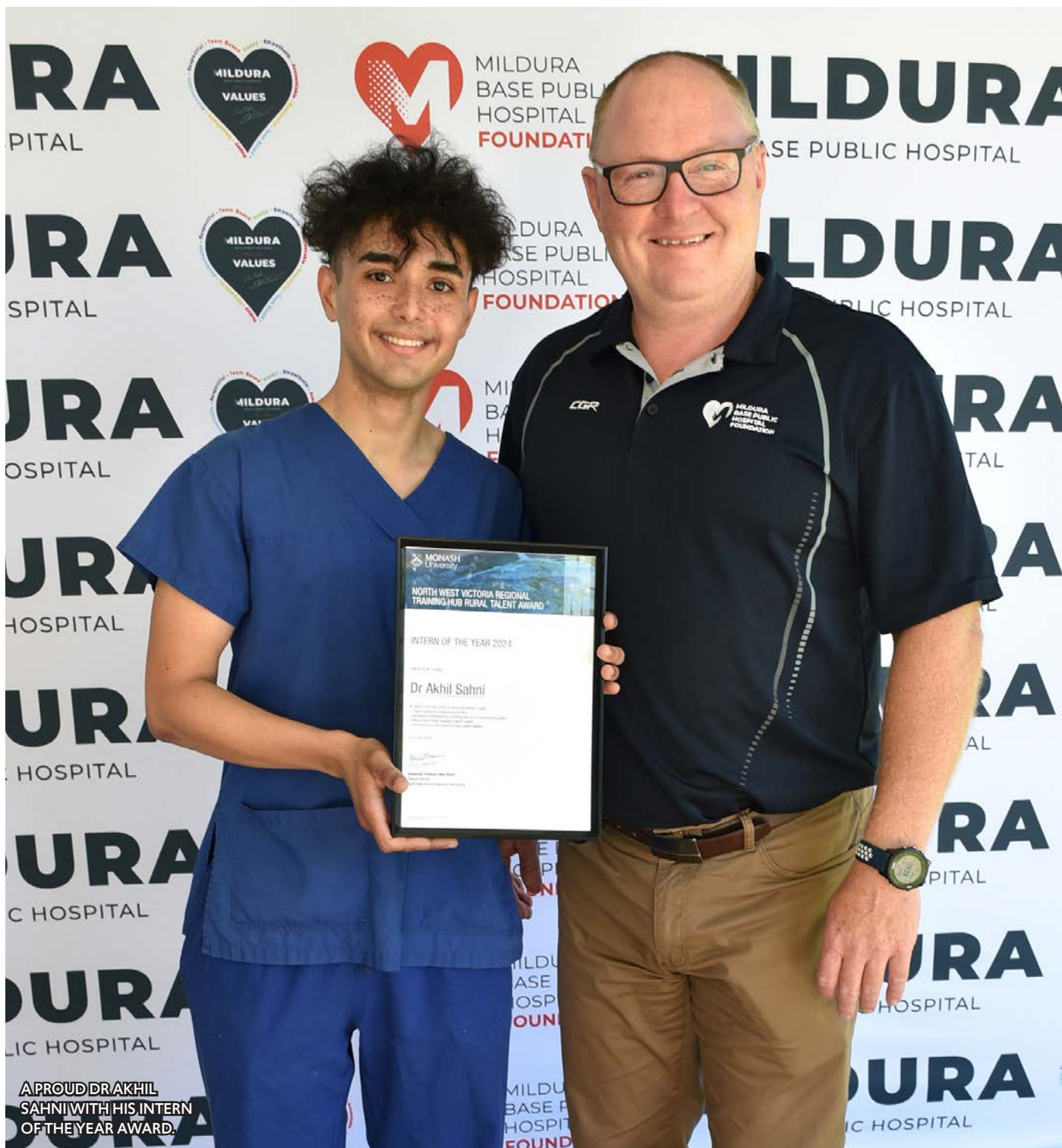
But there's still much more to do. We urge you to consider making a donation to the MBPH Foundation, particularly to our Mobile Screening Truck Fund. Your contribution will ensure that we can continue to bring vital healthcare services to those in need and improve the overall health and well-being of our community.

Together, we can continue to make a lasting impact. Thank you for your ongoing support, and we look forward to another year of success, progress, and positive change.

Regards,  
Ross Lake OAM  
Chairman, MBPH Foundation







A PROUD DR AKHIL  
SAHNI WITH HIS INTERN  
OF THE YEAR AWARD.

*In early January this year a talented young Mildura Base Public Hospital intern was presented with the prestigious Monash University North West Victoria Regional Training Hub Rural Talent Award -Intern of the Year 2024. The proud recipient was Dr Akhil Sahni.*

# THE ULTIMATE AWARD IS ONE JUDGED BY YOUR PEERS





L-R MBPH STAFF SPECIALIST PAEDIATRICIAN & DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL TRAINING & ADJUNCT LECTURER AT MONASH RURAL HEALTH, DR PETER BEGG, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HIEU PHAM, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF MONASH RURAL HEALTH'S NORTH WEST VICTORIA REGIONAL TRAINING HUB, MONASH RURAL HEALTH DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR FIONA WRIGHT, INTERN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT, DR AKHIL SAHNI, WITH MBPH CEO TERRY WELCH.

### By John Dooley

AS Intern of the Year 2024, Dr Sahni has shown a high standard of professional practice, significant contributions in providing care in a multidisciplinary team, Mildura Base Public Hospital's HEART values and commitment to rural practice in Loddon-Mallee.

So said Monash Rural Health's North West Victoria Regional Training Hub Deputy Director Associate Professor Hieu Pham as he congratulated a humble Dr Sahni on his award win.

"We call it the 'Spot the Talent Intern'," Prof. Pham said. "It is a purely 'peer' nominated award and so the winner has been nominated by their own peers who collaborate with them."

"This year I was keen to highlight this award and to emphasise to the other interns that this award is about recognising the good work that they all perform and that it isn't going unnoticed.

"I also hope that this will encourage

people to look around and be part of a little community and to importantly recognise the hard work that our doctors put in."

MBPH CEO, Terry Welch, speaking at the presentation, said that Akhil should be very proud of the award because it was assessed and considered on a whole range of things.

"How you have interacted with the group, the alignment to our values, the clinical care and the way you have engaged across the Loddon-Mallee," Mr Welch said,

"And your peers have said you are number-one! What an honour that is because peer assessment is the ultimate. You can make all the awards you want, but when your peers say that you are at a level like this – that's incredible."

Akhil is a bright, vibrant personality, who is admired and respected by all those he comes into contact with, principally his work colleagues.

"While I am delighted to have been given this award by my peers, I think it is really

a reflection of the teamwork. I think everybody around me has helped me get to where I am," a grateful Akhil said.

Heartbeat had a chat to Akhil after the presentation, where he spoke about his background and immediate plans.

"I came to Monash Rural Health and the MBPH in 2021 for my first clinical year of study," he said.

"I grew up in Jakarta and Singapore and then I joined Monash University and decided to come to Mildura. I have loved it here ever since.

"I spent several years here and particularly wanted to spend my Intern year here. Apart from studying in Mildura, I did some years at Monash's Clayton campus and also spent time in Bendigo and Swan Hill. "I am going to work at the Royal Children's in Melbourne, which is a paediatric hospital, but I hope to return to the MBPH one day."

Akhil has decided that he would like to pursue a career in paediatrics, something he has developed a passion for.





DR AKHIL SAHNI MBPH INTERN OF THE YEAR 2024.

"I have had lots of different clinical experience at the MBPH, but I think paediatrics is probably the pathway I want to follow," he said.

"I like regional work as well and I did undertake a paediatric term while I was here at the base this year. I love working with children -- they bring you a lot of joy. I think taking care of kids is a privilege and an honour.

"I will gain some further experience in that area and hopefully be accepted into some training programs and when those are back in Mildura, I will hopefully return to MBPH and train up here."

Akhil reiterated to Heartbeat how delighted he was to have been given the award.

"I am proud to have received the Intern of the Year Award and very grateful to my peers.

As I mentioned at the presentation, it is never about just one person in a hospital, we are nothing without a team," he said.

"I would be nothing without the lovely nurses, the allied health professionals, consultants and registrars and all my peers.

"The one thing that makes the MBPH special for me, is the people. It's not the



DR AKHIL SAHNI IS PRESENTED WITH HIS AWARD BY MBPH CEO TERRY WELCH.

most resourced hospital on the planet. It's not the most flash, and no one is pretending that it is. But it is a place where everyone puts their heart and soul into everything they do.

"It's the only hospital that I have ever been in where everybody knows you by name and always says hello and asks how you have been. I will miss that and everything else I love about this great hospital."

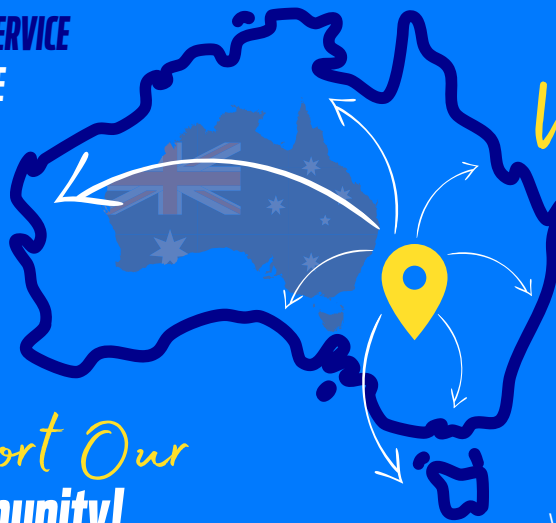


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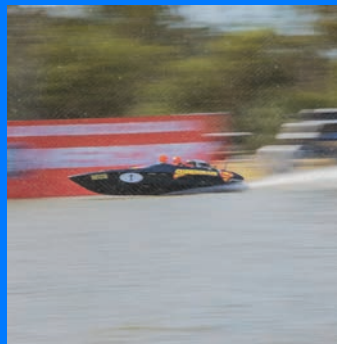


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OLIVER SHARMAN IS  
A BIOMED (MEDICINE)  
STUDENT AT LA TROBE  
UNIVERSITY'S ALBURY-  
WODONGA CAMPUS

# HOMEGROWN HOPE: FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE CLINIC

---

**By Rebecca Crossling**

LOOK around any Mildura café or bar and you'll see young people working a hospitality job while home on holidays, at the same time savouring home-cooked meals and saving up before heading back to university.

That's Oliver Sharman's story, a future doctor who spends his university breaks working in the kitchen at Mildura Base Public Hospital.

Oliver's time in the hospital kitchen has given him valuable insight into the essential role non-clinical staff play in patient care.

"This role has helped me to understand

the vast number of occupations and departments required to make a hospital run successfully," he said.

"I've also enjoyed interacting with patients and staff. My role in the kitchen is to deliver food to patients and take their menus for the next day. It's been great to be introduced to a hospital in a completely different role than what my future career will entail."

Oliver is in his final year of the Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Medicine) at La Trobe University's Albury-Wodonga campus.

The 20-year-old is a born and bred Mildura boy, having attended St Joseph's College.

Next year, Oliver will start a postgraduate Doctor of Medicine program at The

University of Melbourne's Shepparton campus.

A Victorian first, the sought after end-to-end rural medical pathway program is co-designed by La Trobe and The University of Melbourne.

"Studying Biomedical Science (Medical) at La Trobe has been one of the best decisions I have ever made," Oliver said.

"The opportunities that will open due to the course's focus on rural health will greatly impact us and the rural communities that my peers and I have experienced and grown up around."

The Rural Medical Program, established in 2019, sees 15 students of rural and





A TALENTED SPORTSMAN OLIVER IS SEEN HERE FLYING HIGH FOR THE BALL WHILE PLAYING FOR IMPERIALS.



OLIVER SPENT HIS SUMMER BREAK WORKING AS A TEAM MEMBER IN THE MBPH KITCHEN.



OLIVER WAS A STUDENT AT ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE MILDURA WHERE HE WAS SCHOOL CAPTAIN.



A YOUNG OLIVER WITH A TROPHY HE RECEIVED PLAYING JUNIOR BASKETBALL FOR MILDURA HEAT.

regional backgrounds, selected to study at La Trobe's Bendigo and Albury campuses. Those students then gain guaranteed entry (subject to their weight average mark) into The University of Melbourne's Doctor of Medicine postgraduate program in Shepparton.

Since the program's inception, 10 Mildura students have been accepted, with the first group set to graduate as doctors later this year.

La Trobe Mildura Head of Campus, Sandy Connor, highlights the program's success.

"We've had strong up take from Mildura students into the course and we'd love to one day offer the same course in Mildura," she said.

"In fact, in the first year of the Rural Medical Pathway, three Mildura students were accepted and those three are now in their final year of the Doctor of Medicine!

"The pathway creates opportunities for students from rural communities who are interested in practicing medicine in rural and regional areas. It flips the current city-

centric medical training model by delivering most of the training in the regions, with rotation to metropolitan areas for specialist immersions kept to a minimum."

Ms Connor emphasises the importance of regional education for fostering a local healthcare workforce.

"Our regional students tell us they thrive studying in regional locations," she said.

"We know that the key to growing our workforce is to develop our own and the Rural Medical Pathway helps facilitate end-to-end medical training in regional areas."

For Oliver, studying in a regional area was crucial.

"Coming from a regional town and moving away from home, I was hoping to find the move easy and feel comfortable as early as possible within my surroundings," he said.

"I believe that studying in a great community like Albury-Wodonga has helped immensely.

"I have found Mildura and Albury-Wodonga very similar. Obviously, Albury-Wodonga is a little bit bigger and closer

to Melbourne and Sydney - which I travel to regularly. But both towns have great sporting atmospheres that I have immersed myself in."

Oliver says while he's been back in Mildura he continues to train with his local footy team, Imperials, as well as playing cricket, basketball and golf for fun.

"I also enjoy catching up with friends and family during my time back home," Oliver said.

"When I finish my course, I want to work regionally and would love to be close to home with family and friends.

"One of the elements I've really love about the Biomedical Science (Medical) course, is the small cohort size.

It has allowed me to strongly connect with passionate teachers and my likeminded peers that will support me through the challenges of becoming a doctor. I am confident that this degree, along with their support, will successfully prepare me to become a skilled doctor, ready to give back to rural communities in need."



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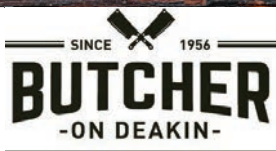
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*Each year Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) welcomes a new group of young doctors. They come from far and wide to be part of the hospital community as interns, and to call Mildura home during their time here.*

# YOUNG MEDICOS MAKE THE MOVE TO MILDURA

**By John Dooley**

THERE are eight interns permanently placed at MBPH this year.

In addition, at any time, there are another eight seconded from other hospitals to spend 10 weeks on rotation here.

That means a total of 40 interns will be seconded to Mildura through the course of the year.

MBPH Director of Medical Education, Dr Mary Beth MacIsaac, was among a number of the hospital's senior medical staff who welcomed the 2025 intern cohort to MBPH in early February.

"We are very excited to see our new interns this year," she said. "I think we have a great group of really enthusiastic young doctors who are excited about the community they are now a part of."

Apart from embedding themselves in the workplace, the interns like to become part of the new community they are living in as Dr MacIsaac explained.

"They are already looking at ways that they can get involved with various community events. They've been interested in sports like squash, and another's interested in setting up a board game challenge. They are really looking at what they can do and how they can be part of the community," she said.

"That's really important because if they can see their lives here, then we have a better chance of actually retaining them. They are absolutely a wonderful bunch of doctors that we'd really love to keep so it's very exciting."

Equally as ebullient in his praise of the new interns was MBPH Executive Director Medical Services, Dr Nabrees Sinnalebbe.

"We have a large number of young doctors in the cohort who joined us this February and it's always great to see the 'new blood' coming in," he said.

"You know they've hit the ground running because we can't get them in one single



BACK ROW L-R MBPH DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION DR MARY BETH MACISAAC, MBPH INTERN DR PATRICK PETTERSON, MBPH STAFF SPECIALIST PAEDIATRICIAN & DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL TRAINING DR PETER BEGG & MBPH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES DR NABREES SINNALEBBE. FRONT ROW L-R - MBPH INTERNS DR TOM BENNING, DR ZAARA SHIAA'AR, DR RAHY ABDULLATHEEF & DR FATIMA MALIK.

photo! They are already busy at work across the hospital.

"I think they've settled in really well. These doctors are the future of our medical workforce and we are very humbled and privileged that they are here."

Dr Sinnalebbe also pointed to the importance of living in a community that they are comfortable with and enjoy.

"Working in Mildura at our hospital is a lifestyle as well," he said. "You need to have a proper work life balance. A medical career is a long one, and therefore you need to look after yourself."

"That is something that we encourage amongst our doctors here. Well-being is important."

"You have to have a life here. We have a beautiful the river here, a very close-knit community and so many things to do. That's why I encourage them to get involved in the community and do some extra-curricular activities because you need to keep your mental health at the forefront."

MBPH Staff Specialist Paediatrician & Director of Clinical Training, Dr Peter Begg, said the enthusiasm and new perspectives that the interns bring to the MBPH team is fantastic.

"They have fitted in well and straight away they're doing a great job," he said.

"We have a good connection with Monash Rural Health and so we can use things like the simulation and other facilities right next door for teaching and further

training which is excellent," Dr Begg said.

"The interns are deployed across a variety of areas in the hospital — paediatrics, medical team surgery, orthopaedics, psychiatry — the whole gamut of clinical operations."

Dr Sinnalebbe emphasised the fact that the recruits have all undergone extensive formal medical training in advance of their Mildura placement.

"They are doctors and that's how they are being treated," he said.

"And of course, during their first year we provide them with extra support and deploy them across the different specialties to get general experience so that they can become independent practitioners down the track."

One of the new doctors in this year's cohort is Dr Zaara Shiaa'ar who spoke to Heartbeat about her first impressions of Mildura and MBPH.

"I really like it. The team at the hospital is really great and everyone is very nice and open and welcoming," she said. "I'm enjoying the work I am doing and meeting new people throughout the hospital."

Dr Shiaa'ar said she studied in Malaysia at the university in Johore.

"This hospital is a little smaller than the one I trained at in Malaysia, but it is very good," she said.

"I am enjoying being in Mildura, and while Australia is quite different to Malaysia it's great here and the weather is nice. And, outside of work there is a so much to see and do."



## MONASH MEDICAL STUDENTS IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN MILDURA

---

**By Stephanie Swain**

MONASH Rural Health Mildura has recently welcomed forty-five incoming medical students starting placements at Mildura Base Public Hospital. The students across Years 3B, 4C and 5D will complete a range of hospital rotations, including general medicine, surgery, psychiatry, women's health, paediatrics, emergency and aged care.

While most arrived in late January, fourth-year students Damiano Tomassoni and Kate Bracchi have already spent their summer working at the hospital.

Damiano first came to Mildura in early 2024 for his first placement as part of Monash's End-to-End Rural Cohort - a group of medical students who complete most of their training in the Loddon Mallee region. During this time, Damiano put his previous physiotherapy training to use, working casually as part of the hospital's allied health team around his studies in 2024 and then went full-time over the summer break.

"Working as a physiotherapist at the hospital, in such a tight-knit community, gives me immense satisfaction and a real sense of purpose; that the work that we do, with the people we live and work alongside,

really matters. We have a sensational physiotherapy (and allied health) team. We truly work cohesively and collaboratively together as a team, and they're a caring and passionate group of professionals."

For Damiano, spending another semester in Mildura after his experience as a third-year student was an easy decision.

"Mildura is such a supportive environment, from the Monash Rural Health faculty to the hospital staff and the teaching team. Plus, the lifestyle - having access to outdoor activities on my doorstep as well as the slower pace compared to bigger cities - really complemented my studies," Damiano said.

Mildura has been recognised among Monash medical students as a popular training destination. Damiano's experiences helped inspire his partner, fellow medical student Kate, to join him in the region.



"My decision to undertake my placement in Mildura was driven by the wonderful reputation of both the staff at Monash Rural Health Mildura and Mildura Base Public Hospital," Kate said.

"I'd heard nothing but praise about the quality of teaching, the supportive learning environment, and the incredible opportunities available to students here. Since arriving, I've found all of these to be absolutely true."

Over the summer, Kate worked as an administrative officer with the hospital's Community Services team. She found this a rewarding opportunity that will help shape her future medical practice.

"One of the most valuable aspects of this role has been gaining insight into the administrative processes that keep the hospital running smoothly," Kate said.

"Understanding how patient referrals, scheduling, and hospital logistics operate has given me a broader appreciation of the collaborative nature of healthcare. This understanding has allowed me to appreciate how essential communication is in ensuring patients receive great care."

During their time at the hospital, Kate and Damiano have been impressed with HEART values that characterise the MBPH work culture.

"I've worked at other hospitals before and I've never received the same kind of warm welcoming that I had when I joined the Base. So that's been phenomenal," Damiano said.

Kate's experience has been similar.

"Well honestly, I've worked at other hospitals and it's something that I haven't experienced before," she said.

"Walking into that environment was kind of a shock, but a nice one. It's been very graciously received and something that I have loved being a part of and will continue to love being a part of while I'm here and hopefully in the future. The heart values definitely shine through."

Kate looks forward to her next six months in Mildura and is especially keen to participate in simulations at Monash Rural Health Mildura's clinical simulation centre, which is also used by MBPH staff to practice their advanced paediatric and emergency skill training.

"These simulations are invaluable as they allow us as students to be hands-on in realistic clinical scenarios, preparing us for the challenges we will face as junior doctors," she said.

Kate is also excited to explore what the Sunraysia region has to offer.

"Whether through patient interactions or simply getting involved in local events, I am excited to immerse myself in the Mildura community," she said.

Damiano is also excited to spend another season working with the Mildura Football and Netball Club as a physiotherapist, allowing him to combine his passion for sport and physiotherapy while contributing to the town.

"Living and working in such a close-knit community has also been genuinely rewarding and I'm excited to build on those relationships this year," he said.

"I also strongly believe in working as a health professional in a place where I am learning - as a way of giving back to the region that supports me by allowing me to learn."

## ALL ABOARD FOR 2025!

Ahead of a busy year of study, the Monash Rural Health Medical Student 2025 cohort enjoyed a river cruise which for many students who had recently arrived in Mildura provided an opportunity to see the mighty Murray River and enjoy the fellowship aboard the Mildura Cruises boat.



(LEFT) MONASH RURAL HEALTH 2025 YEAR 4C STUDENTS GATHER FOR A GROUP PHOTO AT THE CAMPUS.

(BELOW) SOME OF THE MEDICAL STUDENTS ENJOYING THE MURRAY RIVER CRUISE.



(L-R) MONASH RURAL HEALTH YEAR 4C STUDENT MARIA MARQUES VAZ-SERRA, MONASH UNIVERSITY'S NORTH WEST VICTORIA REGIONAL TRAINING HUB MANAGER NERIDA FIRMAN & YEAR 3B STUDENT SOPHIE KARUNARATNE.



MONASH RURAL HEALTH MEDICAL STUDENTS BOARDING THE MILDURA CRUISES BOAT.



NEWLY ARRIVED MBPH INTERN DR SERGIU SAVA ALSO JOINED THE RIVER CRUISE.

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## HEARTBEAT



### WHEN PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

NURSING SOARS TO  
NEW HEIGHTS AT MBPH

### MICHAEL'S DEATH-DEFYING EXPERIENCE

A GRATEFUL MAN AND  
HIS FAMILY GIVE THANKS

### TRIBUTE TO A LONG SERVING GP

DR. PHILIP WEBSTER TO STEP BACK  
FROM EVERYDAY CONSULTING

### THE A-LEAGUE'S ELITE VISIT MILDURA

THE INAUGURAL ONE AGENCY MILDURA  
MBPH FOUNDATION FESTIVAL OF SPORT THRILLS  
THE KIDS AND SUNRAYSIA SOCCER LOVERS

SPRING  
EDITION  
2024



### WHEN PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

NURSING SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS AT MBPH

**Bethan Davies**

At a time of doctor and allied health worker shortages, highly qualified nursing officers are not easy to come by.

A Nurse Practitioner must have a graduate level degree of education and advanced clinical education and training.

With practice makes perfect, nursing officers are becoming more and more experienced in their roles.

At a time of doctor and allied health worker shortages, highly qualified nursing officers are not easy to come by.

was keen to start to her role at attached to the hospital's Mental Health Unit where she specialises in treating drug and alcohol addiction.





*A favourite with locals and tourists alike, the Sunraysia Farmers & Makers Market has established itself as one of the city's major attractions with hundreds of people flocking to enjoy the arts and crafts, farm fresh produce, live music, delicious food, the fun-filled atmosphere and much more!*

# THE MARKET AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

**By John Dooley**

IN the wake of its recent name change to include 'makers', Heartbeat joined Sunraysia Farmers & Makers Market coordinator, Kylie Dew, at Jaycee Park on the Mildura Riverfront to get the lowdown on what has changed.

Kylie was asked about the decision to have some of the local makers join the other exhibitors at the market, something the makers are excited and grateful for as Heartbeat learned.

"I think it was one of those things where we thought it was a nice opportunity to be able to involve the makers whenever they wanted to, as opposed just being at specific markets through the year," Kylie said.

"And it means that people can come down and buy things all throughout the year and not just on those odd dates here or there. It creates a good look and adds to colourful atmosphere of the market overall."

This year will mark the market's 20th anniversary and something many people won't be aware of, is that the original Farmers Market, established in 2005, was actually held across the border at the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens, situated on River Road just outside of Buronga.

"The original market started on the other side of the river," Kylie said. "That's where I used to go to buy my veges. It then it moved to the Ornamental Lakes in Mildura and subsequently to Jaycee Park, where we are now."

"My involvement with the market commenced more than 10 years ago. My husband and I had become 'empty nesters' and thought we'd do some volunteer work and came down to put sausages in bread and our interest spread from there and look what happened!"

Kylie's task is to coordinate all of the stall holder's attendances, including where they set up in the park on market day.

"There are some challenges to it," Kylie said. "There are a whole lot of factors you have consider. Like, you don't want to have six stalls who are all selling zucchinis side-by-side and whether someone needs flat ground and shade."

"The size of market varies and can be bigger or smaller and so you need to be able





SUNRAYSIA FARMERS & MAKERS MARKET COORDINATOR KYLIE DEW.

expand or shrink the plan accordingly.

“You have to be mindful of heat like today, where we’ve had to designate shade zones and so all sorts of things go into it.”

One of the great features of the market, is the live music to entertain the visitors, something that creates a happy, vibrant atmosphere.

“The music in the background is a really important thing,” Kylie said.

“It sets the tone of things - the vibe if you like. It’s nice to watch people walk through the park and suddenly they’ll start bopping along to a song.

“And it supports local live music. That was a big thing when we came back from COVID.

“We had our own struggles, but it was really important to support the community. Our farmers had been through their own battles and the stallholders who had been through tough times needed our support too.

“It was a time to rebuild and fortunately we were able to make the market work again.

“Giving back to the community is important to us and we are proud support the Mildura Base Public Hospital’s Foundation and we happily offer not-for-profit community organisations the opportunity to promote

their organisation with donated stall sites.”

### THE COLOURFUL CHARACTERS OF THE SUNRAYSIA FARMERS & MAKERS MARKET

Heartbeat visited many of the stallholders and found out a little about what they produce and sell and what inspired them to be regulars at the market.

There’s no doubt if you are looking for something different for your home and garden, the Sunraysia Farmers and Makers Market is just the place to find it.

There are a number of stalls selling a range of eclectic handcrafted objects.

One such stall is Rustic Gecko, run by Mark and Roslyn Webb.

The couple have been coming to the markets for more than three years and they have a display of handcrafted furniture and other unusual wares made from a variety of repurposed materials.

Mark explained to Heartbeat where the inspiration to start making their products came from.

“We’ve been going now for a bit over three



A COLLECTION OF HATS FROM DRAGONFLY HEART BY ANNIE.



RUSTIC GECKO’S MARK WEBB.



years and the inspiration I guess flowed from my tinkering. I initially cut out a couple of geckos from old corrugated iron and then I made a couple of bird houses. It just kicked off from there," Mark said.

"It's just stuff we love to make. It's all made from repurposed materials and very rustic as you can see. It's a joy to make it all."

Mark is a former builder, who told Heartbeat that during his 40 years in the building industry, he didn't have a workshop at home.

"Now I have made one!" he said with a laugh. "It's all fun to make and we love getting out and about collecting bits and pieces to make our wares out of. Old farm clearing sales are great and we go wherever else we can find it.

"Going to the old farm clearing sales is just brilliant days. You get meet those 'salt-of-the-earth' people and the stories they tell you is just magic."

Mark's wife Roslyn, says she just provides support, but the fact is she also designs some the wares that Mark makes.

"It's something we could do together, and I love the idea of something new being made out of something old," she said.

"It's really satisfying giving new life to old bits of junk. They would otherwise be more or less just left on the junk heap."

Roslyn's words evoke that old adage about 'one person's trash being another person's treasure!'



### MEET NIGEL SPOKES FROM NIGEL'S RUSTY METAL ART

Nigel turns scrap metal into art and sculptures. He sources, cleans, cuts, bends and welds everything you'll see on his amazing stall.

"Well, I'm a 'car guy' and so I know a lot of car and motorbike mechanics and I leave a

bucket in their workshop and they save me parts.

"Depending on what I have, determines what I make," Nigel explained.

"I like making dogs, motorbikes and tractors, but whatever else I have to use, I will make other things like cats, dinosaurs and other random creatures."

Nigel only sells his metal art at the markets which he said is a hobby.

"I work a full-time job in IT and so this is just a hobby for me and my wife has another stall with the 'fairies'... so it is something we do a couple" he said.

"At this stage I only sell my work at the markets and I can barely keep up with the demand and maintaining stock throughout Christmas and of course I don't weld in the summer because it's too hot.

"I've only been running this stall at the market for three years, but I have been coming with my wife for almost 12 years helping her. I couldn't beat her so I had to join her!

"I'm not artistic by any means. It's just ideas you get when you start doing this and you get on a bit of a roll."



### A MAKER'S HATS

Moving on to something away from metal and timber, one of the other makers at the market is 'Dragonfly Heart by Annie'.

All of Annie's products are "Proudly handmade in Australia".

"I have been sewing since I can remember. I always had an interest in sewing and so making hats creates a good opportunity to work with a multitude of different colours and fabrics," Annie said.

"I make hats for summer and winter. The summer hats are all cotton, breathable and completely washable.

"For the colder months, I use winter weight fabric and crouched materials for those hats.

"I've been making hats for markets now for three years and I'm very excited that we're allowed to be here at every market now. It's just brilliant!"



### FINE ARTIST RHIAN ELYCIA MCLEOD

Rhian is a professional local artist and art teacher who creates artworks featuring Australian native birds, plant life and still life.

Primarily using pen and ink on paper, she also creates with acrylic on canvas.

Rhian sells originals and high-quality prints, greeting cards and tea towels featuring her designs.

"I have been an exhibitor at the Sunraysia Farmers and Makers Markets for eight years. It's one of my favourite things to do," she says.

"I am a part-time art teacher at Mildura Senior College and an artist as well.

"It's a nice balance between teaching and actually being an artist and selling too.

"My works are definitely influenced by wildlife as you can tell – mostly native birds that you find round Mildura and Sunraysia.

"I live in Gol Gol with my husband Mat and our children and we have an abundance of birdlife in my backyard – so heavily influenced by my surroundings, native wildlife and flora.

"What I produce today, has evolved since I did the first market, which initially was represented by my prints. Now there are prints, originals, tea towels, cards, mugs and a range of things."

All of Rhian's prints are beautifully presented in quality frames supplied by Picture Parlour Mildura.

"Picture Parlour is amazing and they have supported me for many years. Their work is impeccable," she said.

### PRODUCE FROM ROBINVALE

Robinvale Estate has been an olive grove since 1946, and family-owned and operated since day one.

Today, Robinvale Estate has an expanded range of delicious products including balsamic vinegar, dressings, dukkah, Liv & Luv roasted granola, olive oil, olives, gift packs, fresh seasonal berries.

All of the olives from their Robinvale grove are processed within 24 hours of harvest,





ensuring their range of olive oil products have the freshest, finest taste.

Robinvale Estate's Kim Natale, explained more about the products she had on display at their market stall.

"We've got two types of extra virgin olive oil that we produce and then we've created agrumato oil, which is where the fruit is pressed in with the olives in the press and not actually added as an infused essence," Kim said.

"We also make a range of salad dressings and because we have an abundance of fresh fruit in the region, we've created a caramelized balsamic range.

"Recently, we were making peach balsamic and fig balsamic, which adds to the variety of choices in our range."



### THE ROOT OF ALL GOOD

Heartbeat also had a chat with Connie Hopper, who had travelled from the Riverland to attend the market.

Connie and her partner Michael market TurmeriX- 'The Root of All Good' powder and capsules, which together with a balanced diet, may be beneficial to a person's health and well-being, the couple explained.

"The Riverland isn't that far away. I was up at 4am this morning to ensure I was here on time," Connie said.

"This is a lovely market which is very good for us. I go to a lot of different markets all throughout the Riverland and Victoria and this is one of the best.



### BROMELIADS APLENTY

Described by the Sunraysia Farmers and Makers Markets promotional material as the "Bromeliad grower extraordinaire", Geoff John is a green thumb when it comes to propagating these diverse plants.

"I have been growing the Bromeliad for close to 20 years and I started coming down to the markets a few years after I started," Geoff said.

"There a lot of different varieties of the Bromeliads. Some are bred for leaf colour, others for flowers and some for a combination of both.

"They vary in size between miniatures and up to about hip height. The majority are probably about 30 cm tall.

"The good thing about them, is that they reproduce themselves and grow what they call pups and over their lifetime, you will get between two and six new ones. You can leave them in a 'clump' or propagate them, which is what I do to sell them."



### BISCUITS BY TONIA

Greg and Tonia Argiro are long-time supporters of the market, showcasing their home-based business, 'Biscuits by Tonia', which offers a beautiful range of traditional Italian biscuits and cakes and slices.

"I have always made biscuits and a few people said to me that I should start selling them and that's how the business was established," Tonia said.

"It started out small and I began producing an expanded range of biscuits and one thing led to another and we diversified into making cakes and slices as well and here we are today."

Tonia said she has been making biscuits for more than 16 years and started at the markets with just a half-table and it expanded from there.

"We love coming down here on Saturdays to meet different people and having a chat with them, many of whom are visitors to Mildura," Tonia said.

Tonia's husband Greg is reluctant to accept any kudos for the success of the business, crediting Tonia with all of the hard work.

"I do very little," Greg declared. "I do taste everything but that's pretty much it. I like to provide moral support!

"It is a family run business and our three kids help out a lot and I do what I can and each year the market just gets bigger and better which is great. So, it's onwards and upwards!

"People come to this market because they come to buy and of course it's such a great location. You have the river, the park and lots of shade and importantly, the market breakfast is awesome!"

It's simply not possible for Heartbeat to feature every one of the wonderful exhibitors at the markets in this article but a few others that took our eye included 'Ben's Bona Fide Food', which specialises in organic vegetables grown from seed locally. Lettuces, carrots, beetroots, spring onions, tomatoes, eggplants, sweet potatoes, radishes, broccoli, turnips, peas, leeks, silver beet, bok choy, kale, celery, and cabbages. And it doesn't end there he also has squash, garlic chive, zucchini, basil, cucumbers, and beans! All of course as the seasons provide. Be sure to call into 'Cup of Personalitea' and say hello to Alana. She will match your personality to the perfect cup of chai, with varieties to suit everyone!

'Just Figs' is another must visit stall, which features dried figs, dipped in chocolate, caramelised as syrup, made into delicious jams - making figs delightful!

The sweet aroma of 'Hannelore Storm' will draw you in. Proprietor Hannelore produces a range of hand-made cold process soaps, bath soaks, room sprays, soy wax melts, candles, hand and body washes, and shampoo soaps.

The Sunraysia Farmers & Makers Market is staged on every first and third Saturday of the month - from 8am to 12pm - and to learn more about the wonderful farmers and makers you'll meet there, visit the market website at [www.sunraysiafarmersmarket.com.au](http://www.sunraysiafarmersmarket.com.au).





RUSTIC GECKO CORRUGATED IRON SHEEP.



SUNRAYSIA FARMERS & MAKERS MARKET.



ONE OF RHIAN ELYCIA MCLEOD'S ARTWORKS.



ELINA GARREFFA FROM TABLE TOP GRAPES.



JUST FIGS.



FOSSEY'S DISTILLERY STALL.



RUSTIC GECKO DRAGONFLIES.



BEN'S BONA FIDE FOOD.



BISCUITS BY TONIA.



ROBINVALE ESTATE BLACK OLIVE TAPENADE.



ROBINVALE ESTATE LEMON & GARLIC INFUSED OLIVE OIL.



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DEPICTION OF THE NEW MOBILE SKIN CANCER SCREENING VEHICLE.

*In an era where convenience and accessibility are paramount in healthcare, one innovative project is taking the healthcare experience to a whole new level.*

# FOUNDATION'S SKIN CANCER SCREENING VEHICLE PROJECT IS TRUCKIN' ON

**By Heath Kendall**

IMAGINE a world where state-of-the-art medical care comes to your doorstep, no appointment necessary, no long wait times, just cutting-edge technology and expert care.

With construction well underway, that's exactly what Australia's first-ever mobile skin cancer screening vehicle is offering, setting the stage for a new frontier in the way Australians approach their skin health. The \$2.5 million initiative, spearheaded by the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Foundation, is a game-changer. This fully equipped mobile healthcare unit is designed not only to improve accessibility but to make skin cancer screening available

to everyone, no matter where they live. Whether you are in a remote rural area or a busy city centre, this mobile screening truck brings top-tier medical care directly to the people.

This isn't just any truck. It's a high-tech, mobile clinic that houses the latest advancements in medical imaging, specifically geared toward the early detection of skin cancer. The heart of this mobile unit is its ground breaking 2D skin imaging technology.

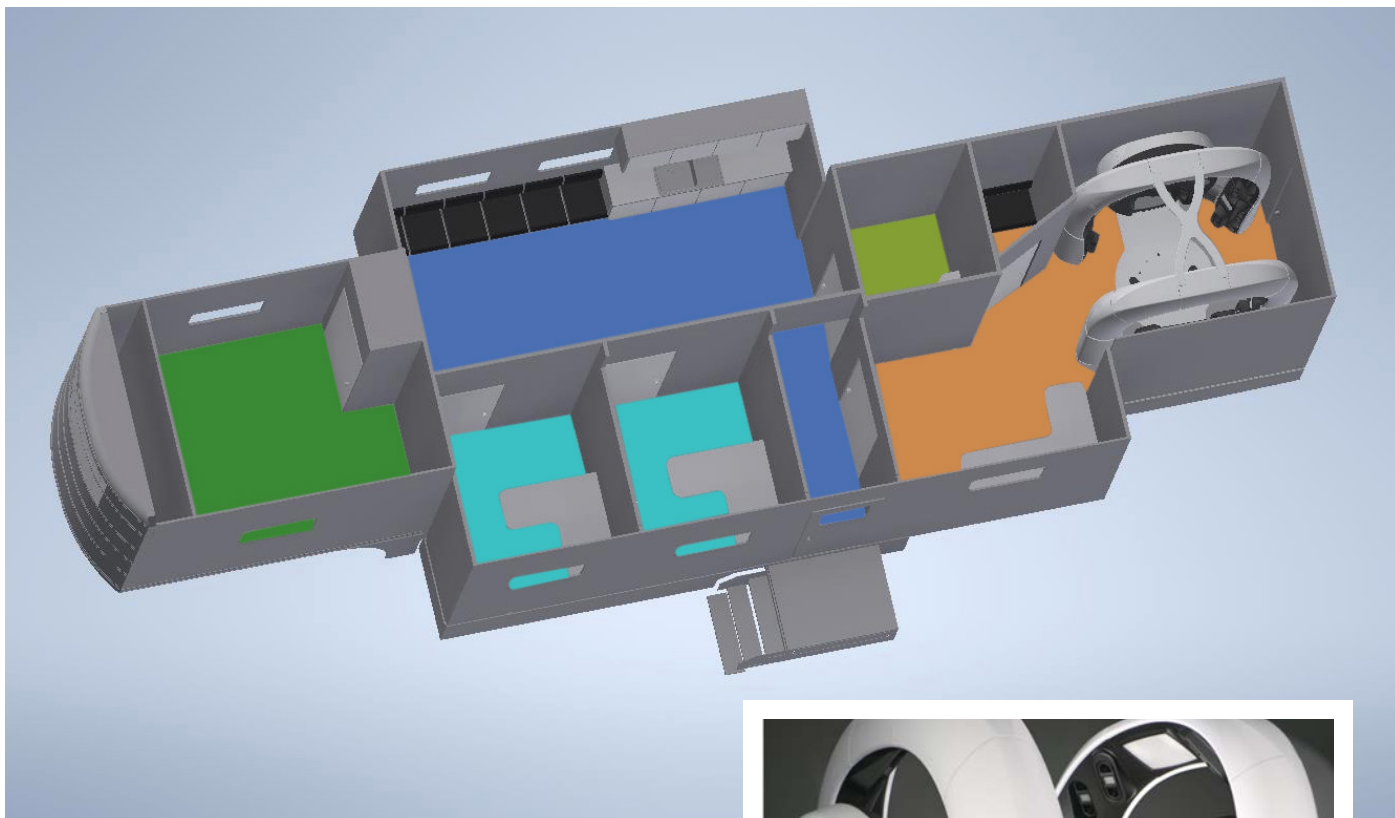
The 2D skin scanner is the crown jewel of this mobile clinic, setting it apart from traditional skin examinations. This cutting-edge device offers a 360-degree high-resolution view of the skin, providing unprecedented detail and precision. Unlike

standard visual inspections, the scanner uses multiple high-resolution cameras and sophisticated algorithms to create a 3D model of the skin, mapping every inch with incredible clarity.

Why does this matter? Skin cancer detection is notoriously tricky. Early-stage melanoma or other skin cancers can be difficult to spot with the naked eye, especially when the changes are subtle. The 2D scanner's ability to identify even the smallest abnormalities means that issues can be detected at an earlier, more treatable stage, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

Beyond just detecting potential skin cancers, the scanner allows for longitudinal monitoring of skin health, enabling medical professionals to track changes over time.





This ongoing monitoring helps doctors and patients stay ahead of any issues, empowering people to take a proactive role in maintaining their skin health.

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, and the statistics are alarming. Every year, over 15,000 Australians are diagnosed with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. With such a high incidence of skin cancer, early detection is absolutely critical. But for many Australians, accessing regular skin screenings can be a challenge. Whether due to geographic isolation, financial barriers, or lack of awareness, many people are at risk of missing out on life-saving early detection. That's where the mobile skin cancer screening truck comes in. By delivering screening services directly to people's doorsteps, the mobile unit makes it easier for everyone, regardless of location, to get screened. Rural communities, often underserved by medical services, stand to benefit greatly from this initiative. But the mobile unit is equally useful in urban settings, where crowded clinics and busy lifestyles often discourage people from seeking out health screenings.

The beauty of the mobile unit lies not only in its high-tech equipment but also in its ability to reach a wide variety of communities. It eliminates the need for patients to travel long distances or take time off work, two common barriers to accessing healthcare. This flexibility ensures that skin cancer

INTERIOR  
DEPICTION OF  
THE MOBILE  
SKIN CANCER  
SCREENING  
VEHICLE.

WB360 VECTRA  
SCANNER ONE OF  
THE MOST ADVANCED  
2D SKIN IMAGING  
MACHINES IN  
THE WORLD.



screenings can take place in areas where they are most needed, whether it's a small town or a densely populated urban centre. Beyond the logistical benefits, the mobile screening unit also serves a psychological purpose. Many people feel anxious about visiting a medical facility, particularly when it comes to something as sensitive as a skin cancer exam. The mobile unit is designed to be inviting, with a relaxed, friendly atmosphere that reduces the intimidation factor. By making screenings more approachable, the truck encourages people to take the first step toward safeguarding their skin health.

The success of the mobile screening initiative is also a testament to the power of collaboration. The vehicle is the result of a strategic partnership between the Mildura Base Public Hospital, the Mildura Base Public Hospital Foundation, private enterprises, and top-tier medical institutions. This collaboration brings

together the latest technology with the expertise of dermatologists, oncologists, and healthcare providers, ensuring the highest quality service for patients.

The introduction of Australia's first mobile skin cancer screening vehicle represents a bold step toward revolutionising the way skin cancer is detected and managed. It's an initiative that is breaking down barriers to healthcare, improving accessibility, and using advanced technology to catch potential skin issues early.

With this innovative service, Australians will soon have a greater opportunity to prioritize their skin health and detect potentially life-threatening cancers before they progress. Thanks to the dedication of the Mildura Base Public Hospital Foundation and their partners, the mobile screening truck is setting a new standard for healthcare in Australia, one where convenience, technology, and care come together to create healthier, happier communities.

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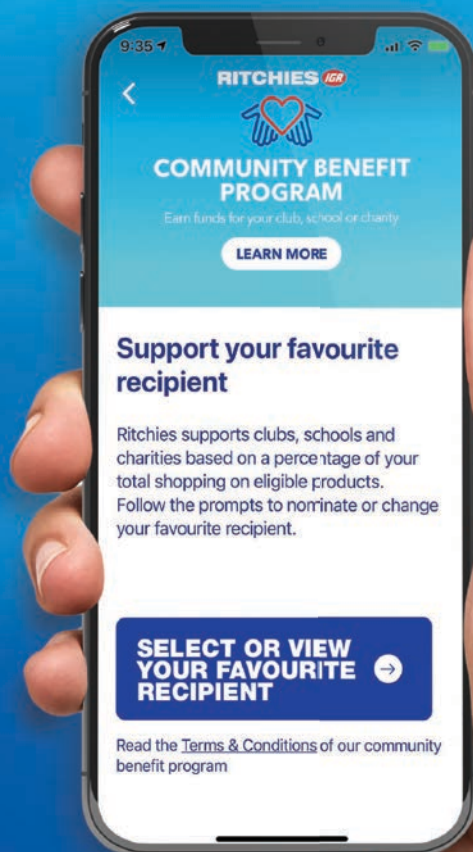


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LENORE BRYAN  
RELAXING BY THE  
MURRAY RIVER IN  
MILDURA.

*"In September 2022, we raised funds for a clinical trial unit, February 2023 we opened our clinical trial unit and today we can say we have opened a clinical trial for our community with more coming," MBPH Ceo Terry Welch.*

# LOCAL PATIENTS NOW ON LOCAL TRIALS

---

**By Rebecca McLean**

WITH the mental and financial burden of having no choice but to travel to Melbourne for a clinical trial, these words from Mildura Base Public Hospital's Chief Executive Officer, Terry Welch, are significant for our community.

Just over two years ago, Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) officially opened its new Clinical Trial Unit. The facility is located on the ground floor of the Specialist Clinic adjacent to the hospital. The establishment of the Clinical Trial Unit now provides a valuable, additional service for the health care of the Mallee community and enhances the services provided at the MBPH which is a 'game

changer' for health in the Northern Mallee region.

The outlook for people with many cancers is changing dramatically. The reason is that cancer treatments are changing.

Newer, smarter medications that can target the precise engine-room of a particular cancer, are being developed by cancer researchers and gradually being trialled in patients within the structure of a clinical trial.

A clinical trial is a way to access new treatments, interventions, medicines, and medical devices. These trial options have already shown better results, they are just not available to everyone yet.

MPBH's first clinical trial opened in September 2024 and has had local

patients participating, saving the need for them to go to Melbourne.

One particular trial, is looking at the follow-up care of patients who have been treated for metastatic melanoma (meaning it's spread to different parts of the body) currently receive.

"This trial is being run globally, which means our patients are getting access to the world's cutting-edge research, now," Mr Welch said.

"There are different types of trials – they can be life-saving and quality-of-life improving for patients, which is why we have more coming."

Clinical trials are critical to healthcare because they help us to keep improving treatment and care.



Six clinical trials have opened since September 2024.

A local who has benefited from having local access to a clinical trial is Lenore Bryan.

Eighty-four-old Lenore is one those people who has a zest for life, a deep love for the region she has lived in her entire life, and doesn't think about age.

And while a melanoma diagnosis in March 2024, followed by chemotherapy, has slowed her down, she's currently on the above-mentioned trial looking at the follow-up care patients like her receive and whether it could be improved to make life easier for these patients.

She is, so far, responding well and is hoping to return to her 4km daily walks and travelling overseas.

Lenore has spent her entire life living between Swan Hill and Mildura, she did her schooling in Swan Hill and worked in Mildura through to retirement.

Following her cancer diagnosis, she decided to stay put in Mildura because of the access ease to the oncology and clinical trial unit.

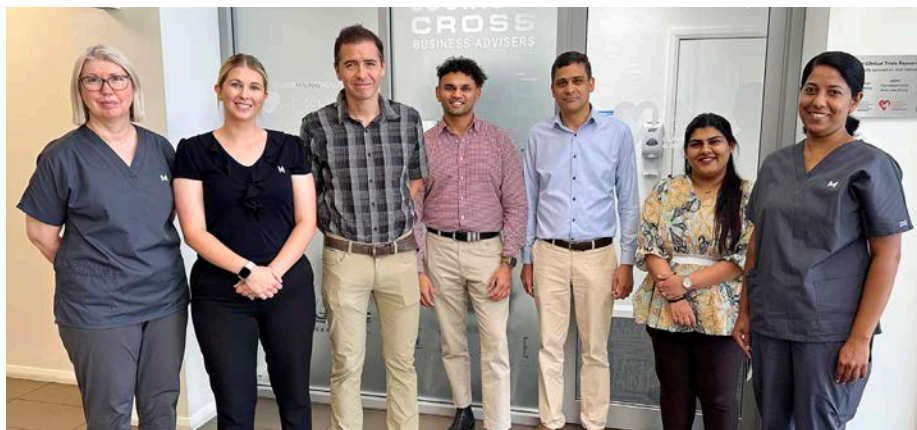
"I was able to choose where I live based on what I thought was best for me. I had heard of clinical trials over the years and I do know they are used to find new treatments, so that, coupled with MBPH oncologists I decided to base myself in Mildura," Lenore said.

Since starting at MBPH as a medical oncologist more than 10 years ago, Dr Krishna Rachakonda has been part of the significant improvement in the oncology service with expansion of the oncology day unit, additional staff including two cancer care coordinators, a second medical oncologist and the clinical trial unit.

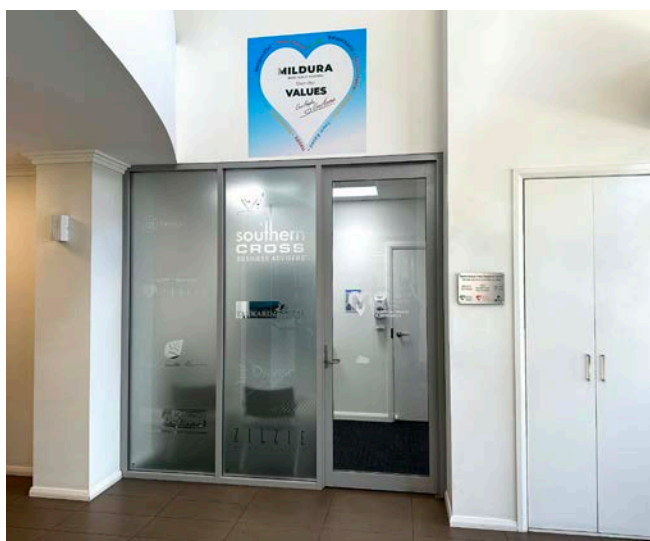
"Participating in clinical trials is an extension of standard of care in modern oncology practice. Clinical trials give the opportunity for patients to access newer therapies and medicines in addition to contributing to valuable scientific data," Dr Rachakonda said.

"Our goal is to allow regional patients from Mildura to benefit and access such treatments and be a part of the larger journey in the treatment of cancer.

"The establishment of the Clinical Trial Unit gives the community the opportunity to participate in valuable research and the other benefit is it is a way to upskill local healthcare professionals like research nurses to be able to conduct clinical trials. It



MBPH'S CLINICAL TRIAL TEAM FROM LEFT, RESEARCH NURSES SUZETTE TREEN & GEMMA MADIGAN, ONCOLOGIST DR JOSE LEAL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES DR NABREES SINNALEBBE, MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST DR KRISHNA RACHAKONDA, CLINICAL TRIAL UNIT MANAGER TANVI NAIK & RESEARCH NURSE REENA JOSEPH.



MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL CLINICAL TRIALS UNIT.



MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST  
DR KRISHNA  
RACHAKONDA.

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

The Clinical Trial Unit team has also grown recently with welcoming Tanvi Naik as Clinical Trial Unit Manager and Nabrees Sinnalebbe was recently appointed Executive Director of Medical Services, including research and oversight of the trial unit.

MBPH has been supported by external partners including the Regional Trials Network and Cancer Trials Australia.

MBPH has also formed a strong partnership with a program called TrialHub.

TrialHub is based at The Alfred Hospital and has been supporting our organisation since the very start "with range of intensive support and mentoring at all levels that has been invaluable and instrumental in helping us to reach our goal of offering clinical trials to our community," Mr Welch added.

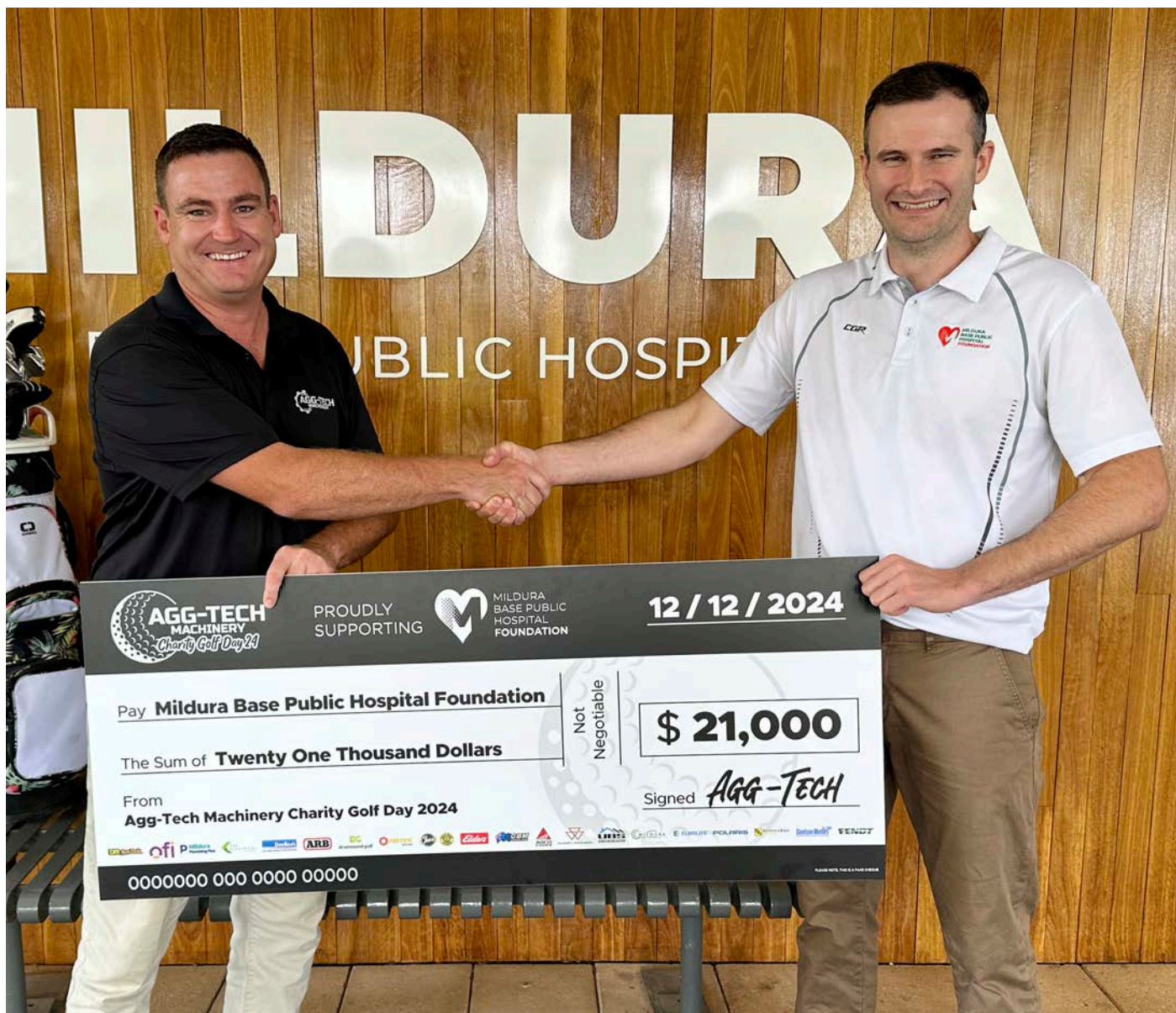
The unit has also opened its first teletrial. A teletrial is where two or three hospitals in different locations

open a clinical trial together as one big team, it's a way of getting more trials open in regional and rural areas. Together with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the trial is looking at how a person's genes affect their response to common medications used for cancer treatments.

The MBPH team of Principal Investigator Krishna Rachakonda, Research Nurses Gemma Madigan, Suzette Treen and Reena Joseph has also been working with TrialHub's Senior Education Manager, Thobe Mthethwa-Pitt and Teletrial Manager William Evans over the last year to set up the study and are excited to be running the delivery of this trial to people locally.

The Clinical Trial Unit was made possible by generous community donations through our Foundation.

If you're interested in learning more about our clinical trials, visit the MBPH website and go to the clinical trials and research section.



*On Friday, February 7, a cheque from the proceeds of the golf day was presented to the Foundation by AGG-TECH Machinery's Business Manager, Alex Barber, which was received by MBPH Acting CEO, Matthew Jukes.*

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN FULL-SWING AT CHARITY GOLF EVENT IN SUPPORT OF THE FOUNDATION

**By John Dooley**

The AGG-TECH Machinery, Charity Golf Tournament, was held at the Mildura Golf Resort on Thursday, December 12, last year. The weather turned on a beautiful, 26-degree day with

blue skies and a light breeze. A picture-perfect day for golf.

At 12.30pm, following a barbeque lunch, the field of 100 plus teed-off in the 18-hole Ambrose competition. The tournament offered the opportunity for players and teams to share in \$50,000 of prizes.

AGG-TECH dedicated the first of their annual Charity Golf Tournaments to the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Foundation with all proceeds being directed toward supporting the Skin Cancer Screening Vehicle, which is currently under construction.





THIS GROUP WERE PART OF THE MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE WHO TOOK PART IN THE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT.

IT IS ALL ABOUT HOW YOU PUTT  
THAT IS WHERE IT IS WON.



SOME OF THE MANY PLAYERS WHO TURNED OUT TO SUPPORT THE INUGURAL AGG-TECH CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT.



ONE OF THE AGG-TECH TEAM TAKING THE POLARIS XP KENETIC FOR A RUN AROUND THE COURSE.



NICE SWING FROM ONE OF THE FIRST PLAYERS TO TEE-OFF IN THE TOURNAMENT AT THE MILDURA GOLF RESORT.

## DONATION TO FOUNDATION

The Charity Golf Day raised a brilliant, \$21,000 for the Foundation, which we are delighted to receive," MBPH Acting CEO, Matthew Jukes.

"It is really gratifying to see how the community spirit wraps its arms around some of the projects we are working on through the Foundation," Mr Jukes said.

"Support and contributions like this from Agg-Tech, enables our projects to really grow and actually come to life, especially our Skin Cancer Screening Vehicle.

"It's now very much in the stages of becoming an actual vehicle. It's hopefully going to hit-the-road very soon - certainly within the next 12 months.

"When it is commissioned, the vehicle will deliver an elevated level of exceptional care and activity closer to home for so many people. This generous donation helps to progress this project and we are grateful

for the support we've received to bring it to life."

Mr Barber explained to Heartbeat, AGG-TECH's motivation in deciding to choose the MBPH Foundation as their charity for the inaugural golf day.

"We chose the Skin Cancer Screening Vehicle as our charity to receive the proceeds of our first golf day, because we thought it was a really important project," Mr Barber said.

"A lot of our customers are rural-based and so they don't have access to Mildura Base Public Hospital and we think the truck is a great idea, particularly to get out to the farmers - our customers - to be able to carry out some skin cancer screenings on them.

"We service an area with a radius of more than 300 kilometres and so a lot of those people don't come into town very often and so we think this is a great initiative, which we are really happy to support."

Alex recapped how the golf day played out, saying it was a great success.

"There were more than 100 people in the field, made up of a mix of men and women, sponsors, customers and also the general public who loved having a hit of golf for a good cause," he said.

"It was a great day, perfect weather and we've had nothing but positive comments since.

"We had a great barbeque lunch before tee-off and then everyone got into the golf and we came back to the clubhouse for our presentations, nearest the pins and all that – it was just a great day."

The MBPH Foundation acknowledges the generosity of AGG-TECH Machinery and their company's Platinum Sponsors: Polaris, Davison Motors, Rural & Regional Finance, Elmslite, UBS Ultimate Building Solutions, Massey Ferguson, AGCO Finance and FENDT.

Thanks also to SEN-1116, Drummond Golf and NITRO Golf Centre for their support.





IF THERE WAS A PRIZE FOR THE BEST DRESSED FOURSOME THIS TEAM WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE RUNNING.



IT WAS DEFINITELY A PERFECT DAY TO WEAR SHORTS AS THESE PLAYERS SHOWED.



TIME FOR A QUICK PHOTO AND A COUPLE OF COOLERS.



A VERY HAPPY LOOKING TEAM OF BOYS HAVING A GREAT DAY OUT.



SOME CONGESTION IN THE TRAFFIC WAS TO BE EXPECTED WHEN YOU HAVE A FIELD OF MORE THAN 100.



THE MILDURA GOLF RESORT DRINKS CART WAS KEPT BUSY SUPPLYING COLD BEVERAGES TO THE PLAYERS THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON.



THE EVENT ATTRACTED A MIX OF PEOPLE INCLUDING THESE LOVELY LADIES WHO TURNED OUT TO SUPPORT A GREAT CAUSE.

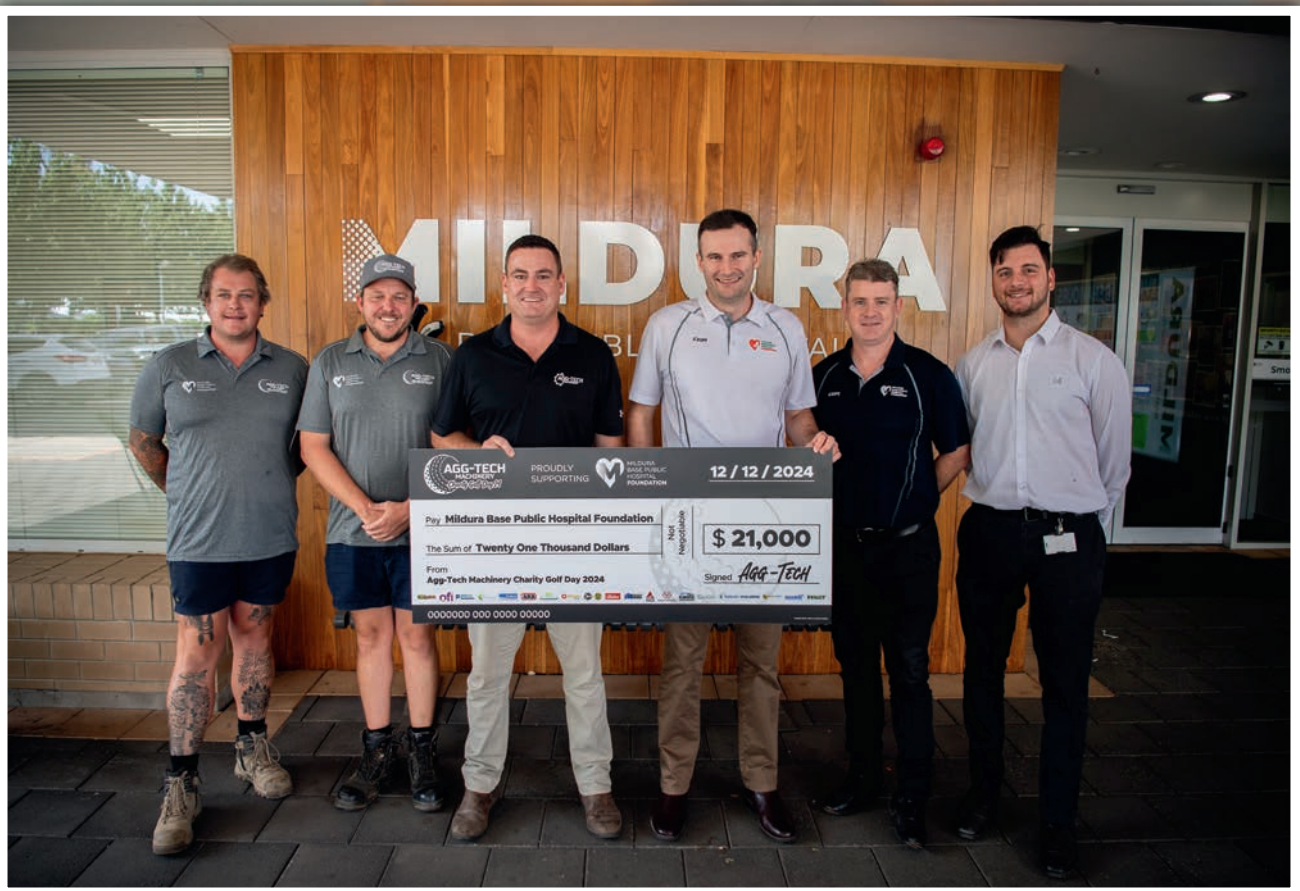
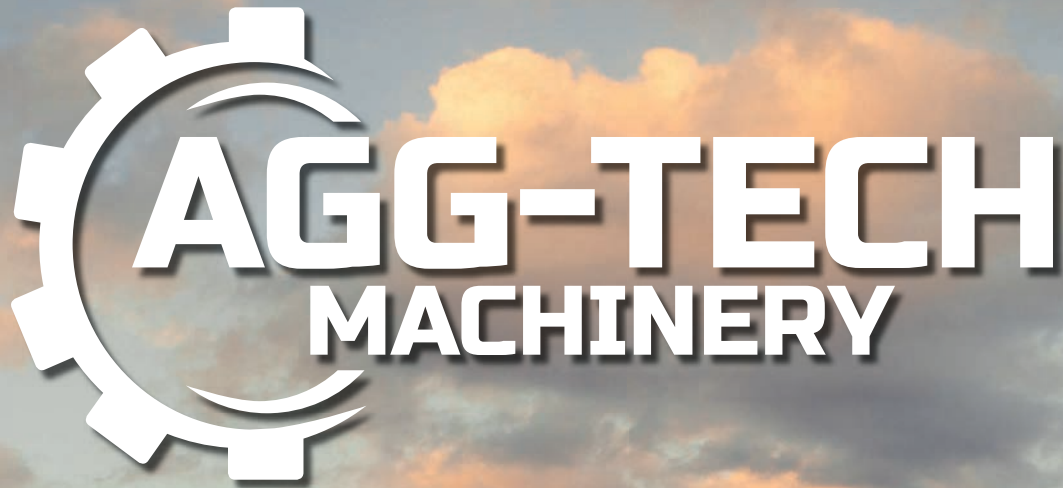


THIS AWESOME MIXED FOURSOME ENJOYED A GREAT 18 HOLES.



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*It was just two years ago that flood waters travelled down the Murray River and effectively washed away Sunraysia's peak summer visitation period.*

# MILDURA SHINES IN THE SUMMER!





ALFRESCO DINING VENUES A PLenty AWAIT IN MILDURA. PHOTO VISIT THE MURRAY.



HOLIDAY PARKS HAD PLenty TO OFFER FOR THE KIDS AND FAMILIES .



LIVE MUSIC AT THE MAC  
TWILIGHT EVENTS ARE  
ALWAYS WELL ATTENDED .



THE MURRAY RIVER IS THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF MILDURA AND PEOPLE FLOCKED HERE OVER SUMMER IN LARGE NUMBERS.

### **By Jason Shields**

HOLIDAY parks on either side of the river were inundated for months by the largest flood in almost 70 years, causing extensive damage, and the region's visitor economy took another enormous hit on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were also 60 Council-managed roads impacted by the flood event, along with hundreds of community assets

such as public toilets, parks and other infrastructure, including Nowingi Place, the Water Play Park and the Off Leash Dog Park. Golf courses went under, as did tennis courts, the list went on.

But this region has always been made of tough stuff. Resilience is part of its DNA. And a mammoth recovery effort, coupled with an expanding events calendar and the launch of an innovative tourism campaign, not only has Mildura back on

its feet, but is starting to pay big dividends to the local economy.

Just before Christmas, Discovery Parks Buronga Riverside reopened after an extensive restoration and was already at 90 per cent capacity by New Year's Eve, while Apex Riverbeach Holiday Park, which reopened earlier last year, was fully booked during the peak Christmas period. Other holiday parks in the region trended the same way.





CANOEOING ON KINGSBILLABONG .



A CRUISE ON THE MURRAY IS A FAVOURITE WITH VISITORS .



BURONGA RIVERSIDE CARAVAN PARK IS BACK BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER .



MILDURA WHARF WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME FULLY SUBMERGED DURING THE 2022 FLOOD.



CARAVAN PARKS ACROSS THE REGION WERE PACKED OUT WITH HOLIDAY MAKERS.



SUNRAYSIA FARMERS & MAKERS MARKET IS A MUST DO FOR LOCALS AND VISITORS ALIKE.



MILDURA RIVERFRONT WAS INUNDATED IN 2022 NOT QUITE REACHING THE 1956 FLOOD LEVEL .

The NRMA Riverside Holiday Park was booked out through the peak period, as was All Seasons Holiday Park, Mildura River End and the Big 4 in Mildura.

All Seasons operations manager Lucy Bromley said there were a number of contributing factors that had led to a bumper summer period.

“A key to it has certainly been attracting events to town and that change of Mildura really getting behind events and becoming

a destination,” Ms Bromley said. “And Mildura Council has been so proactive in communicating with us in the industry, which has been a big help.

“As an example, we had a large swimming contest (the Victorian Long Course Swimming Championships) in January and Council alerted us to that event in advance. Our bookings were not great for that weekend but two days after it was announced we were fully booked.

“The same with a soccer event in October, when visitation is typically a bit low, we were alerted to this event and suddenly we were chock-a-block. These sorts of events are a gift that keeps giving because what we find is that families come up here, get to see Mildura and decide they want to come back.

“And we are just getting so many return customers, so that speaks volumes about what Mildura has to offer.”





A CRUISE ON THE MURRAY IS A FAVOURITE WITH VISITORS.



RIO VISTA AND THE MAC ENJOYED HIGH VISITATION NUMBERS OVER THE SUMMER.



PEOPLE ENJOYED CAMPING ON THE BANKS OF THE MURRAY AT BRUCE'S BEND.

Ms Bromley said another secret to Mildura's economic growth was the way local businesses were working together and cross promoting.

"When we are fully booked, we are directing them to other holiday parks, we have programming with Mildura Central or vouchers to cafes and other venues to pull them into town. It's not about one segment when we get tourists into town. Everyone should benefit," she said.

Over the Christmas period, Mildura Rural City Council reported that visitor spending in the region increased by approximately 10 per cent on the previous year, injecting an additional \$1.1 million into the local economy.

It also reported a 30.7 per cent rise in

café spending, while restaurants were up 27.8 per cent and retail up by 19.3 per cent.

Council's Economic Development and Tourism Manager Leesa Merrett said Mildura's number one visitor demographic was people aged over 55, who were typically higher income or self-funded retirees.

She said that Mildura was also above the state average for attracting families with young children.

"And they are spending more while they are in town – on things like discretionary retail and cafés and restaurants," Ms Merrett said.

Ms Bromley said the launch of the Tropical North Victoria tourism campaign last

year, headed up by celebrity ambassador Shane Jacobson and highlighting that Mildura has more sunny days than the Sunshine Coast, had also helped drive summer visitation.

"It (the TNV campaign) got people talking, that's for sure, and it has certainly put us on the map," she said.

"Council's presence in tourism is huge and they are our first point of contact when things are coming to town. A great example is the light installation (Trail of Lights) coming to Lock Island. We have had three meetings with Council already about how we maximise this opportunity.

"That's fantastic for us as operators to help get ahead of the game, so we all need to be working together."





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# SOLVING THE JIGSAW OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE OLD WERRIMULL BUSH NURSING HOSPITAL?

By Grant Maynard

REGULAR Heartbeat readers may well recall an article in an earlier edition about the history of the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital.

It was speculated that the hospital, which closed in 1947, had been moved to the corner of Pine Avenue and Seventh Street in Mildura and repurposed. (pictured)

That first story was followed by a second when former Milleva resident Jim Douglas, (then 95), who was born at the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital in 1928, contacted Heartbeat and put paid to the idea that the former hospital had been shifted to Mildura.

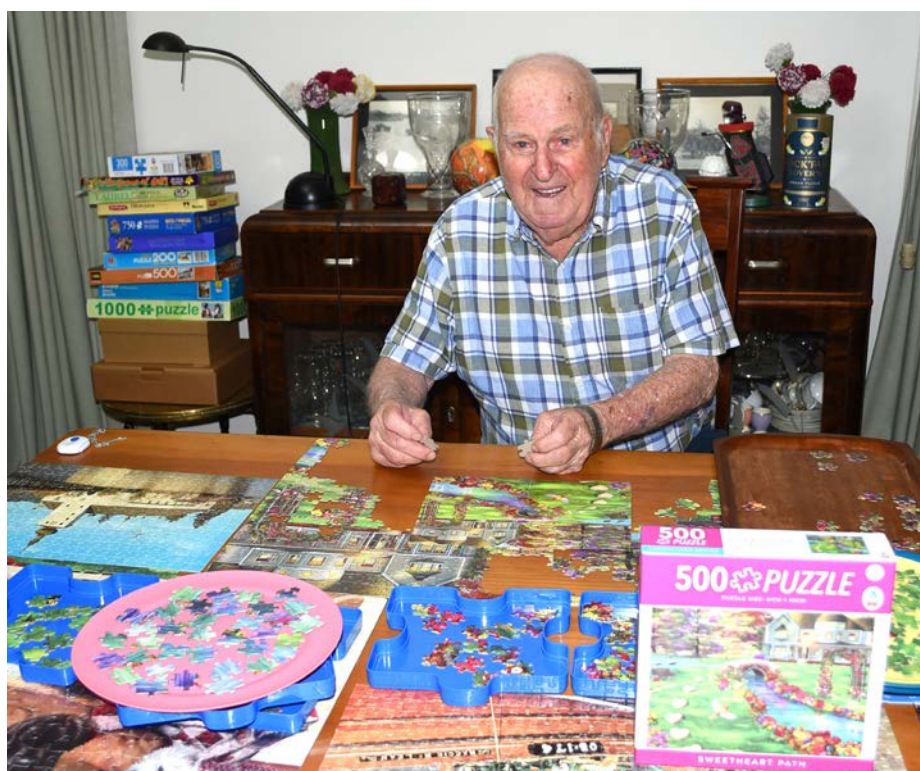
Jim, recalling the hospital building from his youth, said the building in Mildura bore little resemblance to the hospital. He then went on to reveal that he had been working for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWS) in the 1940s and recalls that after the hospital closed, the building became home to SRWS 'ganger' Percy McNamara and his family "for a couple of years".

"He (Percy) then went to Nandaly, and they (the SRWS) moved the building to Robinvale," Jim told Heartbeat.

Jim also had evidence in the form of a letter from the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to Victoria Police Commissioner in 1952, offering to sell the land the hospital occupied to the police. The sale duly went through that year, with the Victoria Police paying the princely sum of £135!

A new police station was then constructed on the site.

Following the sale, Jim said the hospital building was transported to Robinvale and



JIM DOUGLAS WORKING ON ANOTHER ONE OF HIS JIGSAW PUZZLES

became the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission offices in the town.

That was helpful, but no one seemed to know if the building still existed Robinvale and, if it did, where it could be found.

Every curious, Jim was determined to find the old hospital and on a recent trip to Robinvale with his daughter the former hospital's whereabouts were established.

The property (pictured) is situated in Bromley Road – Murray Valley Highway, a short distance from the Robinvale Masonic Lodge.

Well, it seems that a determined Jim may well have finally found the missing piece to solve the 'jigsaw puzzle' that was the whereabouts of the former Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital.

## As a footnote to this story...

It is interesting to note that Jim is no stranger to solving jigsaw puzzles, having completed more than 270 of them over the decades.

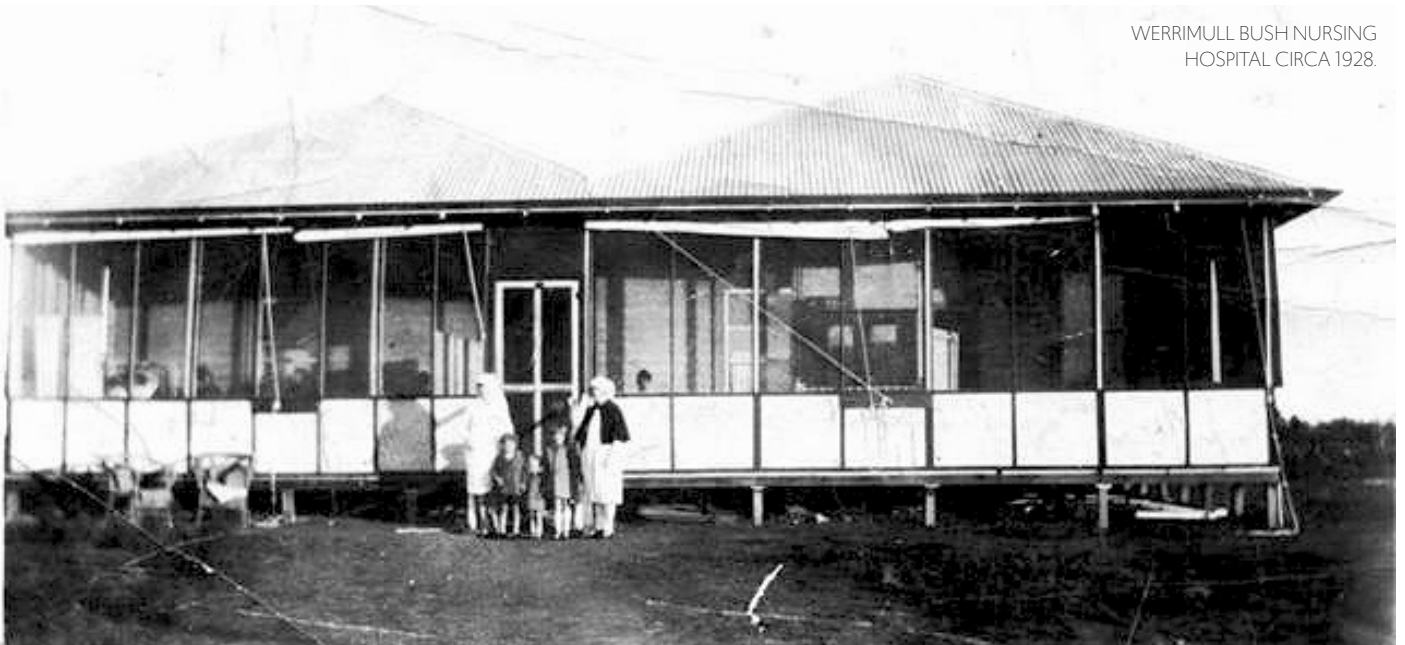
This is probably a story best told in another edition of Heartbeat, but what we can say is that the now 97-year-old Jim, puts his still sharp mind and keen eyesight down to working on these brain-busting puzzles for decades.

"Most of them have come from Op Shops and so you don't know until you start putting them together whether all the pieces will be there," Jim explained.

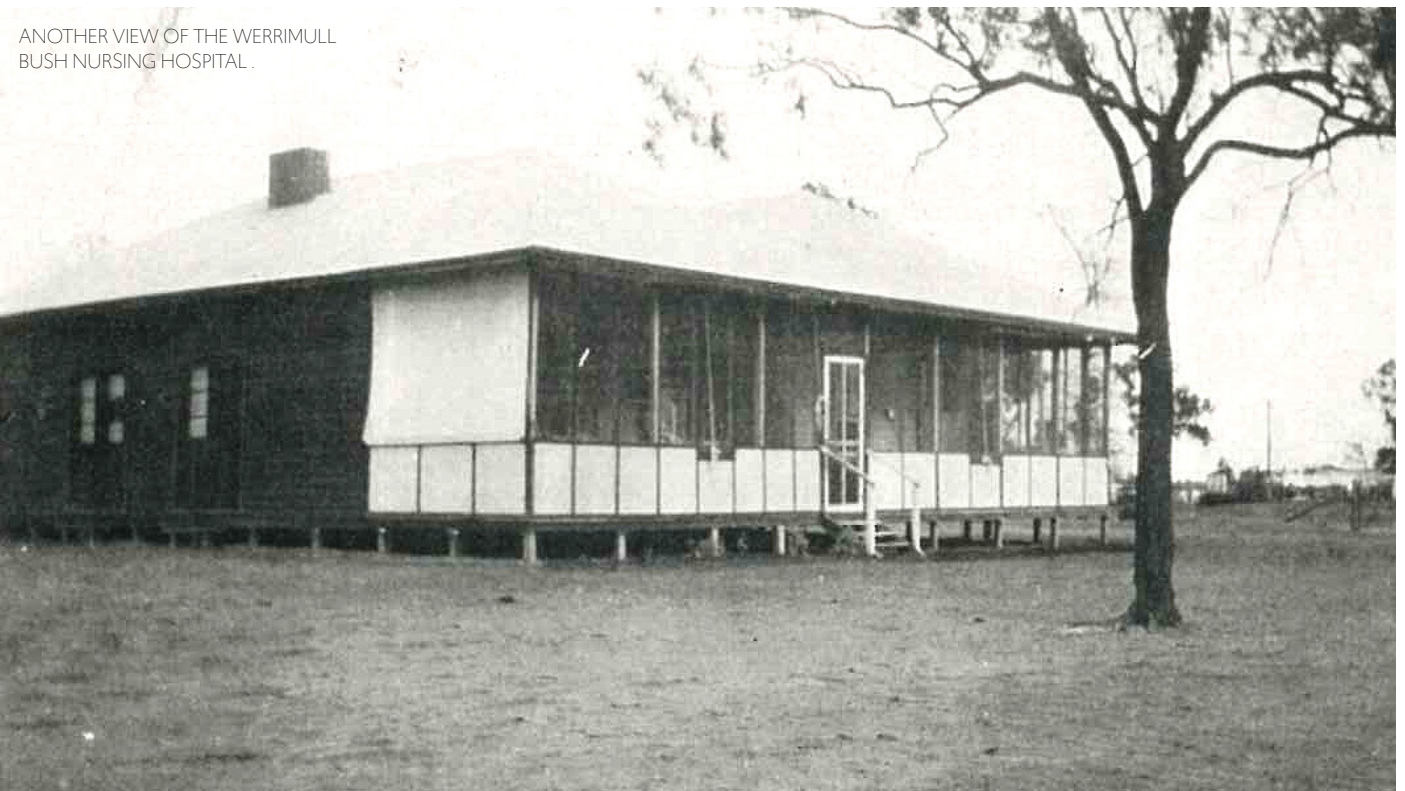
"The little grey cells get used when you are doing a jigsaw, and I prefer them to reading. There's no doubt in my mind they have helped me stay alert."



WERRIMULL BUSH NURSING  
HOSPITAL CIRCA 1928.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE WERRIMULL  
BUSH NURSING HOSPITAL .



THIS IS THE PROPERTY IN ROBINVALE THAT JIM BELIEVES IS THE  
FORMER WERRIMULL BUSH NURSING HOSPITAL.



A SIDE ON VIEW OF THE VERANDAH, WHICH HAS HAD A  
BRICK WALL ADDED TO IT AFTER IT WAS RELOCATED.



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THREE YEARS AGO THE HARD WORK OF RESTORING THE SABRE FIGHTER JET LAY AHEAD.

# STUNNING SABRE SAVED FROM SCRAPYARD

**By Grant Maynard**

IT is set to become the impressive welcoming exhibit for the RAAF Memorial and Museum at Mildura Airport.

And in recent weeks it has been inching inevitably closer to being ready to go on public display.

'It' is an RAAF CAC-27 Avon Sabre jet fighter gifted several years ago to Mildura's RSL sub-branch and more recently having undergone a stunning restoration by members of Dareton's Men In A Shed (MIAS).

The Sabre will never fly again, but the impressive restoration ensures it looks for all intents and purposes like it could!

"It will be a wonderful addition to the museum," Mildura RSL's manager of veterans' services and former serving RAAF member Paul Mensch said.

Paul has taken a personal interest in the

project from the time the aircraft was donated and to say he is chuffed as it nears completion would be an understatement. The plan is to have the historic Aussie-built jet fighter on static display adjacent to the entrance of the memorial and museum complex.

It will be a hard to miss welcome for visitors, Mr Mensch acknowledges with its imposing shape and bright yellow livery highlights.

The display plan also calls for the aircraft to be covered by large annexe to keep it safe from the worst ravages of Mildura's weather.

Our city has a much-storied aviation history, the outstanding chapter being that during World War Two our city was home to a RAAF flight training facility, designated 2OTU — or more precisely the 2nd Operational Training Unit.

Mr Mensch takes up the story.

"In 1939, a short time after the outbreak of World War Two, the Royal Australian Air Force purchased a piece of Mildura land we now recognise as the Mildura Airport for the proposed establishment of a No.4 Bombing and Gunnery School.

"The plans for that school did not go ahead and instead 2OTU was established in 1942.

"On April 6, 1942, 2OTU was formed at Port Pirie in South Australia.

"Personnel and equipment began moving to Mildura on May 14, 1942, by rail while their Wirraway and Fairey Battle aircraft were transported by air.

"On the very same day, the new Mildura unit was allocated its first fighter aircraft — five P40 Kittyhawks.

"Training continued in Mildura during the following years and up until the end of the war in 1945.





DARETON MEN IN A SHED  
MEMBER GREG WOOD HAS  
BEEN WORKING ON THE  
RESTORATION OF A SABRE JET  
FIGHTER FOR THREE YEARS.



"The purpose of 2OTU was to train pilots in the tactics of aerial warfare. Trainees of 2OTU would have already successfully completed Elementary Training School before being placed in the hands of 2OTU's experienced instructors. Many of these instructors had previously fought air battles in the Middle East, England and the Pacific area.

"However, not all instructors had been to battle but they were still highly experienced pilots from operational squadrons.

"1247 pilots graduated from the unit and more than 104,000 hours were flown in total.

"Almost all fighter pilots that took part in the Pacific Theatre either trained or completed a refresher course at 2OTU Mildura."

During World War II, 2OTU Mildura provided training on a wide range of aircraft, including P-40 Kittyhawks, Vultee Vengeances, Avro Ansons, CAC Boomerangs, Supermarine Spitfires and Airspeed Oxfords.

2OTU officially closed at Mildura in early 1946 after the end of World War Two.

2OTU was reformed at RAAF Base Williamtown, NSW, in 1952 and, in 1958, became No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit (2OCU). The unit remains active today.

Interestingly, it was at Williamtown that Australia's Sabre pilots were trained and the restored example of this historic aircraft that is set to go on display in Mildura proudly displays the markings of the 2OCU squadron.

### A PLACE IN HISTORY

The first version of the Sabre produced by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, and designated the CAC-27 Sabre 30, was handed over to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in a formal ceremony at Laverton on August 30, 1954.

The aircraft was Australia's first swept-wing aircraft; the first with powered flight controls, and the first capable of supersonic speed.

Five years later, almost to the day, on August 13, 1959, the RAAF's two squadrons of Sabre jet fighters based at the Butterworth airbase in Malaya were used as part of an Operation Firedog mission.

Twelve aircraft, six from Nos 3 and 77 Squadrons, strafed two jungle camps near Bentong, in Northern Pahang, after these had first been bombed by RAAF, Royal Air



DMS SABRE JET RESTORATION TEAM MEMBERS ANDREW CANNARD, GREG WOOD AND BOB JONES.



A FRONT ON VIEW OF THE JET ENGINE AIR INTAKE.



DMS MEMBER GREG WOOD FINALISING THE FITTING OF THE LEFT HAND WING.

Force (RAF) and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Canberras.

Several other missions were flown before a formal end to the Malayan Emergency was declared on July 31, 1960.

These were to be the last operational missions flown by RAAF fighter aircraft for more than 40 years.

Ten Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Sabre Mk 32s, which had formerly been in service with RAAF squadrons, were officially handed over to the Royal Malaysian Air Force on October 1, 1969.

The gift, worth almost \$10million, also included spare parts, ground equipment, and a simulator for training.

The gesture was part of Australia's commitment to provide military assistance to its allies in South-East Asia made in April of that year by Prime Minister John Gorton.

The RAAF's Sabres were superseded by the French-designed Mirage.

### THE RESTORATION BEGINS

The story of the revival of CAC-27 Sabre A94-906 really began when it was donated to Mildura RSL sub-branch several years ago.

"It was rough and in a lot of bits," Mr Mensch recalls.

The plane was not worth much as a display as it was so Mr Mensch began casting about looking for someone, or some organisation, that might take on the challenge of restoring it to some semblance of its former self.

"I knew about the Dareton Men in a Shed from my days working as a photographer with the Mildura Weekly and so I approached them," he said.



THE TWO WINGS ARE POSITIONED TO BE ATTACHED.



MANY PIECES OF THE PLANE WERE REPLACED OR NEEDED INTENSIVE CLEANING INCLUDING PARTS OF THE COCKPIT COWLING AND CANOPY.



THE SABRE IS LOADED ONTO THE TRAILER AT DARETON MEN IN A SHED AHEAD OF ITS TRIP TO THE MILDURA AIRPORT.



THE LEFT HAND WING IS IN PLACE AND AWAITS THE WING TIPS TO BE ADDED.

SOME OF THE REBRANDING BEGINS.



THE PROJECT WOULD SEE AUTHENTIC MARKINGS FOR THE SABRE RESTORED.



DMS MEMBER PHIL ROSZLER WAS PART OF THE TEAM THAT TRANSPORTED THE SABRE JEST TO THE MILDURA AIRPORT.



THE SABRE'S TRANSFORMED TAILPLANE MARKINGS.

"They had a look, and they weren't too keen to start with..."

"I couldn't blame them. It was a daunting undertaking.

"But they eventually agreed and set to work."

We should mention at this stage that the restoration project was far from being a straightforward task. The Sabre had been damaged in an accident that included a fire that had extensively damaged the wings and fuselage.

But a number of Dareton MIA's volunteers set to work, and it has taken more than three and a half years to get the aircraft to where it is today.

Where it is, is in much larger and painstakingly restored pieces than it was.

The jet is now in a hangar at Mildura Airport as the MIA's volunteers to put

the finishing touches to the project. "They have done a magnificent job," Mr Mensch said.

### RECONSTRUCTION PHASE

One of the mainstays of the restoration effort is MIA's member Greg Wood.

In a recent interview with Heartbeat, he said the Sabre's restoration journey was nearing its end.

It was recently transported in 'large chunks' from Dareton to Mildura Airport to be bolted back together.

In a nutshell, the aircraft was in three large pieces – the fuselage, and the two wings.

"We're almost at the end," Greg told Heartbeat. "We're putting the wings on now."

Once the wings are attached, the volunteers are hoping to lower it "back onto the onto

its legs" complete with a couple of tailor-made stands.

The 'legs' are the struts that the wheels attach to, and the stands are taking the place of the wheel assemblies for now.

"It will have wheels on eventually," Greg promises as he points to a set of refurbished wheel assemblies waiting on a nearby bench.

The wheel and brake assemblies, along with the wing ailerons (flaps) and the 'drop (fuel) tanks' — used to increase the fighter's range — are among finishing touches yet to be completed.

The ailerons were still at Dareton when Heartbeat visited but are, Greg says, refurbished and ready to go on.

Greg says reassuringly that it should be "pretty easy going from here".



**Editor's note:** By the time you are reading this, the Sabre reconstruction should be complete and the sterling efforts of the Dareton MIAS members at an end.

### A REAL TEAM EFFORT

The resurrection of the Sabre has been a team effort from start to finish with Greg paying tribute to his fellow Shed members who have assisted along the way and also those from the wider community who have also played a role like Buronga steel merchant Brian Gregg.

"He's been very, very good to us," Greg said.

"We had to make up a frame to lift the plane and Brian donated the steel.

"Earlier he donated sheets of aluminium that we used to repair the fuselage and wings."

Greg also praised the contribution of Buronga-based Pickering Transport.

"I know some people at Pickering's, and I spoke to the manager over there and asked, 'How do we go about hiring or borrowing a drop deck trailer and a prime mover?'" he said.

"He said: 'No worries. I know you have a man who can drive it for you.'"



RAAF SABRE FIGHTER JET CAC 27. PHOTO: DARREN CRICK

"Michael Waters lent us a pilot car; Graeme Skinner supplied the tilt tray to help load and unload the plane pieces, and Carpenter's Body Works lent us a gantry to lift the plane once we got it to the airport."

"It was all hands on deck, but we were able to do it all with volunteers and loaned equipment.

"We had no-one knock us back. Anyone

we've asked for help or to lend us something has helped. No charge."

Greg also thanked Mildura Airport staffers for their hospitality and assistance during the reconstruction phase and, pointing to the 20CU Tiger's head emblazoned on the Sabre tail, he explained that was done by Merbein's Terry McGowan — a signwriter by trade and an artist by choice.

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*More than six years ago, local identity Vernon Knight was approached to help an elderly lady record and publish her memoir. The experience was so positive and impactful, Vernon built on that simple idea to develop what has now resulted in the publication of six books, detailing the life stories of 88 individuals.*

# MALLEE'S LIVING HISTORIES HAS DEVELOPED A LIFE OF ITS OWN

**By Tracey Forbes**

THIS year will see the publication of the seventh volume, with Vernon's vision being to "enrich the lives of our region's elders and enhance the understandings of those who wish to know more about our region's past".

Entitled the Mallee's Living Histories, the process matches volunteer writers with likely community elders (storytellers). The writers and storytellers meet, conversations are held, and then those conversations are transcribed into story format.

Since the publication of the first book in 2019, 39 writers have volunteered their time to meet and chat with the 88 storytellers. While having the stories published in written format is of course important, it's the process itself that has made this project so valuable.

Over the space of a few months the storyteller and their writer build a real connection, a friendship, one which often continues long after their story has

been published. The writers take great care to include family in the process wherever possible, to only write from the storyteller's perspective and to protect the confidentiality of all involved.

One daughter of a storyteller tells that "At first I was hesitant, as I wasn't sure where my dad's personal information was going and what it would be used for. I then realised this idea of story-telling was a wonderful insight into my dad's war history and life in Mildura. The writer never overstayed her visits and always liaised with me about what she had written. Dad enjoyed the visits and is very proud to have his story in writing. It is a lovely keepsake for our family and friends."

The process of documenting some of the Mallee's wonderful historic memories and accounts of events had begun.

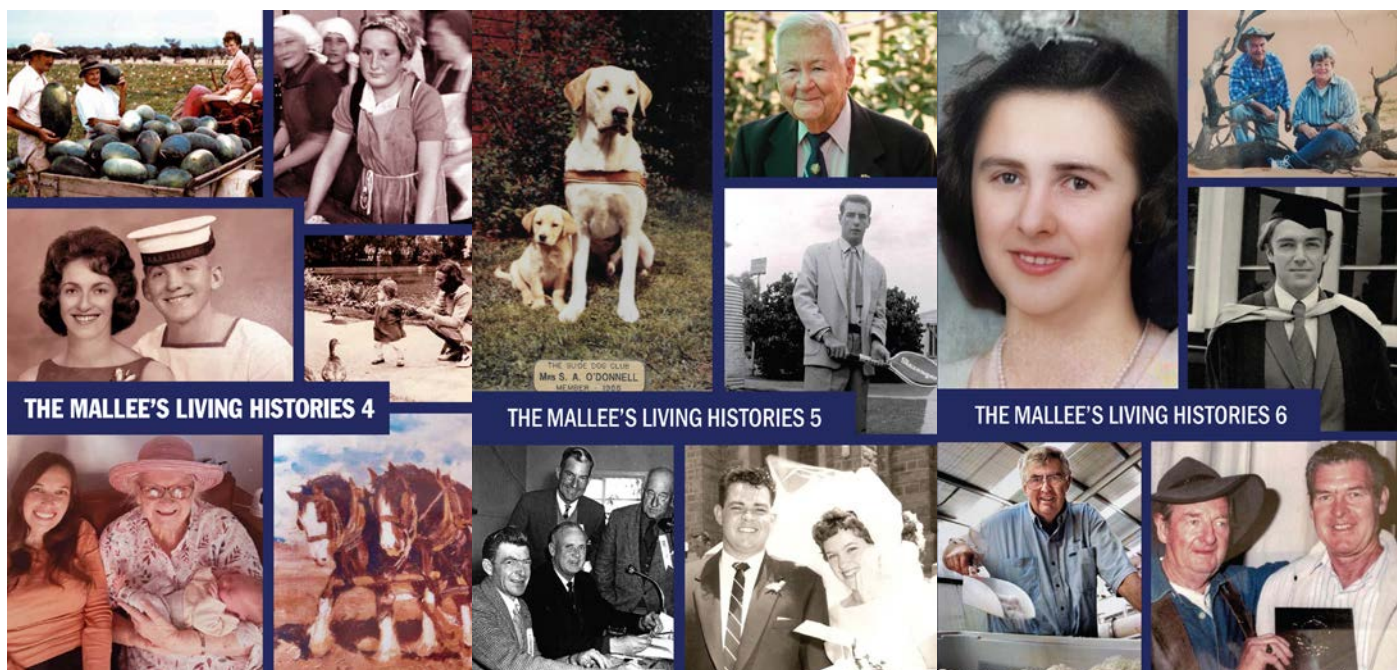
The first book contained the stories of 15 residents of Princes Court Homes, the project at that time being auspiced by Princes Court Incorporated and managed by a small group of five skilled

and enthusiastic individuals. Monash Rural Health joined the project in order to observe and analyse the ability of the project to deliver health benefits for the storytellers involved. A full copy of the evaluation report by Monash University is available on their website.

Over time, more aged care facilities joined the project, with storytellers from Jacaranda Village Red Cliffs, Chaffey Aged Care Merbein and Murray House Wentworth participating. A number of elders still living independently have also provided a few chapters. With storytellers from across the district participating, the project really paints a very broad and comprehensive picture of early Mallee life, its challenges and rewards.

Book 6 was launched at Princess Court Village on December 10, 2024 and was well attended by storytellers, their family and friends, writers, sponsors and supporters. Princes Court CEO, Anthony Couroupis was delighted to announce that the Mallee Living Histories project had been





nominated and was in fact a finalist for the Australian Community Group Award, a part of the 2024 7NEWS Community Achievement Awards for Victoria.

Although not the winner, the project certainly received much acclaim and recognition through the award process.

Brian Hunt, his own story featuring in Book 6, delivered a welcome to country. Known as the 'Poetic Huntsman', Brian recited one of his own poems which was most warmly received by the audience.

Mark Turlan, representing Mildura RSL, the major sponsor of the Mallee Living Histories project, spoke about the club's involvement as sponsors and the importance of the project in and for the local community.

Other sponsors recognised on the day included Monash University Rural Health, Mildura Health Private Hospital, Mildura Rural City Council, Princes Court, Jacaranda Village, Chaffey Aged Care, Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative, Lime Dental, Pizza Café, Lower Murray Water, Quinn & Co Eyecare, Murray House and Dickson & Son. Some sponsors choose to provide their support anonymously.

Federal Member for Mallee, Anne Webster, officially launched Book 6 and congratulated the writers and storytellers and all involved, for capturing the snapshots of valuable local history. Dr Webster also spoke of the importance of youth becoming interested and involved. The value of the project was evident with the launch having been attended by so many supporters.

It was heart-warming to see storytellers signing copies of the book to pass on to family and friends. For one storyteller, sharing her story meant that Book 6 had reached Perth, Port Lincoln, the Gold Coast, London and Scotland within just a few weeks of being launched.

The whole experience was a most memorable one for everyone involved.

Mildura Base Public Hospital first features in Book 2 of Mallee's Living Histories. Storyteller Sue Tassone tells of her mother nursing at the Base Hospital and that later Sue, at the age of sixteen moved into the Nurses' Home in Mildura where she worked as a 'cadet' until the age of seventeen, when she was able to start nursing training. Of the sixteen cadets to start training, only eleven finished. The nurses' home rules were quite strict with lights out by 10pm and only two late passes allowed per week. The girls were required to wear a skirt when either entering or leaving the nurse's home. Sue describes the nursing work as demanding and that as young trainees, they had responsibilities that would not be considered today. Although it was hard work, she loved her time living in the nurse's home.

"Everything was shared, great friendships made".

In the latest volume, Book 6, the hospital is featured in Betty Whiting's story. Betty, formerly Sister Betty Gordon, retold stories from her nursing days. Betty commenced training at Mildura Base Hospital in 1945. She spoke of sleeping on horsehair mattresses at the nurses' home on

verandas enclosed with flywire and canvas blinds.

Although the training and the hours sounded tough, Betty's story also recounted the fun she had with her fellow nurses both at work and after hours. After her initial training she went on to complete midwifery training at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, returning to Mildura to nurse at the Windulva Private Hospital.

Windulva was a private hospital located in Twelfth Street Mildura, which featured as the birthplace of many of the Mallee's Living Histories storytellers. Originally the family home of Clement De Garis, it was christened Windulva after his three daughters Winifred, Dulcie and Vera.

When it later became a private hospital, the name was preserved. In her story, Betty recounts the many hours of domestic duties the nurses were required to perform as the hospital was so short staffed and domestic staff not readily available.

After a brief pause from nursing for marriage and children, Betty returned to nursing in 1969. She tells of working in outpatients (the emergency department at the old Mildura Base Hospital) and of nursing polio patients.

She was one of the nurses with the responsibility of nursing Ailsa Deacon, a polio sufferer who was a patient at the hospital from 1952 until her death in 1980. Betty was also in charge of the TB (Tuberculosis) chalet at the Base Hospital, a piece of history that many in the community would not be aware of.





ANTHONY COUROUPIS, CEO PRINCES COURT RECEIVING RECOGNITION AS A FINALIST AT THE 2024 7NEWS COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS.



MILDURA NURSES' HOME CIRCA 1954.



BRIAN HUNT, THE POETIC HUNTSMAN, ENTERTAINS THE AUDIENCE AT THE OFFICIAL BOOK LAUNCH WITH HIS POETRY.



VERNON KNIGHT WITH A COPY OF BOOK 3 WHICH HAD JUST BEEN PRINTED.



1946 2ND YEAR NURSE BETTY GORDON.



THE LAUNCH OF BOOK 6 ON 101224 WAS VERY WELL ATTENDED BY STORYTELLERS WRITERS AND PROJECT SUPPORTERS.



YOUNG NURSE SUE.

The chalet took more than three years to construct, accepting patients in 1948. It had provision for fourteen patients with surrounding verandas that not only allowed for TB patients to be wheeled out into the fresh air but also gave extra bed room if needed.

The chalet was demolished in 1978. Betty proudly notes in her story that she was awarded Life Membership of the Mildura District Nurses' Association in 1990.

In 1997, she was delighted to be on the Organising Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the Mildura Base Hospital, which was celebrated at the Settler's Club with more than 200 guests attending (many dressed in past uniforms). Stories

such as Betty's help readers piece together a jigsaw of local history that might otherwise be unknown or lost.

All stories from Books 1 to 5, are now available online on the Mallee Living Histories website with Book 6 to be added shortly. Stories are available to read, free of charge (with an appropriate e-reader app) from [www.malleelivinghistories.com.au](http://www.malleelivinghistories.com.au).

Hard copy books are available individually or as a full set of six from Princes Court and can be ordered on-line or collected in person.

Book 7 will be published this year, taking the tally of stories to 100+. The volunteer writers will sit down yet again with some

fresh storytellers to add to the 88 chapters already published.

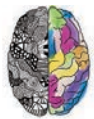
That's quite an achievement and an important piece of work.

Do you know a local elder with a story to tell? Or, would you be keen to spend a few hours with one of our storytellers to rekindle and capture their memories?

Anyone who may be interested in becoming involved with the project, is encouraged to register interest via the website contact page.

As Peter Kenyon OAM, Director, Bank of I.D.E.A.S. remarks in the Foreword to Book 6, "We learn through stories. They fire the imagination; they crack open our hearts and they open our minds like nothing else".





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- ☎ 03 4050 4622
- 📠 03 8677 9624
- ✉ [mildura@relationalminds.com.au](mailto:mildura@relationalminds.com.au)

## Other Useful Mildura Services

Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS) is based at Mildura Base Public Hospital. It is the public mental health service that manages crises for the community. For mental health support, contact: 03 5022 3500 or 1300 366 375.

**headspace** - helping young people struggling with general life issues and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression. Contact: (03) 5021 2400.

### Helplines

Relational Minds is not an emergency service. If you need immediate help, please call:

- **Suicide Callback Service:** 1300 659 467
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Kids Help Line:** 1800 55 1800
- **QLife** (anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral): 1300 555 727
- **Eating Disorders Victoria:** 1300 550 236 and the **Butterfly Foundation:** 1800 33 4673 - supporting people with eating disorders and body image issues





DR GLEESON IS A KEEN AVIATOR WHO WILL USE HIS OWN BEECHCRAFT BONANZA TO FLY TO OTHER REGIONS SUCH AS BROKEN HILL WHERE HE PRACTICES.

---

*There is a lot more to Mildura Health Private Hospital's accomplished GP, GP Endoscopist and GP anaesthetist Dr Tom Gleeson than meets the eye.*

# THE DOCTOR WHO LOVES FLYING





MILDURA HEALTH PRIVATE HOSPITAL

### By Phil Kettle

AFTER arriving in Mildura from Queensland in 2020, Dr Tom Gleeson is now firmly entrenched here.

The good doctor and his family are enjoying the Sunraysia lifestyle and have no plans to move on.

That's good news for Sunraysia.

The youngest of three brothers, Tom's life began in Charleville, 750 kilometres west of Brisbane, where his father worked in maintenance at the local hospital and his mother was a teacher.

While still at primary school, the family moved to Chinchilla, 450 kilometres from where they had been living and his father made a career change, buying a butcher's shop.

"It was about the same time my father started breeding horses. I can't remember a time in my life when horses haven't been part of my life and to this day they continue to be," Tom recounted.

"When my brothers and I finished primary school, we went to boarding school at Brisbane Grammar.

"I'm sure that all came about because my mother, being a teacher, wanted my brothers and I to get the best educational opportunities that we could.

"I know that it must have been extremely difficult for my parents to manage the financial cost of that, but somehow they did.

"For what they sacrificed, I will always be grateful."

Having graduated from Brisbane Grammar, Tom went on to study at Brisbane University, where he would complete a degree in science and medicine. He then went on to do his placement in 2005, at the Gold Coast Hospital.

From the Gold Coast Tom moved to Townsville, where he added another string to his growing 'bow' of medical qualifications becoming a GP Anaesthetist. "Having always been a boy from the bush, when the opportunity arose for me to move to St George I leapt at the chance," Tom recalls.

Situated on the beautiful Balonne River, more than 500 kilometres from Brisbane, St George is a rural town with a population of about 3000 people.

The town's hospital provides community and allied health services, as well as home and community care support to the St George and surrounding communities.

"I learnt more working in St George than I could have ever imagined," Tom explained.

"There were only three GPs there and we had to do everything as well as often being on call 24/7.

"The nearest major hospital was in Toowoomba. That meant sometimes as a GP, you would have to do what would normally be done in a hospital. It was hard work."

Of course, it wasn't all hard work, as Tom found time to meet and marry his wife Liz and to begin their life together.

Tom and Liz now have three daughters.

At the mention of his family, Tom smiles - a smile of an obviously very proud husband and father.

After 11 years as a GP in St George, Tom describes feeling that he had totally run out steam and was in the need of a change, not only for himself but also for his family.

"It was time to move on. We started looking at our options. I noticed that Mildura Private Health was looking for a GP. I made a call, which led to discussions with the hospital's CEO," he said.

"A flying visit to Mildura with my wife ensued and we made the decision to give Mildura a go. Not totally sure about the move, we took 12 months leave. That gave us the choice of a returning to St George if we had a change of heart."





ST GEORGE HOSPITAL WHERE DR GLEESON SPENT MANY YEARS.



THE PICTURESQUE BALONNE RIVER IN ST GEORGE.

As it turned out, it would be almost 12 months in the making by the time Tom and his family moved from Queensland to Mildura.

He started at Mildura Health Private Hospital as its first GP in January 2020.

Mildura Health Private Hospital considers Dr Gleeson was a rare find, being a country boy at heart and an accomplished GP, GP Endoscopist, as well as a GP Anaesthetist.

“Since his arrival, he has played a pivotal role ensuring the hospital’s GP practice was accredited to train the next generation of rural doctors and he is an integral link in the continuity of patient care across Mildura Health Private Hospital, Mildura Base Public Hospital and Broken Hill Public Hospital,” a spokesperson said.

It didn’t take long for Tom and Liz to decide that Mildura was going to be their home. Six months after arriving they bought a property.

“It was like it was meant to happen. We found our dream home without much effort,” Tom said.

“We found a house on a couple of hectares of land with horse paddocks and stables – it has everything we want in a home and it’s a great place to live.

“Our girls are in a great school, and it only takes me 10 minutes to get to work.

“The people that I work with are fantastic as are the patients and community we serve.

“What I really like about Mildura, is that it is big enough to have everything that you could ever want and yet small enough to still have a country feel.”

Tom, who along with interests in horse racing, has always had a passion for flying, recently buying a Beechcraft Bonanza.

His ongoing pilot training will soon see him becoming our own version of the flying doctor.

“I’d like to say that the sole reason for



DR GLEESON PRACTICES AT THE MILDURA HEALTH PRIVATE HOSPITAL.

purchasing a plane is to enable me to get to Broken Hill where I currently travel to work once a month.

“While that is the case, I mostly just want to be able to do some flying which I love!”

Like most regional locations in Australia, Mildura has a shortage of general

practitioners. This shortage puts a lot of pressure on our hospitals.

While attracting GPs to Mildura continues to be a challenge, we can all feel grateful that Dr Tom Gleeson and his family have chosen to call Mildura home...even if he still barracks for the Brisbane Lions!



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*Dr Ryan Sheridan, a GP registrar at Ontario Medical Clinic, ABOVE, is living proof of the potential in growing your own workforce. His story will be revealed shortly. Recently appointed as Board Director (Doctor in Training) for the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Chair of the RDAA Residents and Registrars Special Interest Group, Ryan is an advocate for rural health at a national level. More on his amazing journey shortly*

# HOMEGROWN HEALTHCARE: DR RYAN SHERIDAN AND THE FUTURE OF RURAL HEALTHCARE



Workforce retention has long been a critical conversation in rural health. In Mildura, like so many regional communities, the challenge isn't just attracting doctors and other healthcare professionals but ensuring they stay.

WHILE recruitment often grabs headlines, retention holds the key to sustainable care. Victoria's Single Employer Model, an innovative pilot program, aims to change the game for rural generalist trainees. Multiple General Practices across the Sunraysia region are now enrolled in this model and prepared to integrate early career doctors as they transition from hospital-based training. This initiative addresses two key barriers to rural workforce retention: employment stability and training continuity. However, retention is about more than just career security- social connectedness is equally vital. Strengthening professional and personal ties early in a junior doctor's career can make a meaningful difference in ensuring rural doctors feel supported, both in and outside of their clinical work. That responsibility falls to the existing medical community in Mildura and to all of us- to help them build connections so that they ultimately will call Mildura home.

### **THE GP WORKFORCE CRISIS AND THE SINGLE EMPLOYER MODEL**

Rural Australia is on the verge of a healthcare crisis. By 2030, the nation will face a projected shortage of over 10,000 GPs, with rural and regional communities like Mildura hit the hardest. Longer wait times, increased pressure on our emergency department, increased out-of-pocket costs and poorer health outcomes will be the inevitable consequences if nothing changes.

But recruitment alone isn't enough- retention is the real challenge. For many young doctors, rural practice is often seen as a stepping stone rather than a long-term career. Professional isolation, limited career progression, and personal barriers like distance from family make it difficult to commit. Even practical hurdles, such as lacking a stable employment history for a mortgage, add to the challenge.

Yet rural medicine isn't just about sacrifice- it's about opportunity. Bringing trainees to rural areas earlier in their careers ensures they develop ties to the community before

becoming embedded in metropolitan networks. Social integration is key. Strong professional and personal connections help transform rural practice from a temporary placement into a permanent commitment. Our communities have a vital role to play in this, fostering belonging and support beyond the workplace.

Victoria's Single Employer Model is a critical step forward. By addressing the practical concerns of students and trainees- job security, employment continuity, and aligning rural roles with metropolitan benefits- it provides a tangible solution to make rural medicine a viable, long-term career choice.

At its core, the program simplifies training and employment for rural generalist trainees by offering a single employment contract that spans hospital and general practice settings. The benefits are practical: paid parental leave, leave entitlements, and job security. These measures go a long way in reducing the uncertainty that often deters doctors from committing to rural areas.

What's exciting is the ripple effect this model could create. Stability fosters confidence, confidence fosters connection, and connection fosters commitment. When rural healthcare professionals feel secure in their roles, they are more likely to invest in their communities, and that's what sustainable rural healthcare looks like.

### **THE BIGGER PICTURE: BUILDING FROM WITHIN**

The Single Employer Model is just one component of a broader vision to 'grow our own' rural healthcare workforce. By investing in local talent and offering clear pathways to training, rural communities can build a healthcare workforce that isn't just present but deeply connected to the region. This starts with fostering interest in health careers as early as high school, ensuring that students see a future for themselves in medicine, nursing, and allied health roles within their own communities. This approach works. La Trobe Rural Health School Mildura campus' nursing program is a prime example, producing enough graduates to meet much of our hospital's workforce demand. Applying similar principles to medical training locally could be transformative. The end-to-end regional medical program already offers a structured rural pathway, starting with a

three-year Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Medical) at La Trobe University's Bendigo or Albury-Wodonga campus, followed by a four-year Doctor of Medicine (Rural Pathway) at the University of Melbourne in Shepparton. There has been extensive advocacy for replicating this model into the Mallee, ensuring local students have a direct path into medicine without needing to relocate to metropolitan areas.

The 'grow your own' strategy goes beyond addressing workforce shortages, it's about creating a self-sustaining, community-driven healthcare system that fosters long-term commitment to rural practice. By investing in local training pathways and fostering early interest in health careers, rural communities can develop a workforce that is both sustainable and deeply connected to the region. This ensures long-term access to high-quality care, delivered by professionals who understand and are invested in the communities they serve, just like Ryan.

### **LINKING POLICY TO PEOPLE: DR RYAN SHERIDAN'S JOURNEY**

Dr Ryan Sheridan, a GP registrar at Ontario Medical Clinic, is living proof of the potential in growing your own workforce. A Mildura local, Ryan's journey has come full circle. After growing up in the region, he left for the city to pursue his medical studies. But fortunately, Mildura called him back.

"I always knew I wanted to return," Ryan shares. "There's something about serving the community that raised you—it's deeply rewarding."

Ryan's decision to practice in Mildura wasn't just about career opportunities, it was about connection. Growing up locally, Ryan understood the unique challenges of rural healthcare. He saw firsthand both the impact that consistent, accessible medical care has on a community and the challenges that arise when it is lacking. In a short time, Ryan has become a valued member of Ontario Medical Clinic, earning the trust of his patients and colleagues alike.

"Being part of a multidisciplinary team is incredibly satisfying," Ryan says. "In rural practice, the integration of the team is paramount. We rely on one another's expertise to deliver high quality care, and that sense of collaboration is one of the most rewarding aspects of working in a rural community."





DR SHERIDAN VISITED CANBERRA AS PART OF HIS ADVOCACY WORK FOR RDAA. L-R DR RT LEWANDOWSKI, FEDERAL LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, PETER DUTTON, RDASA VICE PRESIDENT AND RDAA BOARD MEMBER, DR ALI LYDEAMORE, FEDERAL SHADOW MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE, SENATOR ANNE RUSTON WITH RDAA BOARD MEMBER DR RYAN SHERIDAN.

Ryan is also fostering informal social networks among trainees and early-career doctors in Mildura. “Social connections are vital for retention,” he says. “Creating a sense of community outside of work is just as important as what happens within the clinic walls.” Recognising the need for both individual connection and systemic support, Ryan has stepped into leadership and advocacy roles to tackle broader rural healthcare challenges.

Recently appointed as Board Director (Doctor in Training) for the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Chair of the RDAA Residents and Registrars Special Interest Group, Ryan is an advocate for rural health at a national level. Earlier in the year, he travelled to Canberra to meet with Members of Parliament, furthering the RDAA’s advocacy efforts pre-budget and pre-election. His work reflects a deep commitment not just to his patients but to the broader system that supports them. Ryan’s interest in Addiction Medicine highlights his dedication to tackling complex rural health challenges, broadening his impact. As part of his Rural Generalist Fellowship, he is currently exploring advanced skill options and is strongly considering mental health due to the clear need in the community and its intersection with his interest in addiction medicine. “Mental health services are critically over-stretched in rural areas, and



L-R ONTARIO MEDICAL CLINIC CLINICIANS, DR PAULINE LAU, DR NAYNA PURCHASE, DR MARK MARROWS, DR RYAN SHERIDAN, GP PHARMACIST BROOKE SHELLEY, AND DR EMMA MURRAY.

integrating these skills into my practice would allow me to address some of the most pressing healthcare challenges in this community,” Ryan explained. Mildura is fortunate to have one of its own return- not just as a doctor, but as a leader, an advocate, and a driving force for change. His commitment to rural medicine and his community is exactly the kind of investment that builds a sustainable future for healthcare in the region.

### A PATH FORWARD

Dr Ryan Sheridan’s story is a reminder of what is possible when we invest in people and create pathways for rural healthcare professionals to thrive. Reflecting on his journey, Ryan shares, “If you are a junior

doctor looking to do some good with the skills you’ve got- go rural. You won’t regret it.” His sentiment speaks to the heart of rural medicine: it isn’t always easy, but it is always rewarding.

The Single Employer Model offers a promising framework for addressing rural GP shortages, but its success will depend on continued support, collaboration, and innovation. When we grow and invest in our own, we’re not just building careers- we’re building healthier, stronger communities. Communities where patients know their doctor, and their doctor knows them. Communities where care isn’t just accessible- it’s personal. And in Mildura, we’re proving that rurality isn’t a barrier- it’s a strength.





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# A COMMUNITY WITHIN A COMMUNITY

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**By Phil Kettle**

FOR Margie Cursaro, born in 1977 in the small town of Liberty in the Philippines, it has been a long and adventurous journey from her place of birth to Mildura — her now home.

The small village of Liberty is located on the island of Leyte — a member of the Philippines' Visayas group of islands and it is where General Douglas MacArthur famously returned in late 1944 to eventually liberate the people of the Philippines from Japanese occupation during WWII.

It is the eighth-largest and sixth-most populous island in the Philippines, with a total population of 2,600,000.

But the town of Liberty has just a dozen houses or so, and at the time of Margie growing up there, there was no running water or electricity.

"I was one of five girls, and our life growing up was one that I will always look back on with fond memories," Margie says. "My parents both worked and worked extremely hard... like all people there. There were no handouts. To survive, you had to work hard and that's what my parents did.

"My sisters and I were able to attend Liberty Elementary School. Then during my high school years I was able to further my education at Northern Leyte College. "This was all made possible because of the determination and sacrifices that our parents made for us to get an education. For that I will always be extremely grateful."

## **MARGIE'S ROMANTIC CONNECTION TO AUSTRALIA**

"After high school, my cousin introduced me to a pen pal from Australia. I got to know him through our correspondence and eventually fell in love and decided to get married," Margie confided.

"We married in 1995, and I headed to Australia to start our new lives together. It was with mixed emotions I left home on a life-changing adventure.

"I moved to Robinvale," Margie says adding that it now seems like a long time ago.

"If it's possible, try and think of what would be the exact opposite of what Robinvale looks like and then, only then, you might be getting some idea of what it is like where I had come from."

Margie said that arriving in Australia and Robinvale with limited English made life a challenge.

"The culture shock was huge when I moved from my little village in the Philippines to a farm just outside of Robinvale," she recalled.

"Not having a fluent grasp of the English language provided many barriers for me. It also helped me to find that there were many Filipinos who had made the move to Australia as I had."

In 1996 Margie officially became an Australian citizen. This was also the year her son was born.

A year later her first daughter was born.

"My connection with Australia was complete," she said.

"It was also at this time that it became so inspiring for me to see a sense of community just like it was back in the Philippines. The Australian people are always ready to lend a hand and help their neighbour."

In 2010, circumstances for Margie changed and she moved to Mildura.

"It was then that I became really involved with the Filipino community," Margie explained.

"Mildura is a vibrant town that is very welcoming to people from all over the world. My life became busier by the day. Three more children, working full-time at Mildura Base Hospital Café for nearly 10 years, followed by another three years at another café.

"I learnt at a very early age that if you want something in life the only way to achieve that, is by working hard and that is something that I have always done and will continue to do."

Margie became totally immersed in what was a busy life, balancing family and work,

but still she found time to become involved with SMECC.

Since 1979, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) has provided local migrant and refugee communities with a range of services.

SMECC continues to work with and represent all culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, within the Mallee region.

"I also became involved in the FCSI (Filipino Community of Sunraysia) which has been an effective community group in the Sunraysia area for more than 30 years," Margie said.

"We have 500 members in the Sunraysia region. I am proud to have been the SMECC representative and fund raising committee chairperson for the Filipino Community Incorporation of Mildura.

"My job has been to represent the Filipino community and to share our culture, heritage and beliefs with the people of Mildura, through SMECC and by holding festivals."

For Margie, 2025 will always be a year the year she will remember as the beginning OF her time as the president of the Filipino Community, replacing the outgoing president Rod Serojales who has been transferred to Melbourne for work.

"I am honoured to be given the role of president, and I would like to take a moment to thank all members for their support and trust in me going forward," Margie said.

"I am excited about the opportunities ahead for our community. I will continue to work hard to serve the Filipino community in Sunraysia and ensure we achieve our goals together.

"The collaboration and dedication of all members is invaluable, and I look forward to working closely with them."

Margie is both excited and positive about the role she has undertaken and was pleased to details her aims for the Filipino Community. They are:

**Strengthening Community Connections:**  
"I want to enhance the sense of belonging among community members by organizing





THE SUNRAYSIA FILIPINO COMMUNITY CELEBRATES AT THEIR CHRISTMAS PARTY HELD AT STEFANO'S CAFE IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR



KATHERENE CARUSELLA, ROD SEROJALES, WITH MARDIE CURSARO AT STEFANO'S CAFE

regular events, cultural celebrations, and social gatherings that promote interaction and unity”.

**Advocacy and Representation:** “I aim to serve as a voice for our community, advocating for our interests and concerns at local government levels, ensuring that our needs are recognized and addressed”.

**Cultural Preservation and Promotion:** “I seek to promote Filipino culture and heritage through educational programs and cultural events, fostering pride in our identity, while sharing our traditions with the broader community”.

**Economic Empowerment:** “I want to create opportunities for economic development within our community, supporting local businesses, job training programs, and networking events that enhance employment prospects”.

**Support Services:** “I aim to establish resources that address the social and health needs of our community, ensuring access to information, counselling, and support services for individuals and families”.

**Youth Engagement:** “I want to encourage the youth in our community to take active roles in leadership and community activities, fostering their personal development and ensuring the continuity of our community’s legacy”.

**Collaboration and Partnership:** “I plan to build partnerships with local organisations and other cultural groups to promote inclusivity, share resources and work together on common goals”.

“By pursuing these goals, my vision is to



GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR WADES ASHORE DURING FIRST LANDINGS AT LEYTE, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. OCTOBER 20, 1944. PHOTO: U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS OFFICER GAETANO FAILLACE. NATIONAL ARCHIVES..

create a thriving, united, and empowered Filipino community in Mildura that contributes positively to the local society, while preserving our unique cultural identity,” Margie said.

Mildura and the broader Sunraysia region are home to a diverse array of cultures from around the globe. The contributions of individuals such as Margie, and other

members of the Filipino community, who work diligently and selflessly, enrich our community significantly.

We should feel proud and gratified to share our vibrant community with people from the Philippines and other parts of the world. Their efforts, along with those of other migrants, enhance the dynamism and strength of Sunraysia.



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COMMUNITY LIVING







(MIDDLE L-R) EULIEN MUNEZ (MBPH), NIKOLA LOXTON (MBPH/COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM), JENNA HARRISON (MBPH), MADALINE HERBERTS (MBPH), BELAH USSHER (DARWIN MIDWIFERY), SOPHIE VRYBERGEN (MBPH) AND DYLAN BROOK (NOT COMPLETING A GRADUATE PROGRAM/ONGOING EMPLOYMENT). (FRONT L-R) ALLYSON WEBLEY (MBPH MENTAL HEALTH), KAREN SHORROCK (MBPH CRITICAL CARE), MAIRE FRANZ LAZO (MBPH/COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM), ALI LUSH (ASSOCIATE LECTURER OF NURSING), TEMPANY CROOT (TOWNSVILLE MIDWIFERY), GEMMA MELTON (MBPH MIDWIFERY) AND GRACE GIDDINGS (MBPH CRITICAL CARE)..

*Seventeen La Trobe students have taken graduate-year positions at Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) this year, cementing the strong ties between the University and the local health system.*

# NURSING GRADUATES TAKE A PATHWAY TO THE BASE

**By Anthea Strathopoulos**

LA TROBE Mildura facilitated local students to undertake a Nursing and Midwifery double degree following a Memorandum of Understanding signing with MBPH in 2021. The first cohort of these students will graduate in 2025.

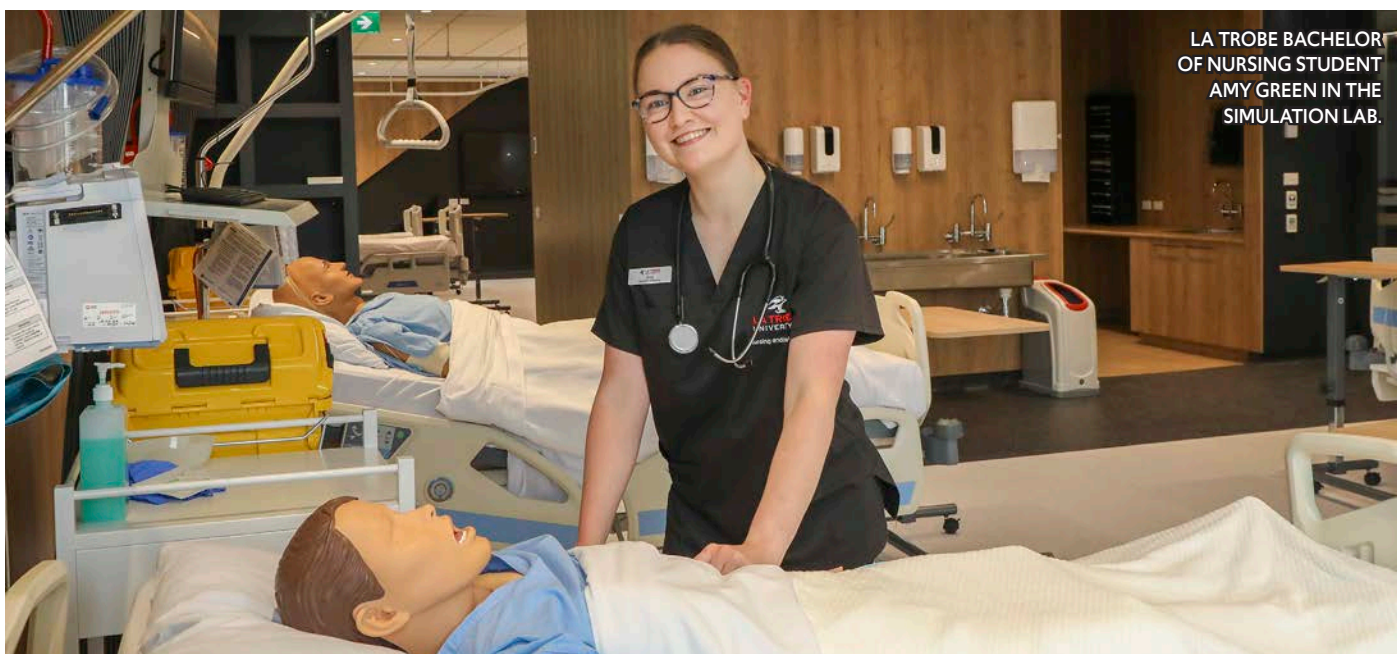
Mildura Base Public Hospital Executive Director of Engagement and Support Services Heath Kendall said the partnership with La Trobe fostered strong ties with the district, in addition to aiding with the development of the local workforce. "La Trobe University has been a great

partner for many years and plays an important role in working with Mildura Base Public Hospital, with our professional workforce particularly in the area of Allied Health and Nursing," Heath said. "Recruiting local students to our workforce helps build a strong connection with our community."





GRADUATE BELAH  
USSHER (R) WHEN SHE  
WAS TRAINING IN THE LA  
TROBE IMULATION LAB.



LA TROBE BACHELOR  
OF NURSING STUDENT  
AMY GREEN IN THE  
SIMULATION LAB.

“The hospital’s close relationship with the University, together with the learning and training students receive during their courses, contributes to their ability to gain more employable skills.

“The students we get from La Trobe are very skilled individuals and they generally have a strong connection with the region, which is important in retaining them when they graduate.”

Mildura Base Public Hospital and La Trobe University are focused on career progression and the successful employment of local students with over 80 percent of graduates obtaining employment and inclusion in MBPH’s Graduate Nurse Program.

La Trobe University Mildura Head of Campus Sandy Connor said the association with the hospital brought value to the community by providing an

opportunity for local people to study in the town that they lived in and then start their careers locally.

“Having the hospital as a partner for La Trobe means that we understand the needs of both our community and the hospital, which enables us to respond to those needs and provide the workforce they are seeking,” Sandy said.

“Many of our students are low Socio-Economic Status (75.6 per cent), first in their family to attend university (56.5 per cent) and mature age or non-school leavers (64 per cent), meaning they have homes, children, partners and bills, and would not be able to attend university if they had to leave home to do so.

“The benefit of this to our local community is profound.”

Bachelor of Nursing student Grace

Giddings said students enjoyed studying and finding employment in their hometown or district.

“These graduate positions provide students with an opportunity to work close to home without having to travel too far,” Grace said.

Grace started with a Diploma of Rural Health at La Trobe Mildura, followed by a Bachelor of Nursing and recently found a graduate position at Mildura Base Public Hospital in the critical care area.

“I was over the moon and relieved to not only be offered a spot at MBPH Graduate program, but the highly sought after and desired critical care program which only accepts four applicants,” Grace said.

“At La Trobe, we are building great relationships with lecturers who offer an open-door policy and provide feedback for everything.”





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- Royal Children's Hospital - Paediatric Cardiology Rural Out Reach Service (quarterly)
- Three visiting Haematologists from The Alfred Hospital
- Cardiology Registrar from The Alfred Hospital - rotating on a six monthly placement
- 3rd year and 5th year Medical Student placement from Monash School of Rural Health
- One visiting Respiratory & Sleep Physician

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

- Electrocardiograph (ECG)
- Echocardiogram (ECHO)
- Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE)
- DCR Cardioversion
- Exercise Stress Testing
- Stress ECHO
- 24Hr Holter monitoring
- 3-5 day Holter monitoring
- Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring
- Pacemaker/ICD/Reveal follow up
- Pacemaker/ICD/Reveal Implantation arrangements



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CARDIOLOGY**

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# Partnership Opportunities



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

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

## JOIN OUR GROWING LIST OF SPONSORS



A partnership with MBPH Foundation is an opportunity to enshrine your family's name and or business in an institution that has served the community which you love and have contributed so much to.

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Naming Partner	\$15k
Major Partner	\$25k
Premier Partner	\$50k

## NAMING RIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES

### Mobile Screening Vehicle

The mobile treatment and prevention vehicle will allow people living in remote areas access to treatment and screening.

### Patient Transport Vehicle

The MBPH Patient Transport Vehicle provides an opportunity to promote your brand as it travels around the Northern Mallee.

### Foundation Gala Ball

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### Corporate Golf Day

A great event that you and your business can be at the forefront of.

## BECOME A MBPH FOUNDATION COMMUNITY AND MEDIA PARTNER





MILDURA  
BASE PUBLIC  
HOSPITAL  
FOUNDATION

# UPCOMING EVENTS SCHEDULE 2025



**28**  
**MARCH**

## FOUNDATION GOLF DAY

Four Person Ambrose at Coomealla Golf Course  
Over \$50,000 in Prizes.  
Includes BBQ & Refreshments.



**02**  
**MAY**

## KC SOCIETY LUNCH

A fantastic event held at 400 Gradi.  
The KC Society provides financial scholarships  
to young people who have chosen to further  
their education in health at tertiary level.



**18**  
**JULY**

## MILDURA CUP Paddock CLUB MARQUEE

Join us in the exclusive Paddock Club Marquee.  
Featuring special guest Group 1 winning trainer  
Wayne Hawkes.  
Includes Food & Refreshments.



**3-4**  
**OCTOBER**

## AGENCY, A LEAGUE FESTIVAL OF SPORT

An A-League pre-season game held at  
Mildura Sporting Precinct.  
See some of the best football right here  
in Mildura.



**01**  
**NOVEMBER**

## FOUNDATION GALA BALL

Enjoy spectacular entertainment and live  
music at the beautiful Willow & Ivie.  
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Foundation's Skin Cancer Screening Vehicle.

**MORE INFORMATION**

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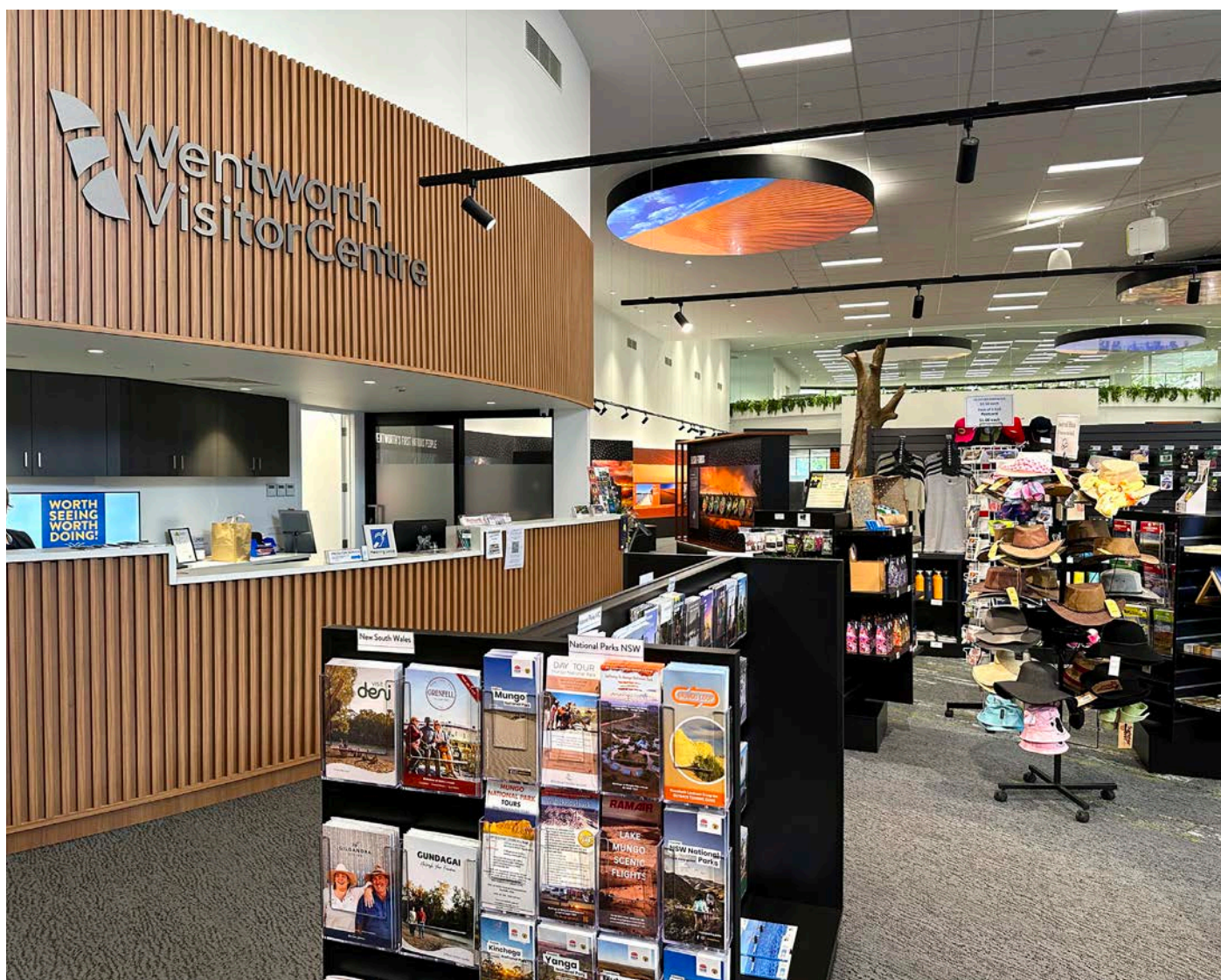
THE STRIKING  
EXTERIOR OF THE  
WENTWORTH  
VISITOR CENTRE.

---

*What essentially began as a sad chapter in a community's tale – the demise of the Wentworth Service Club – has been rewritten with the former club having been rejuvenated and repurposed into an amazing new facility.*

# NEW VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE IS MUCH MORE THAN A TOURIST HUB





THE WENTWORTH VISITOR CENTRE INFORMATION COUNTER.

### By John Dooley

THE once bustling Wentworth Services Club building sat empty and forlorn for many years after the doors closed.

Then along came Wentworth Shire Council, who bought the property with the view to moving the council chambers to the former club and opening a new visitor information and conference centre.

Late last year the Shire's was able to realise a community vision for the abandoned building and open the doors to an inspired new complex.

"Rather than a white elephant we now have an incredible fit-for-purpose building that accommodates a 21st Century workforce, library facility with a focus on children's space, and an awe-inspiring Visitor Information Centre," Wentworth Shire Council Mayor Daniel Linklater recently explained to Heartbeat.

"This centre came about because of a community vision that dates back to 2015. "After the demise of the club, 500

Wentworth residents signed a petition calling on council to purchase the building which it did – and now, 10 years later, we have this fantastic facility.

"It is a real tribute to the local community. They had the vision and as a result it has created something that is the beating heart of the entire Wentworth Shire – not just Wentworth."

The new complex is an incredible building that has many aspects to it as Heartbeat discovered.

"The visitor information centre greets you as you enter the building and at once people are wowed at the brilliant 'interpretive' space which occupies the main area on the ground level," Cr Linklater said.

"Also in this space is a lovely café as well as our library, which is located towards the rear of the building."

A major feature of the revamped venue is the upstairs conference centre that can accommodate more than 150 people seated at round tables. The facility is fully equipped with the latest kitchen amenities

and audio-visual equipment. The room offers a spectacular vista of the Darling River with a shady outlook provided by majestic eucalypts that stand tall along the river bank below.

The interpretive space is really something to see and the result of a collaborative, creative effort masterfully executed. The unique space showcases the Indigenous and cultural history of the Shire, including a replica of the famous Canoe Tree, European exploration and settlement and agricultural development, the paddle steamer era and the display also features a real Ferguson tractor – which played an integral part in the building of levee banks that prevented the 1956 flood from inundating Wentworth.

"There are also many cultural artifacts that have been produced for this display and overall, I think it is a tremendously well-presented building," Cr Linklater said.

"It really does utilise the open space that's here, which those familiar with the former Wentworth Services Club will appreciate.





GEORGE CHAFFEY IS FEATURED IN AN INSTALLATION SHOWCASING THE BENEFITS OF IRRIGATION TO THE REGION.



TRADITIONAL BUSH TUCKER IN COLOUR.



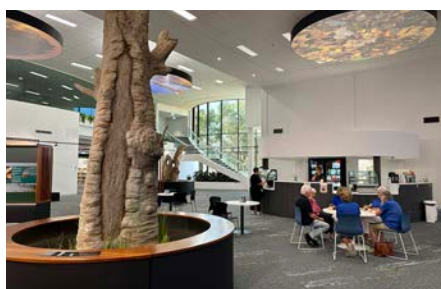
THE BARKANDJI PEOPLE'S STORY IS TOLD IN THIS DISPLAY HONOURING THE REGION'S TRIBE.



THE FERGY TRACTOR AND OTHERS LIKE IT WERE CREDITED WITH HELPING TO SAVE THE TOWNSHIP OF WENTWORTH FROM BEING INUNDATED DURING THE 1956 FLOOD.



WENTWORTH SHIRE COUNCIL MAYOR COUNCILLOR DANIEL LINKLATER.



THE REPLICA OF THE FAMOUS WENTWORTH CANOE TREE THE PHOTO ALSO SHOWS CENTRE'S CAFE.



THE HOLLOWED OUT RED GUM TREE TRUNK THAT THE REGION'S FAMOUS HERMIT 'POSSUM' USED TO STORE HIS FOOD IN THE BUSH.

"One of the really pleasing things about this is what had become a sad chapter in Wentworth's history – the demise of the club – has been turned around.

"And as the result of a lot of hard work and determination, we now have a thriving community centre."

Cr Linklater said that the rejuvenation project had been "a very big investment for council".

"The project utilised Mildura-based

architectural services, local head contractors and electrical contractors. Most of the work has been done by locals, which we're really proud of," he said.

"I want to congratulate Council staff, lead by general manager, Ken Ross, who have been closely involved with the design team to deliver such a brilliant finished product.

"Ken had a lot of input into the design work, as well in consultation with others and it was

done in a very considered process, over a period of time.

"The building was effectively stripped back to bare concrete and metal and now we have what you can see. It is just magnificent."

Cr Linklater said that while the visitor information centre is a focal point, especially for people seeking to find out about the attractions of the area, it is only the first port-of-call.





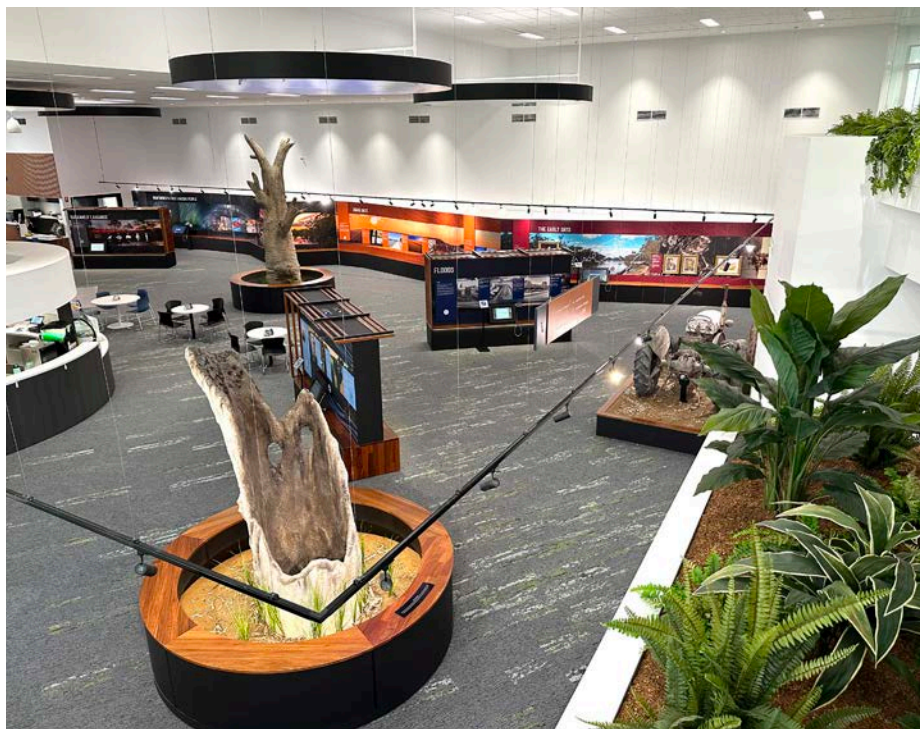
A BEAUTIFUL INDIGINEOUS INSTALLATION FEATURING MANY TRADITIONAL ITEMS.



THE STORY OF OUR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IS TOLD IN VIVID COLOUR THROUGHOUT SEVERAL DISPLAYS HONOURING OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY.



THE CONFERENCE CENTRE OVERLOOKING THE DARLING RIVER IS A FEATURE OF THE COMPLEX.



THE VIEW SHOWING THE EXPANSE OF THE INTERPRETIVE SPACE.



THE FERGY TRACTOR SIMULATOR LOCATED NEXT TO AN ACTUAL TRACTOR IS A POPULAR FEATURE WITH VISITORS.



THIS COLOURFUL DISPLAY OF CHANGING IMAGES TELLS THE STORY OF THE FIRST NATIONS' TRIBES INHABITING THE WENTWORTH REGION.

"As you come over the bridge into Wentworth you have the historic Port of Wentworth area on the left then you immediately see this stunning building on your right," he said.

"It is a tourist destination in itself! It is so beautifully presented, but the idea is that this isn't the one-stop-shop from a tourism perspective.

"This is really the catalyst to get people out

and about to explore what the Shire has to offer.

"People will pop in and have a look around, grab a coffee and understand that there is a gaol, a pioneer settlement, the junction of Australia's two greatest rivers, some great shops, beautiful pubs where they can get lunch or dinner and then find accommodation at a motel or one of the many great caravan parks or B & Bs in the

area, to stay the night and enjoy all that there is to see."

And speaking of things to do and see in the Shire, Cr Linklater took the opportunity to espouse the virtues of another new attraction that is due to be operating by the end of this year in Wentworth -- the 'Fibre Optics Symphonic Orchestra' - the Bruce Munro light installation at Perry Sand Hills, just outside of the town.





THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS TO THE INTERPRETIVE SPACE WHICH SHOWS THE IMAGINATIVE THOUGHT THAT HAS GONE INTO ITS CREATION.

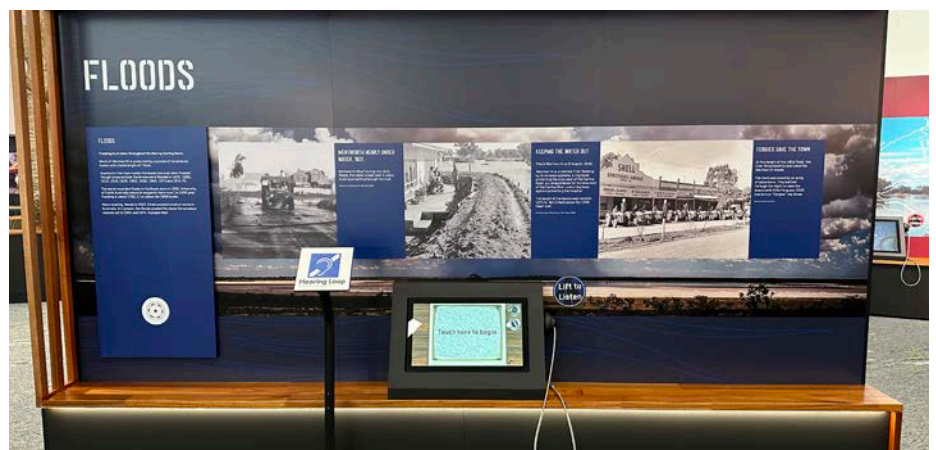
“We call it ‘FOSO’. It will be completely different to the installation planned for Lock 11 in Mildura because we want people to experience both and from a tourism perspective stay an extra night,” Cr Linklater said.

“The unique aspect of the Perry Sand Hills is that they will be ‘hills hoist’ style light installations, assembled in the formation of an orchestra. The lights will then animate in time with a composed orchestral music score. It is the biggest of this style of installation in the world as we understand.”

At the end of his chat with Heartbeat, the Mayor reiterated his thanks to the people of Wentworth whose community spirit is well known.

“Again, I want to congratulate the community who had the foresight by way of a petition back in 2015, prompting council to purchase the empty building which has again become a destination in its own right,” he said.

“Projects such as this obviously take a long time from concept to completion – but what an absolutely stunning result – well worth waiting for!”



THE HISTORY OF FLOODS IMPACTING WENTWORTH AND THE WIDER REGION IS ANOTHER OF THE FASCINATING DISPLAYS.



ONE OF THE MANY INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS IN THE INTERPRETIVE SPACE IN THE VISITOR CENTRE.





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ONCE THE KIDS GET A TASTE  
BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A KART  
YOU WON'T GET THEM OUT OF IT

*Heartbeat has discovered that the sport of racing go-karts is alive and well in our region. The Mildura Kart Club recently welcomed a visit to its headquarters on a parcel of land next to Mildura Airport.*

# KARTING IS AN EXILERATING SPORT SO WHY NOT GIVE IT A GO!

---

**By John Dooley**

AN enthusiastic group of members, including some young, novice drivers eager to hone their skills, were out in force on a recent sunny Sunday morning. The circuit was buzzing as it does whenever club members meet, and it was a real eye-opener to see just how fast these little karts travel around the club's 800-metre bitumen circuit.

Reaching speeds in excess of 100kph, the exhilaration is multiplied by the closeness to the track—you really know you're moving when your posterior is just centimetres from the asphalt!

The Mildura Kart Club has a long history dating back decades and it has produced some champion competitors, one of whom we will meet soon.

But first, club president, Gary Rogers, gave Heartbeat an insight into the club.

"We hold the longest running open karting event in Australia," he says proudly as he opens our conversation.

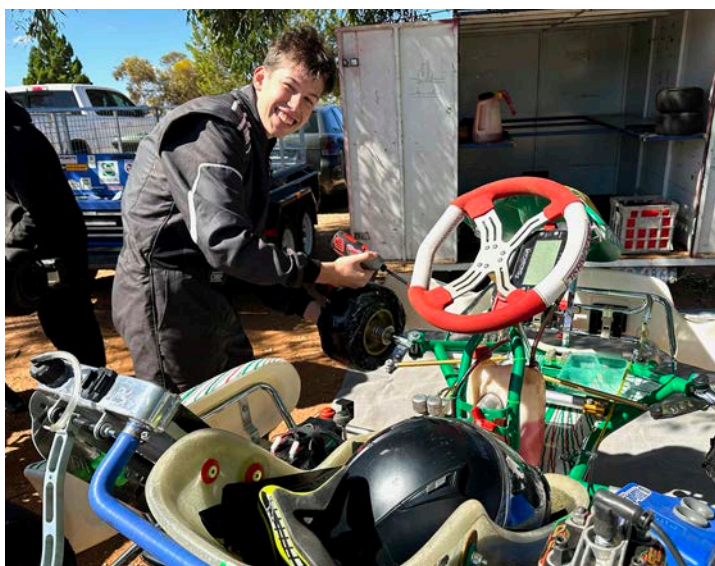
"It has been running for 52 years now."

Dubbed the Northwest Titles, the event is staged annually over the June long weekend.

"The event attracts up to 200 competitors from all around Australia," he tells me.

"We run a practise on the Friday night and then we race on Saturday and Sunday.





MILDURA KART CLUB MEMBER SEBASTIAN KLARICH 17 IS A KEEN KARTER WHO DRIVES A XR32 TONY KART.



MILDURA KART CLUB PRESIDENT GARY ROGERS.



A BIG CROWD ATTENDS THE NORTHWEST TITLES.



TAKE A LOOK AT THESE YOUNG DRIVERS BEING PRESENTED WITH THEIR TROPHIES AT THE NORTHWEST TITLES.



HAMISH TILLER, 15 IS ABOUT TO GO OUT ONTO THE TRACK FOR HIS FIRST TASTE OF COMPETITIVE RACING.



SEBASTIAN KLARICH STEERS HIS KART THROUGH A TIGHT CORNER ON THE MILDURA CIRCUIT.

"It's a great event and people come to make a weekend of it and a lot of them stay for the Monday holiday as well, which adds to the local economy.

"It's a lot of fun, a lot of laps, and we offer pretty much the most laps for an event in Australia. And our 50th anniversary event offered a record prize pool."

Talk to anyone around Australia, at any level of karting, who has raced here Gary says and you'll get nothing but good reports.

"I've been the president for five years now and during that time the club has grown steadily," he says.

"We currently have 70 members, 55 of whom are licensed drivers."

Gary said that the club works to attract more female participants, and that is beginning to happen.

"We welcome female members, and we have had a lot of mums out here running with their kids," he said.

"We would love to have more female members, and we do have a pretty full-on 'Girls Race Too' movement, which aims to encourage more female grid participation... but their participation can also be as a volunteer or an official.

"We actually have a 'Girls Race Too' ambassador in our club and so we are really trying to encourage that extension of participation.



"Today, is more of an open fun day for new members with our racing season starting in March."

The club welcomes new members from the very young to the old, male and female and Gary explained the process of getting an initial licence to race.

"A kid, for example, can obtain their practise licence from age six and at that age they are allowed to practise and can run round here on the track. Then, from age seven they can start racing competitively.

For how long?

"We have drivers who are 80 years-old!"

Gary says in answer.

"The senior karts are getting up to around 110kph down the back straight and the karts the kids are driving are pushing about 85 kilometres an hour in the same area of the track."

Gary was asked how challenging is it to learn to drive a go-kart.

"It's pretty easy. It's fun trying to teach the kids and there are a lot of techniques and driving styles for them to learn. But, it's equally as hard to coach some of the adults sometimes!" he said.

"My eight-year-old daughter Audrey has been racing since she was six and I have another couple of kids coming through as well.

"Audrey can run in the seven to 10 class and then go to the 10 to 12s, which is a similar kart that's just a bit faster. From there she will move up to juniors and then seniors."

By motorsport standards, karting is relatively inexpensive, with the cost of an entry level kart coming in below \$2000.

"They go up from there and then there is the safety gear and club membership, a trailer and some other gear so, all up, you'd probably budget around \$5000 to get started," Gary said.

Heartbeat met young karter Hamish Tiller, 15, who was having his first 'real' race on the club's track.

"Yes, it's my first 'big, wild' kind of race today. I have done quite a few practise runs, but this is my first real meeting," he said.

"I got interested in karting last year when the family was at a race meeting with one of my dad's cousins and we were talking about go-karting.

"Ever since then I just wanted to go-kart.

"In November we bought the kart you can see - and now I'm here."

Sebastian Klarich, 17, and his father Rob



ROBERT CHAMBERLAIN IS AN AUSTRALIAN KART CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER.



AROUND THEY GO AND IT'S ALL CAPTURED ON GO PRO.

also race karts, something they started following the COVID hiatus.

"We joined the club in 2021 and really it's cool," an enthusiastic Sebastian declared.

"My kart is an 'X32 Tony Kart', which I race in the senior class in our club and sometimes in other classes when I go away to other meets. That's where you meet more competition from other club's drivers which is so much fun, and you gain a lot of experience.

"Racing in a kart which is low to the ground, in speeds up to 100, feels really quick!

"It took me a little while to get the confidence up, but once I got there it was really great."

Sebastian thinks it is a safe sport because, for one, the karts have direct steering which means they usually go where you point them.

"You go straight into a corner, turn the wheel and it's a quick response," he said.





SOME OF THE ACTION FROM THE NORTHWEST TITLES HELD ON THE JUNE LONG WEEKEND AT THE CLUB.



A YOUNG DRIVER RECEIVING SOME ADVICE FROM HIS DAD BEFORE HE HITS THE TRACK.



A SERIOUS COMPETITOR ABOUT TO HEAD TO THE CIRCUIT.

"It's very safe and the centre of gravity of the kart is very low down, which means there is minimal chance of it flipping over and we have a lot of safety procedures we follow.

"Having said that, there was one time when I was racing in South Australia and going into the first turn, someone clipped the wheel of another kart that flipped over my kart. The driver was alright, but it was a pretty scary experience!"

And Sebastian's advice for anyone young person thinking about taking up the sport? "Just get onboard. It's a lot of fun and a really rewarding experience gaining that skill."

Heartbeat met one of the Mildura Kart Club's veteran competitors who has a number of coveted awards to his name having competed in the Australian Karting Championship several times.

Robert Chamberlain is a former Lance

Corporal with the Australian Defence Force and whose love of racing go-karts dates back to the late 1980s.

"Many years ago, I won the Australian Dirt Track Championship, which was still associated with Karting Australia, way back then," Robert said.

"That was in 1987, in Gladstone, Queensland. I've also come second in 1988 on bitumen, and I finished third 1990, in Tasmania.





YOU KNOW YOU ARE ALIVE WHEN TRAVELLING THIS LOW TO THE GROUND AT SPEED.



ANOTHER SKILLFUL DRIVER AT THE WHEEL ON THE CIRCUIT.



THE COMPETITIVE FIELD BUNCHES IN A TIGHT RACE.

"I was born in Mildura and did move away for a period. I started karting in 1982 and I have been president, vice-president and committee member here in Mildura.

"While we're not a big club, we aren't a small club either. Our competitiveness, both at state and national level, over the years has been very strong.

"We've always had strong competitors. As an example, at the moment club member Hugo Garraway easily sits in the top 10 in the state in his class."

Robert also encourages anyone, particularly young people, to give the sport a try.

"Karting's not hard. Once kids get in into a go-kart, you can't get them out - they're addicted," he said.

"And many adults are much the same. Once they've had a had a little drive, they want to do it more.

"It does take a lot of laps to hone your skills and reaction time. Then there is making sure that you are taking the corners correctly and most importantly, setting the kart up right. But it's all covered in the training."

Robert explained that while these machines may just be go-karts, there are myriad adjustments that can make a kart go faster.

"Whether it be changing axles, front end adjustment, tyre pressures or gearing. There is a myriad of things to check and fine tune," he said.

"Improving track lap times is the key to practise... getting faster to go racing.

"Any chance our members get to race against other drivers outside our club, where you may only be racing against the same five to 10 others - they take it.

"The difference is that at an open meeting

somewhere else or even here in June, you could be racing against 30 to 40 other karts, depending on what size meeting you go to.

"That experience is a key learning curve for a lot of our younger drivers."

Well, there you have it from the man who knows what it takes to drive these karts to their limit and the from the other members of the Mildura Kart Club who spoke to Heartbeat. There's no doubt, it sounds like a great sport.

Parents, why not get the kids away from their phones and computer games and out into the fresh air on a Sunday morning to experience the thrill of karting and an opportunity to meet new friends - and you can join in too!

For more information about the Mildura Kart Club and membership details visit: [mdakartclub.com.au](http://mdakartclub.com.au).



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