

International
Women's Day
events p4, 30 & 32

Local Identity
Jillian Brown p25



Forster Fortnightly

Your local independent community newspaper distributed to
Rainbow Flat, Hallidays Point, Tallwoods, Tuncurry, Forster,
Pacific Palms, Charlotte Bay, Smiths Lake, Coomba Park, Bungwahl & Seal Rocks.

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Wednesday 18 March 2026

PROUD TO BE A LOCAL FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS

Circulation 7,000 No.142

Best of local agriculture, horticulture & crafts

By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

The annual Nabcac Show attracted strong crowds on Saturday 7 March, with visitors enjoying a full day of traditional country show attractions on a warm autumn day.

Hosted by the Wallamba Agricultural and Horticultural Association Inc., the much-loved community event showcased the best of local agriculture, horticulture, crafts and entertainment.

Families flocked to the showground to explore livestock displays, pavilion exhibits, market stalls and a variety of competitions highlighting the talents of the region's residents. The show also featured children's activities, food stalls and live entertainment throughout the day, with a brief shower doing little to dampen spirits before the spectacular fireworks display that marked the evening's finale.

The Wallamba Agricultural and Horticultural Association Inc. is now seeking volunteers to join its team in preparation for next year's show. Please contact the secretary on 0403 012 309 or email secretary_adah@outlook.com

Right: Photo from the Grand Parade at the Nabcac Showground by Mary Yule. More photos on p24



Manning - Great Lakes Police District Update

Dear Readers,

This fortnight I thought I would again give you a rundown of some of the types and numbers of offences your local police have recently investigated and put before the court. I will also provide an example of a great drug arrest and an example of the dangers police face each time they go out on the road.

In the week from Sunday 1 March 2026 to Saturday 7 March 2026, 61 people were charged or had Future Service Court Attendance Notices (formerly called a Summons) issued against them in the Manning Great Lakes Police District, consisting of charges from Taree, Forster, Bulahdelah and Gloucester Police Stations. Of those, 13 were domestic violence related.

Below are some of the more significant offences people were charged with that may interest you:

Stalk/Intimidate offences
Breach Bail
Disqualified Driver

Continued on page 2.



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We acknowledge the Worimi People, the traditional custodians of the land where this newspaper is published. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and future.

Manning - Great Lakes Police District Update

Continued from page 1.

Breach Apprehended Domestic Violence Order
Possess Drug
DV Assault
Drive Under Influence Of Drug
Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm
Break Enter & Steal
First Instance Warrant
Suspended Driver
Use Vehicle with misleading Plates
Larceny
Behave in Offensive Manner
Drive Conveyance without consent of owner
Aggravated B&E commit serious indictable offence
Armed with intent commit indictable offence
Face disguised with intent to commit indictable offence
Malicious Damage
Enter Enclosed Lands
Drive With Low Range Prescribed Concentration Alcohol
Drive With Middle Range Prescribed Concentration Alcohol
Affray
Reckless Wounding
Police Pursuit – Not Stop
Drive Manner Dangerous
Drive with special range prescribed concentration of alcohol
Armed with intent to commit indictable offence

From the above list, an example of the dangers your local police face:

About 11.40pm on Tuesday 3 March 2026, local police were patrolling Manning River Drive, Taree, when they attempted to stop a Ford hatchback. When the driver allegedly failed to stop as directed, a pursuit was initiated. During the pursuit, the hatchback and a police vehicle collided on Waang Djaril Way, Purfleet. Two male officers were treated at the scene by NSW Ambulance paramedics before being taken to Port Macquarie Hospital

for minor injuries. They have since been discharged.

The driver of the hatchback, a 58-year-old man, was taken to Port Macquarie Hospital for the treatment of head, back and arm injuries. On the evening of Wednesday 4 March 2026, the man was charged whilst under police guard at Port Macquarie Hospital with Police Pursuit (2nd offence), Drive manner dangerous (2nd offence) and Drive motor vehicle whilst disqualified (2nd offence). The man has been remanded in custody.

To close, I provide an example of great police work to foil drug offenders passing through our area:

About 8.15pm on Tuesday 24 February 2026, officers stopped a vehicle northbound on the Pacific Highway near Taree. During a search of the vehicle, police allegedly located and seized approximately 1.25kg cocaine, with an estimated potential street value of \$469,000. Two men – aged 30 and 36 – were arrested and taken to Taree Police Station. The younger man was charged with supply prohibited drug (greater than or equal to large commercial quantity), and deal with property proceeds of crime (less than \$100,000). The older man was charged with supply prohibited drug (greater than or equal to large commercial quantity), and drive motor vehicle while licence suspended – second offence. Both men were bail refused and are currently remanded in custody.

As you can see, your local police continue to work tirelessly to reduce crime and keep you and your loved ones safe, often at the risk of their own health and safety.

Remember to be kind to each other and don't forget to say "G'day!" to your local police!

Chief Inspector Timothy Bayly - Officer In Charge (OIC), Forster Police Station



Above: Inspector Timothy Bayly.

Stolen and torched Electrician's vehicles



Photo and information supplied by local resident.

A handful of residents on Head Street in Forster were woken shortly after 3am on 4 March by the sound of a car alarm, followed by mild explosions and the crackling of flames.

Two stolen electrician's vehicles had been abandoned and set alight in the car park alongside Forster Public School.

Fire and Rescue crews were called to the scene, with police also attending. The fires were fully extinguished by about 3:30am.

According to a televised report by Seven News, thieves allegedly broke into a motel room in Forster using a shovel to access the keys before stealing two work utes belonging to visiting employees from Rockwater Electrical in the Northern Rivers.

The workers also reported their wallets, iPads and tools were taken from the vehicles.

Local police are asking anyone who may have seen suspicious activity between 10pm on 3 March and 3am on 4 March to check dashcam or CCTV footage from homes or businesses in the area.

Red & Yellow BBQ Fundraiser success!

Great Lakes College Tuncurry Campus

What an incredible day at our Red & Yellow BBQ Fundraiser on 4 March! Thanks to your generous support, we raised an amazing \$575 to help Surf Life Saving Australia continue their vital work.

Our surf lifesavers are absolute heroes – always ready to keep our beaches safe, save lives, and support our community. Whether it's patrolling the water, educating the public, or responding to emergencies, we can always count on them. That's why we organised this fundraiser: to give back and help ensure they have the resources they need.

Thank you to everyone who came, contributed, and showed their



appreciation for our lifesavers. Your kindness makes a real difference. Let's keep supporting our surf lifesavers in everything we do.

Thank you to our Student Representative Council (SRC) team for organising this amazing event!

Surf Life Saving NSW encouraged communities to get behind their local surf life saving clubs after a big summer season for the inaugural Red & Yellow Day on 4 March - a nationwide celebration to recognise the thousands of Surf Life Saving volunteers who dedicate their time to keeping our beaches safe.



MidCoast Council Mayoral column

There was a lot of work transacted at our last Council meeting on Wednesday 25 February.

To mention just a few -

There will be a consultative meeting held on Tuesday 24 March at 6pm to seek community input on how we might be able to improve the financial sustainability of the MEC. I encourage you to attend to have your say.

We will be installing solar panels on our two Aquatic Centres which will substantially reduce operating costs.

The new Pelican Boardwalk in Forster has come in under budget so we will be extending it in the other direction towards the old Amaroo wharf. (See p26)

I put forward two motions that were supported by my fellow Councillors, for consideration at the Australian Local Government Association's Conference in June.

One motion calls on the Federal Government to fund Councils to build back improved infrastructure following declared disasters. This would ensure infrastructure is more resilient in the face of future disasters.

The second motion calls on the Federal Government to provide more financial assistance for pensioners. Councils are increasingly being asked to cover the costs of State Government programs (referred to as cost-shifting) which are passed onto rate payers, increasing the cost of living. Pension rates are long overdue for an increase.



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Smiths Lake

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Smiths Friendly Grocer

Coomba Park

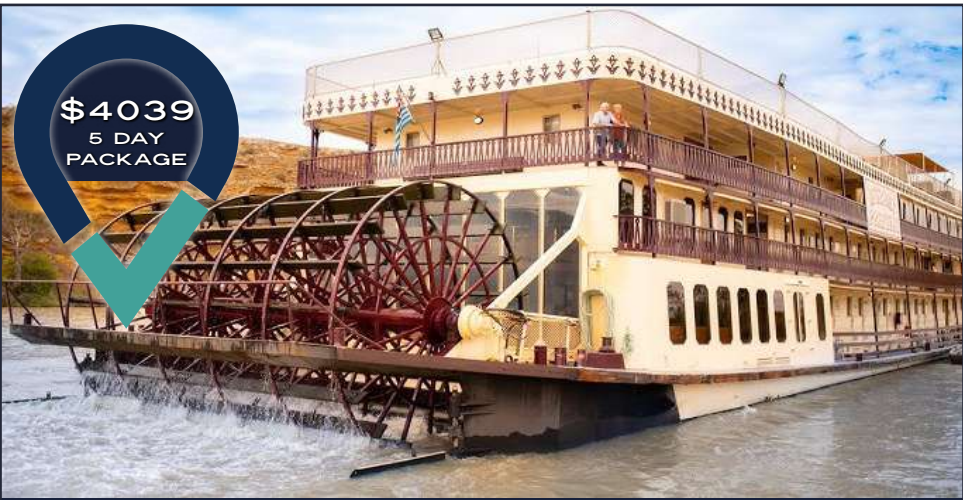
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Seal Rocks General Store



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Inspiring founder of School of St Jude shares story at Quota’s International Women’s Day event



(L-R) Gemma Sisia and Faith Samwell. Photos by Mary Yule.

By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

A full audience gathered at Sporties in Tuncurry on Saturday, March 6, to hear an inspiring story of education, determination and global impact as the founder of the School of St Jude in Tanzania addressed the local community for International Women's Day.

The event, organised by Quota Forster Tuncurry, featured guest speaker Gemma Sisia, an Australian educator who founded the school in 2002 with a mission to provide high-quality education to bright children from some of the poorest communities in East Africa.

Ms Sisia told the audience her remarkable journey began with a simple idea and a single \$10 donation from a friend.

Originally from a sheep property near Guyra in northern NSW, Ms Sisia worked as a high school maths and science teacher in East Africa after finishing university. It was there she saw first-hand the barriers facing children

from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“I thought, wouldn’t it be great to build a good quality private school that didn’t charge school fees,” she said.

Returning to Australia, she shared her vision with family and friends. While the idea seemed ambitious, one friend believed in the dream and gave her \$10 to start the project.

“That was our first donation,” Ms Sisia said. “I took the \$10 into Armidale Mall, opened a bank account, and started fundraising wherever I could –

churches, schools, clubs, even people sitting on park benches.”

After raising enough funds to build a small classroom block, the School of St Jude opened with just three students.

More than two decades later, the school has grown dramatically.

Today St Jude’s educates around 1,800 students on full academic scholarships across three campuses in Tanzania, with 53% of the students being girls.

The school’s annual budget now exceeds \$10 million, with more than 90% of funding coming from Australian donors and supporters.

“Starting a school with \$10 seemed pretty hopeless at the time,” Ms Sisia said. “That’s why we named it after St Jude, the patron saint of hopeless cases.”

The school aims to identify talented students

from disadvantaged backgrounds through a rigorous scholarship process. Each year around 5,500 high-performing primary school students are invited to compete for just 300 scholarships.

The selection process includes exams, interviews and in-person poverty assessments to ensure places go to children who would otherwise have no access to quality education.

Students receive not only academic support but also English language instruction, extracurricular opportunities and boarding facilities for secondary school.

Ms Sisia said education was the key to long-term change.

“Tanzania doesn’t need more people who can barely read and write,” she said. “We need serious professionals, entrepreneurs and leaders.”

Graduates are encouraged to give back to their communities through a year of service, often

teaching in government schools before moving on to university.

Among those who shared their stories with the audience was St Jude’s graduate Faith Samwell, who spoke about her journey from a crowded government school to graduating as a civil engineer.

Ms Sisia said more than 600 alumni have now completed university or trade qualifications, with many beginning to make their own contributions to the school.

“They’re only just starting their careers, but already some of our graduates are becoming doctors, engineers and teachers,” she said.

The Schools also employs 340 mostly local staff and also generates work in each community from the making of uniforms, the growing of food for the one million meals it serves a year, and the visitor program.

To learn more about the School of St Jude, please visit: <https://www.schoolofstjude.org>



A new chapter by the lake

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Artist impression of clubhouse



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Keseah Bell selected for Young Endeavour Voyage

By Diane Hallam - Marine Rescue Forster Tuncurry

Marine Rescue Forster Tuncurry is proud to celebrate 22 year old volunteer Keseah Bell, who has been selected for the Young Endeavour's Sydney to Newcastle voyage, an 11 day leadership and teamwork program run by Royal Australian Navy crew, and her selection is a testament to her perseverance and hard work.

Keseah has recently completed her assessments after months of commitment, training, and determination, for both Radio Operator and Rescue Vessel Crew Member qualifications, earning her epaulettes (shoulder insignia) after countless hours of study, drills, on water training, and practical evaluations. Her passion for the ocean and emergency response continues to drive her toward a future maritime career.

Keseah said she joined Marine Rescue because she loves the water, enjoys the challenge of training, and finds helping people get home safely incredibly rewarding. Inspired by another trainee who had heard about the Young Endeavour program, she applied despite never having sailed before. Her background as a



Above: (L-R) Unit Commander Geoff Anderson, Keseah Bell and Darren Hulm.

surfer, her work as a Young SAM first responder, and her strong connection to the local coastline make this opportunity especially meaningful. GoodSAM (Good Smartphone Activated Medics) is a free smartphone platform that connects nearby trained volunteers with people experiencing out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

Although the voyage comes with a personal cost, Keseah sees it as an investment in her growth, and we at Marine Rescue Forster Tuncurry couldn't be prouder of her dedication and drive.

Congratulations, Keseah. We look forward to the skills, confidence, and leadership you'll bring back to the unit.

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Have Your Say: Blueys Beach Village Concept Designs

MidCoast Council

Have your say on the Blueys Beach Village concept designs that aims to improve the safety, accessibility and visual amenity of the area.

“The plans are designed to reflect the unique coastal vibe of the Blueys Beach area whilst improving the safety and usability of the space,” said Rob Scott, Director Infrastructure and Engineering.

Key features of the concept designs include:

- speed humps with line markings
- entry feature wall, seating nooks
- feature paving
- permanent shade umbrellas
- water bubbler
- cycle parking
- resurfaced road
- formalised kerb
- formalised parking
- sculptural art feature
- widening of the footpath
- relocation of bus stop
- disability parking bay.

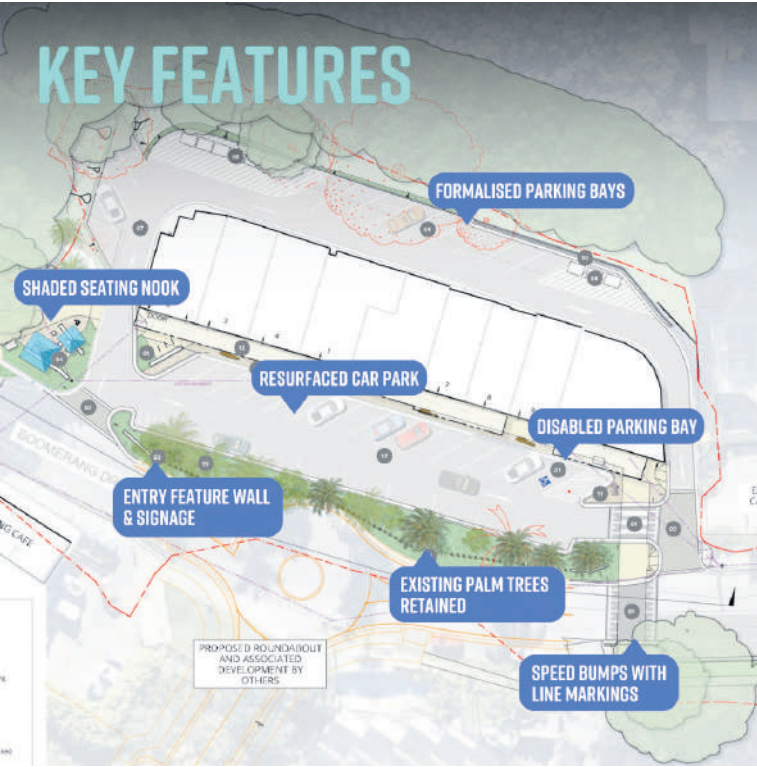
Two concept designs have been developed aligning with the approved plans for a local development. The section of the work that the developer is responsible for are indicated on the plans. These include the

roundabout on Boomerang Drive, a new access road and medium sized parking lot.

The main differences between the two options are the position of pedestrian facilities and the number of car parks.

Option one includes 36 car parks and four motorbike bays and places the pedestrian facilities near the entrance at the post office and near the entrance at the news agency.

Option two includes 32 car parks and four motorbike bays and places the pedestrian facilities near the entrance at the post office and in a more central location across the village near Drift Café.



It was endorsed at the 10 December 2025 Council meeting to investigate the feasibility of a centre parking arrangement and if viable, be included in the options to be considered. As a result, the feasibility of a centre parking arrangement has been investigated and is not included in the options for consultation due to the reduced benefits for road safety, traffic access and affordability.

Everyone that uses the area is encouraged to provide their feedback.

Council staff will be hosting drop-in sessions for the community to come along to view the plans, ask any questions and provide feedback at:

- 8am – 11am Wednesday 18 March, near Drift Café (Today!)
- 9am – 1pm Sunday 29 March, Pacific Palms Markets

Council staff will also be contacting key stakeholder groups and businesses to get their feedback on the plans. Directly adjoining property and business owners will receive written notification of the proposal being exhibited.

This feedback will be used to inform the final concept design before it is presented at a Council meeting.

The plan is unfunded and will be used to apply for funding once the plan is approved. The project will be completed in stages as funding is sourced from grants and other revenue sources.

To view the draft plans and provide feedback, head to <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/blueysbeach>.

Feedback is open from Tuesday 10 March to Monday 20 April 2026.

See p20 for Letter to the Editor.

Seniors Concerts return and raise over \$2600 for local charities



Office of MP Tanya Thompson

Member for Myall Lakes, Tanya Thompson, has announced that the 2026 Myall Lakes Seniors Concerts have raised more than \$2,600 for local charities, following four hugely successful performances in Forster and Taree.

After being unable to be held in 2025, the much-loved concerts made a welcome return this year, drawing large crowds of local residents who came along to enjoy the entertainment, share plenty of laughs and support a great cause.

Funds raised through the gold coin donation entry will be shared between the Mental Health Carers Support Group and the Can Assist Manning Valley Branch.

“It was fantastic to see so many people turn out, have a laugh, sing along and at the same time help raise more than \$2,600 for two very deserving local charity groups,” Mrs Thompson said.

“After missing the concerts last year, it was wonderful to see them back again and enjoyed by so many people.”

Mrs Thompson thanked the many volunteers and sponsors whose support helped make the concerts possible. Special thanks were extended to Club Forster and Club Taree for generously donating their venues.

Key sponsors included Glaicha House, Allan Pearce Funerals, Linked Community Services, Whiddon Group, Get Up & Go Transport, Insure More and Valley Industries.

“I’m incredibly grateful to everyone who attended, donated and supported these concerts. It’s another great example of our community coming together to help those in need,” Mrs Thompson said.

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FRRR backs rural Australia with more than \$760,000 in grants

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal, 10 March 2026

Margaret Jurd College in Tuncurry is one of 65 locally-led projects to receive funding from the philanthropic organisation Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) which aims to empower remote, very remote, rural and regional communities in Australia to be more vibrant, resilient and sustainable places to live, work, learn and invest.

Margaret Jurd College received \$10,000 to create a Yarning Circle. This outdoor learning space is in partnership with local Elders to strengthen student wellbeing and cultural connection.

Tuncurry Taree Universities Campus was granted \$9,286 for a Community Art Project to support flood recovery through art therapy workshops and public murals that foster resilience and connection.

Taree Old Bar Surf Life Saving Club received \$9,684 for Emergency Call Out Team Equipment and a Rescue Storage Upgrade to provide secure lockers and rescue gear to deliver faster, safer responses during emergencies.

Established in 2000, FRRR has since delivered more than \$213 million to more than 16,000 projects. Learn more: www.frrr.org.au.



Margaret Jurd College in Tuncurry.

Australian Government Help to Buy Scheme



Australian Government

The Australian Government Help to Buy Scheme is now open for applications. Eligible home buyers can apply through one of the Participating Lenders listed on the website (over 30 are available across Australia).

The Australian Government Help to Buy Scheme is a new initiative designed to support more Australians to buy a home. If you’ve saved what you can but are still a little short of being able to buy a home that meets your needs, Help to Buy may be able to bridge the gap.

Whether you’re a first-time buyer or someone returning to home ownership, Help to Buy offers support to secure a place to call home. With 10,000 places available each year, Help to Buy is helping thousands of Australians make the step into home ownership.

How the Scheme works

Help to Buy is a shared equity Scheme where the Australian Government contributes towards the purchase price of your home.

Under Help to Buy you will need to:

- save a minimum 2% deposit
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The Australian Government will:

- contribute up to 30% (existing homes) or 40% (newly built homes) toward the purchase price.

This will allow you to buy a home sooner by:

- bridging the gap between what you can borrow and the price of a home that suits your needs
- helping your deposit go further, enabling you to buy sooner.

When you buy a home through Help to Buy, you will own the home but share some of the value with the Government. As the Australian Government has contributed to purchasing the property, the Government will proportionally share any gains or losses made when you sell your home or when you buy out the Government’s equity share.

To find out more, visit: firsthomebuyers.gov.au

Australian Government

The Help to Buy Scheme is now here

With the new Help to Buy Scheme, the Australian Government can contribute up to 40% of the purchase price of a home.

So you can buy with a smaller deposit and lower mortgage repayments.

It’s a pathway to home ownership backed by Government.

To see if you’re eligible visit firsthomebuyers.gov.au

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Artist's Impression to be used as a guide only.

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Learn more

Local 'Clean-up Australia' efforts

Great Lakes Pearl Dragons make waves in Wallis Lake



By Ivan Bensimon - Great Lakes Pearl Dragons

On Sunday, 1 March, Great Lakes Pearl Dragons joined the nationwide Clean-up Australia Day effort by taking to Wallis Lake in their dragon boat. The team focused their clean-up on Breckenridge Channel, Miles and Leon Islands, and the area surrounding their Boat Shed.

Volunteers from the Club collected a range of debris, including tyres, old crab pots, fishing

nets, and the usual assortment of plastic lures, bottles, and cans. The group's philosophy was simple: every piece of rubbish removed is one less threat to the lake's marine and bird life.

As regular paddlers on Wallis Lake, the Pearlers say they feel a responsibility to help preserve its pristine waters. Their actions highlight the importance of community involvement in protecting local environments for future generations.

Wallis Spirit Dragons Clean Up Wallis Island



By Karen Permezel - Wallis Spirit Dragon Boat Club

Wallis Spirit Dragon Boat Club at Coomba Park again participated in the annual Clean Up Australia Day event on Sunday 1st March on Wallis Island. Eleven paddlers and our sweep, Sally Cooke, gathered at our home base at Coomba Aquatic Club at 7am and registered for the day. After our usual boat preparation and warm-up, we paddled the twenty minutes to the western side of Wallis Island and tied up the boat.

The Clean Up Australia Day organisation provides a kit containing gloves and rubbish and recycling bags to collect items in. We split into two groups after gloves and bags were distributed, with one group heading north and the other heading south along the shoreline of the island. We picked up a total of four bags of rubbish and two bags of recycling. We also collected nine oyster baskets, a worm farm tray and, the biggest item brought back to the boat by new members Helen Price and Mandy Giddings, a wakeboard!

The accumulated haul was loaded into the middle of the boat, between the paddlers

and sweep, before we paddled to Foreshore Park with the boat sitting much lower in the water! We unloaded all items at the park at a pre-organised location, ready for collection by MidCoast Council. Our paddle back to Coomba Aquatic Club was very enjoyable. The predicted strong south-easterly wind hadn't arrived yet, the lake was smooth and the cloud cover kept us cool.

The Wallis Island environment is now much cleaner and safer, especially for the water and wildlife inhabitants that we are so privileged to share beautiful Wallis Lake with every day we paddle.

Thank you to the following members who participated in the day: Elaine Charker, Annette and Eric Hayes, Barbara Filter, Janne Moran, Simone Muenger, Mandy Giddings, Helen Price, Pat Powell, Jenny Martin, Sally Cooke and Karen Permezel (Event Supervisor).

Protect our wildlife by signing petition to restrict sale of poison baits

By Kym Kilpatrick – FAWNA Hallidays Point

Recently Birdlife Australia has been pushing for the restriction of rodenticides, i.e. rat and mouse poison baits, particularly those known as second generation rodenticides (SGARs) because of their devastating impact on our wildlife. The evidence is in that these potent and long-lasting poisons, still available on the shelves of our supermarkets and hardware stores, with ingredients of brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, difenacoum or flocoumafen, are responsible for huge death rates in our birds of prey.

Rodenticides are classified as either first or second generation poisons. Both involve anticoagulants which kill by causing uncontrolled haemorrhaging. First generation poisons usually require multiple doses to kill the animal concerned whereas second generation will kill after one dose, but not immediately, instead weakening the animal and causing it enormous thirst.

Because Rodenticides are designed to be highly palatable (and in some cases look like licorice lozenges) many wildlife as well as pets (and sometimes even children) can be attracted to eat them. Possums, bandicoots and reptiles such as Blue Tongues will take the baits directly, and even non-target species such as sugar and squirrel gliders.

Most poisonings though occur through what is called secondary poisoning from SGARs. This is when weakened, thirst driven animals search for water, even during daylight, and become easy prey for other species including, but not limited to: all owls species; tawny frogmouths; hawks, eagles & other raptors; magpies; butcherbirds; and kookaburras; as well as phascogales; lizards; snakes; and even Green Tree Frogs. Basically, when pets or native species eat the poisoned rodents, they become poisoned as well.

The evidence of immense harm is mounting. A study of Powerful Owls in WA found 100% build-ups of rat poison in their livers and

another study found 72.6% of Southern Boobook owls had accumulated poisoning. In Tasmania, 74% of wedge-tailed eagles were found to have toxic poisoning from rodenticides. Barn Owls have also been found to be particularly vulnerable.

Bioaccumulation and persistence are additional issues. In short, rodenticide poisons accumulate in the soft tissues and internal organs and remain present after death. Thus, even scavengers such as crows and goannas are vulnerable to secondary poisoning. Sadly, research has detected rodenticide residues in numerous wildlife species across Australia, indicating that exposure is widespread even in areas where baits have not been laid.

Federal Minister for the Environment, Murray Watt has recognised that Rodenticides, particularly second generations, as one of the most harmful of all pesticides in use today. And yet they are still on our shelves.

Long-term effectiveness is also questionable as any surviving rats or mice will breed up in large numbers while the animals and birds that naturally prey upon them experience population crashes or local extinctions.

In the NSW Northern Rivers, the Barn Owl Project, involving provision of nest boxes for barn owls in strategic places is a more ecologically friendly and effective approach. A quick search on-line will provide information about box traps and flip & slide bucket-traps and/or instructions on how to cheaply make your own. There are also a range of kitchen ingredient remedies that do not carry secondary poisoning risks and have the added



Above: A very ill powerful owl that was brought into FAWNA's care from suspected rodenticide poisoning. Unfortunately it could not be saved. Photo by Moira Serat.

advantage of not attracting native marsupial rodent species such as antechinus and bush rats.

A homemade rat posion recipe can be found at <https://wollongongnursery.com.au/wollongong-nursery-blog/effective-homemade-rodenticide>

For more information about Birdlife Australia, including the online petition go to: <https://birdlife.org.au>

Flood recovery

MidCoast Council

MidCoast Council has endorsed a streamlined approach to contracting out flood repair works to speed up the process of repairing roads and bridges. With 56 Essential Public Asset Reconstruction works packages identified from the May 2025 flood event, there is a lot of work to do.

The combined value of these works is estimated at around \$204 million, with The Bight Bridge representing the largest single project at approximately \$35 million. This is in addition to the more than \$40 million Council has already spent on Emergency and Immediate Reconstruction Works. So far, Council has been reimbursed \$6.1 million under Disaster Recovery Funding. While Council can claim all eligible costs, the timing of reimbursements is currently impacting Council's cash flow and may affect future budget allocations.

Director of Infrastructure and Engineering Services, Rob Scott said that Council needs to receive funding approval from the NSW Reconstruction Authority for each of the proposed Essential Public Asset Restoration projects before work can begin.

"Meanwhile, we're getting ready to ensure the work can take place as rapidly and efficiently as possible once that funding is approved," said Mr Scott. "With so much to do, Council will need to use a number of different contractors. For low-risk works, we will use our existing panel contract to run select tenders for packages of work. This will save on costs and get workers on the ground sooner. We'll avoid duplicating the same standard contract and cut down on administrative processes."

Council's existing panel contract already has a long list of contractors with proven capabilities, capacity and appropriate contractual terms. A simplified tender process will still apply, with the Reconstruction Authority also weighing in on contract decisions. More complex projects, including major bridge reconstructions, like The Bight Bridge will be put out to open tender.

A wide variety of recovery projects are still needed, including reconstruction or repairs to bridges, landslips, drainage, culverts, sealed and unsealed roads.

Australians will receive nationwide mobile alert in July under emergency notification trial



Above: Federal Emergency Management Minister Kristy McBain says AusAlert will notify Australians during times of disaster. (ABC News: Callum Flynn)

By Samantha Dick – ABC NEWS, edited

A new national mobile alert system will begin trials this year, with the aim of delivering faster emergency warnings to Australians in times of disaster.

The Federal Government initially promised the national messaging system would be ready by the end of 2024, but it is now expected to be operational by October.

The system is designed for natural disasters such as bushfires and floods, but could be used for police operations and terrorist attacks.

Most Australians will receive a mobile phone alert in July this year, as part of a nationwide test of a new emergency warning system.

The long-awaited warning system, AusAlert, will send a message to any device with a SIM

card, targeting a location to within 160 metres, and override settings like "do not disturb" to ensure that messages are received.

The technology is intended to alert Australians about natural disasters, but could also be used during terrorist attacks like the Bondi shooting.

A nationwide test of the system will occur on July 27 at 2pm AEST, when everyone in Australia with a compatible mobile device will receive an alert.

AusAlert is now expected to be fully operational by October — about two years after its intended start date in 2024, but before its rescheduled rollout of 2027.

The system was initially expected to cost about \$10 million, but is now projected to cost about \$132 million.

Emergency Management Minister Kristy McBain acknowledged the lengthy delays and budget blow-out, but said "a build like this is quite technical".

She said there would be two types of alerts: critical and priority.

Critical alerts urging people to take immediate action will have a fixed volume, unique ringtone and vibration which cannot be disabled.

Priority alerts for Watch and Act emergencies will be less intrusive and users can opt out of receiving the messages.

Ms McBain said the alerts would appear on locked screens and exist outside of the standard text messaging service. "AusAlert will be more reliable, more accurate and efficient than the current systems in place," she said.

Localised trials will take place in urban, regional and remote areas across Australia in June in the following locations: Majura ACT, Launceston TAS, Port Douglas QLD, Liverpool NSW, Geelong VIC, Tennant Creek NT, Goomalling WA, Port Lincoln SA and Queanbeyan NSW.

Green Point RFS volunteers acknowledged

By Mary Yule - Forster Fortnightly

More than 65 volunteers from the NSW Rural Fire Service across the Mid-Coast District were recognised at a medal presentation ceremony in Bulahdelah on 7 March.

Deputy Commissioner Kyle Stewart APM joined special guests to present two National Emergency Medals, 13 National Medals and Clasps, 45 Long Service Medals and Clasps, and three Young Volunteer of the Year finalist certificates.

Three volunteers from the Green Point brigade were among those honoured.

Stephen Oxley was awarded a National Emergency Medal in recognition of significant operational deployments over 15 years. Jen Ramsden was presented with a 30-year Long Service Medal, while Elliott Simpson was recognised as Young Volunteer of the Year.

Green Point RFS Captain Rusty Donnelly said the brigade was proud of the three members' achievements.

"I'm proud to have all three members from our brigade doing the best they possibly can," he said.

Rusty said Stephen's service included operational deployments during the 2019–2020 Black Summer fires, response operations during Cyclone Alfred in early March 2025, the May 2025 floods in Taree, and the significant Mid-Coast District 44 fires between October 2025 and February 2026.



(L-R) Stephen Oxley, Jen Ramsden and Elliot Simpson.

"We have had a very busy fire season with almost as many call-outs as the Black Summer fires in 2019," Rusty said.

Elliott progressed through the brigade's cadet program and now serves as a Deputy Captain.

"He joined through our cadet program for Year 10 students at the local high school," Rusty said. "He has come along in leaps and bounds and is now a Deputy Captain, leading crews on the ground."

Jen's award recognised more than three decades of volunteer service, beginning in the Blue Mountains before relocating to the Mid-Coast.

"When Jen joined Green Point last year, I asked about her background," Rusty said. "She started in the Blue Mountains 30 years ago, later helped with RFS catering on the Mid-Coast, and then joined our brigade. She had been volunteering for over 30 years and had never been formally acknowledged."

Bight Bridge approved



MidCoast Council

Construction to replace The Bight Bridge has been assessed as eligible for funding by the NSW Reconstruction Authority, marking an important step towards restoring this key local connection for the community.

The bridge, located in Wingham, has been the subject of ongoing assessments and planning following the May 2025 flood. Council has been working closely with relevant authorities to secure funding approval.

While some residents may have been hoping for a higher bridge to be built, the Natural Disaster Recovery Arrangements don't allow for increases in the level of service or flood immunity. The new bridge height will be a little higher than the former bridge to provide a similar level of flood immunity and provide a safer road alignment which meets current engineering standards. It will also be designed to be significantly more robust in its ability to resist upward lift forces and debris loads.

Council will provide further updates once the project timeline and next stages of the reconstruction program are confirmed.

Triumphant Proud Mary travellers return



Left: Lunch at the German Arms, Hahndorf. Photo by Rob Henley.

We still found time to visit a few wineries, a brewery and lots of museums. Among other highlights was a visit to Hahndorf for a German feast and time in Adelaide where some braved the "Fringe Festival."

The "Cockle Train" was a step back in time. This was the era when Wool was our staple and the Murray our major interior transport line!

"Best ever" was heard from many. Planning for a visit to Tasmania is now well underway!

Our Probos group meets on the third Tuesday of the month and visitors are always welcome

Enquiries to Membership officers Col Jay on 0448 918 645 or Linda Lovell on 0447 473 510. line!

By Gail Henley - Forster Shores Probos

Fresh from a journey to sail on the mighty River Murray, a group of 24 Forster Shores Probos members recently returned to the equally marvellous Great Lakes! They sailed on the small 18 cabin "Proud Mary" and explored the surrounding countryside. It was an epic voyage accompanied by fine food, wine and new experiences. The scenery was stunning and the "in country" experiences informative and exciting.

Before the cruise we travelled Australia's oldest rail line from Goolwa to Victor Harbor to follow the path of wool bales as they travelled down the river system and onwards for export.

Right: The Proud Mary Evening BBQ by the Mighty Murray. Photo by Chris Libbury.



Know the warnings

When there are bushfires, floods or storms, Emergency Services issue simple warnings to help you make faster, safer decisions. **There are three warning levels:**

-  **Yellow** Advice level means you're not in danger yet but stay alert.
-  **Orange** Watch and Act level means start taking action now. Conditions are changing.
-  **Red** Emergency Warning level means take action immediately. Any delay puts your life at risk.

Emergencies can escalate quickly, so staying alert is important. Learn more at nsw.gov.au/GetReadyNSW

Know the warnings. Plan ahead.



Get Ready NSW



*Shown here are Fire, Flood and Storm Warnings. Other warning symbols include Heat, Tsunami, Cyclone, and Other.

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Six-month progress update shows strong results for MidCoast

MidCoast Council

MidCoast Council is making strong progress on its four-year Delivery Program 2025-2029, despite the challenges caused by the May 2025 flood event.

Council's latest six-month report shows that 16% of projects and performance measures have already been completed or achieved, and 63% are on track to meet their annual targets. This means the majority of Council's work is either progressing well or finished.

While recovery and repairs from the May 2025 flood are still ongoing, Council has continued delivering important projects across the region.

One of the biggest priorities was repairing the damaged water main that supplies Wingham. During the floods, the pipeline crossing the Manning River was badly damaged. A temporary solution was quickly put in place to maintain water supply. The permanent replacement project was successfully completed in December 2025. The new pipeline has been installed safely under the riverbed to better protect it from future floods. To complete this urgent work, resources were redirected from other water supply projects. As a result, some water projects have been delayed but remain planned for this financial year.

Other highlights include the new Cedar Party Creek Bridge, which opened to traffic in November 2025. The elevated bridge improves flood safety and traffic flow and was delivered with significant State and Australian Government funding.

A new skate park at Black Head was completed, creating an inclusive space for young people and families. The Tea Gardens Library expansion was also completed, adding a new



Wingham Water Pipeline Manning River Underbore.

meeting and events space and upgraded facilities.

Council has continued to invest in facilities and programs that support community health and wellbeing, including the new Stroud State Emergency Services (SES) facility, which is currently under construction and will provide modern support for emergency responders. Building works at the Stroud Medical Centre were also completed to address structural issues and improve access for the community.

Several major environmental projects took place, including the Dunns Creek Wetland at South Forster, which is now operating and improving water quality before stormwater enters Wallis Lake.

Council also partnered with Transport for NSW to dredge channels in the Lower Myall River, improving boating safety and water flow, while in Gloucester, riverbank restoration works were completed to repair flood damage and prevent further erosion.

Read the full report in the attachments to the 25 February Ordinary Meeting, <https://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Your-Council/Council-meetings/Agendas-and-minutes>.

Bravery & Service recognised for local SES

By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

Volunteers from across the Mid Coast were honoured this week for acts of bravery and decades of community service through the NSW State Emergency Service (SES).

The awards ceremony, held in Taree on 10 March, brought together members from the Forster Pacific Palms, Gloucester, Harrington, Nabic, Stroud, Taree City and Wingham units.

Among those recognised were Forster Pacific Palms SES volunteers Carissa Bentley, Jessica Watson and Terry Whatson, who were awarded the National Emergency Medal for their service during the devastating 2019–2020 bushfire emergency.

In another moment of recognition for the Forster Pacific Palms unit, Unit Commander Greg Dodds accepted a Commissioner's Unit Citation on behalf of his members. The citation recognised the team's actions during the significant Mid North Coast flooding event in May 2025, when SES crews carried out numerous rescues and emergency operations under dangerous and rapidly changing conditions.



Above: Unit Commander Greg Dodds accepting a Commissioner's Unit Citation on behalf of Forster Pacific Palms SES. Image credit: MP Tanya Thompson Office.

NSW SES Commissioner Mike Wassing AFSM praised the dedication of the award recipients and acknowledged the wider contribution of SES volunteers across the Mid Coast.

"These awards also recognise the incredible commitment of volunteers who have served their communities for decades," Commissioner Wassing said.

"Their experience, dedication and willingness to respond whenever they are needed is the backbone of the NSW SES."

Local honours for community leaders



Above: 2026 Myall Lakes Woman of the Year Award went to Donna Ballard (on the left).

By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

Outstanding contributions across the Myall Lakes electorate have been recognised through the 2026 NSW Local Woman and Senior of the Year Awards.

Held at the local level, the awards give Members of Parliament and community groups the opportunity to honour women and seniors who help make their communities vibrant, inclusive and inspiring places to live.

Member for Myall Lakes Tanya Thompson said she was proud to present the 2026 Myall Lakes Woman of the Year Award to Donna Ballard.

"I had the absolute privilege of presenting the award to the incredible Donna Ballard," Ms Thompson said.

As CEO of the Taree Universities Campus, Ms Ballard has helped transform higher education access across the MidCoast, enabling many local residents to study without leaving the region. Her work has opened new pathways to education and opportunity for local families.

Ms Ballard is also the co-founder and coordinator of the Wingham Music Festival, which brings the community together through arts and culture.

The Senior of the Year Award was presented posthumously to Ronald Spriggs of Wingham in recognition of his lifelong dedication to the community.

Mr Spriggs was a passionate advocate for the Wingham Swimming Pool, working tirelessly



Above: Ronald Spriggs' Senior of the Year Award was received by his daughter Kate.

Left: Mr Jim Peters with his 2026 NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award. Read more in Tanya's Community Update (on the right).

Image credits: MP Tanya Thompson Office.

keep it open and under local management, while also contributing to numerous local organisations. His daughter Kate accepted the award on behalf of the family.

Ms Thompson said the awards highlight the quiet but vital role many seniors play in strengthening their communities.

"Our seniors contribute so much to our area, often behind the scenes, and I thank each and every one of you for everything you do," she said.

Tanya's Community Update

2026 NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award



It was a pleasure to present Mr Jim Peters with a 2026 NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award in recognition of his incredible contribution to our community.

Jim founded the Wallis Lakes Dining Group. The group helps new residents meet people and feel welcome in our beautiful region and, over the years, has collectively spent more than \$650,000 at local clubs and restaurants, supporting our local businesses.

Jim is also part of the "Dad's Army" volunteers who maintain the common grounds of the Forster Keys area, is actively involved with the Pacific Palms Probus Club, and runs the Wallis Lake History Group.

Thank you, Jim, for your incredible contribution to our community.

2026 Viking Challenge

It was fantastic to see the 2026 Viking Challenge in action last weekend. Hosted by the Great Lakes United Football Club, the event brought two days of exciting football to our region. It was great to see hundreds of players, families, and supporters all enjoying the games and everything our area has to offer! (See p29)

A big thank you goes to the organisers, volunteers, and local sponsors who worked so hard to make the weekend a success. You all did a brilliant job welcoming so many competitors to our beautiful part of the world.

As always, if you have any State Government Issues please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Tanya Thompson MP

Tanya THOMPSON MP

Member for Myall Lakes

As your local State MP

I'M HERE TO ASSIST YOU WITH:

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✓ Roads and transport

✓ Community services

✓ Social services

✓ Community infrastructure

✓ Affordable housing

✓ Schools and education

✓ Congratulatory messages

If you need help or want to raise a local issue, please get in touch, I'm here to listen and take your voice to Parliament.

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myalllakes@parliament.nsw.gov.au

02 6555 4099

TanyaThompsonForMyallLakes

tanyathompson.com.au

Authorised by Tanya Thompson MP, 1-9 Manning Street, Tuncurry NSW 2428, funded using Parliamentary Entitlements October 2025.

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Drive Alive

By Jim Sullivan – Hallidays Point

While I worked at NBN television for many years, I produced a program called "Drive Alive" because of my background in motor racing and driver education. The program involved 90 second spots covering driving risks and offering solutions.

As a current member of Diamond Beach RFS Brigade I have seen quite a few crashes that might have been avoided with a little forethought.

Here are some road safety tips from the original program to share with readers:

Keep your wheels straight

While waiting at an intersection to make a right-hand turn keep your wheels straight. Sitting there with wheels already turned means you happen to hit from behind you will be pushed into the opposing traffic flow.

Are your headlights clean?

Road grime from wet roads can significantly cut the performance of your headlights. Take a glance at your windscreen where the wipers don't reach - if it is grubby the headlights will be pretty much the same.

Some turns are legal, but can be lethal

On roads where the speed limit is 80 km/h and above, and there is no defined turning lane, it is risky to sit in the middle of the road waiting for a break in oncoming traffic to turn into a side road or driveway. For the few minutes it might take it is far safer to pull off the road to the left and wait for a safe break in traffic.

Window down to check speed

On a long drive on country roads it is easy to misjudge how much you have slowed down when coming to a small town - with cars so silent now it is a good practise to wind the window down as you slow for the town - the extra level of wind noise will remind you of your speed.



Don't have your brain in milk-shake mode

Returning to a freeway after a roadside stop you need to be ready to accelerate smartly to match the traffic stream you are joining - probably travelling at 110 km/h. You don't want to be a slow moving road block that can cause passing drivers to have to take avoiding action.

Drive the car behind

If someone tail-gates you, don't be pushed towards the car in front. The closer a car is behind you, the further you should stay from the car in front. If traffic suddenly slows, you have plenty of space to brake steadily and avoid a panic stop with that tail-gater so close.

Tidy car is a safe car

Loose items on the front seat or dashboard can cause a dangerous distraction. Accidents have happened when braking causes something to fall - a driver reaches to save it - and trouble follows. Never leave anything on the rear parcel shelf - if you have the misfortune to have an accident unsecured items can become dangerous missiles.

Walk around before take off

Just like a pilot walks around his aircraft before taking to the air, it is a good practise to do that with your car. A quick glance at the tyres might reveal damage - or low on pressure. Remember a tyre that is under inflated will affect cornering, and possibly braking stability.

New Equipment Shed at Forster Croquet Club



Above: Tanya Thompson (4th from left) with members of Forster Croquet Club with the new equipment shed. Photo supplied.

By Carmel Rigby - Forster Croquet Club

Forster Croquet Club recently hosted a morning tea for our local member, Tanya Thompson, to celebrate the replacement of our new equipment shed that was made possible through the Community Building Partnership Grant.

The new shed enables us more efficient storage of our mowers and lawn equipment and ensures that our equipment remains dry during rain events.

Club members worked hard clearing the garden area prior to the shed being erected and we could not be happier with the end result.

Our Club is grateful to Tanya for her support in pursuing financial assistance in replacing and improving the facilities at our club. Members enjoyed hosting Tanya and managed to have a game even with the rain!

The Grin Bin

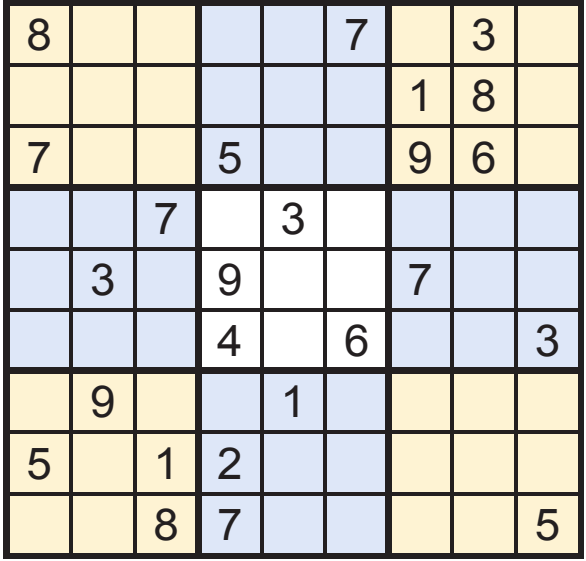


Doodley Squat



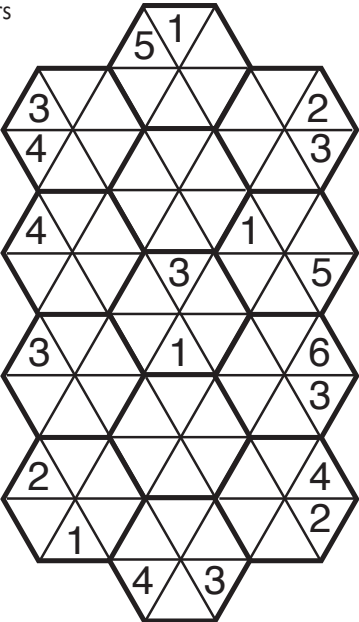
Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers from 1 to 9. Each number can only appear once in each row, column and 3x3 block.

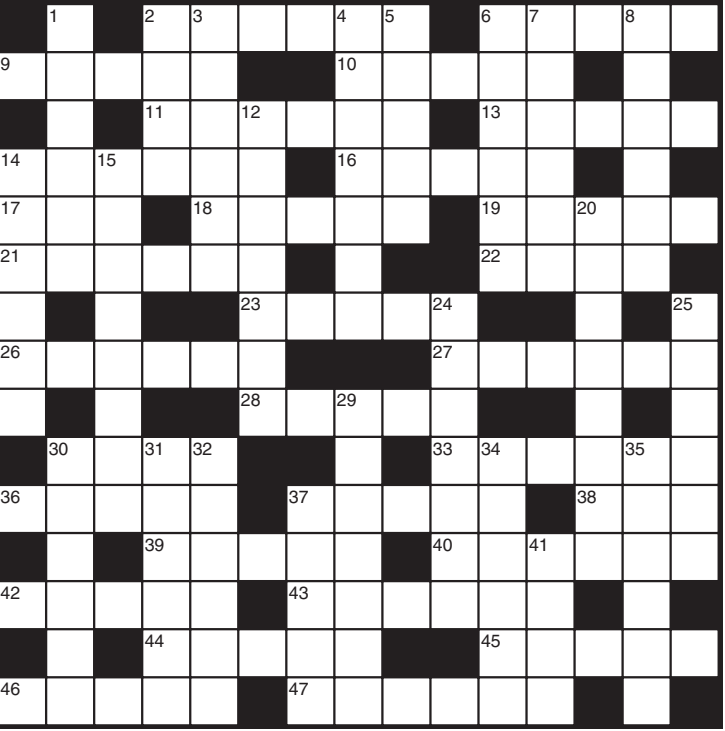


Quick Workout

Fit the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 into the hexagons so that where the hexagons touch, the numbers will be the same. No number is repeated in any hexagon.



Crossword



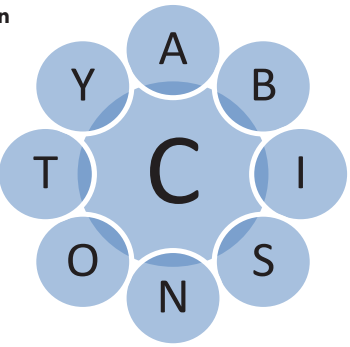
- ACROSS**
- 2 Abstract
 - 6 Short gaiters
 - 9 Stately
 - 10 Rome's river
 - 11 One demanding excessive interest
 - 13 Weary
 - 14 Obnoxious creatures
 - 16 Reposes
 - 17 Choir
 - 18 Furniture item
 - 19 Burdens
 - 21 Small ball
 - 22 Extremities
 - 23 Unsuitable
 - 26 Climbing palm
 - 27 Widespreading dominion
 - 28 Donor
 - 30 String
- DOWN**
- 1 Stick together
 - 2 Fruit
 - 3 Dwell
 - 4 Utter repeatedly
 - 5 Sea nymph
 - 6 Become established
 - 7 Jail
- ACROSS**
- 33 Evil intent
 - 36 Cruise ship
 - 37 Poisonous
 - 38 Indicate tiredness
 - 39 Speech sound
 - 40 Language
 - 42 Glossy fabric
 - 43 Venerate
 - 44 Acquire knowledge
 - 45 Unpleasant
 - 46 Loses colour
 - 47 Bear witness to
- DOWN**
- 8 Tendencies
 - 12 Combining
 - 14 Snakes
 - 15 Family member
 - 20 Having high opinion of
 - 24 Destructive insect
 - 25 Go back
 - 29 Acting with rough force
 - 30 Shriill-sounding insect
 - 31 Speak of abusively
 - 32 Male honey bees
 - 34 Fruit of the oak
 - 35 Reckons up
 - 37 Earth (L)
 - 41 Orderly

Focus

An All Australian Word Game

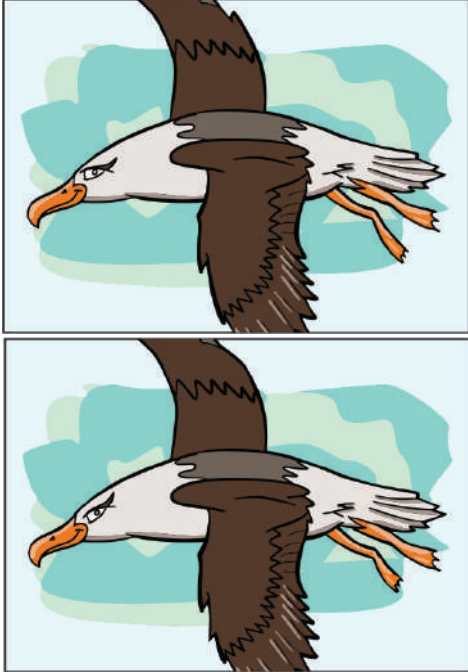
- * Each word must contain the centre 'Focus' letter and each letter may be used only once
- * Each word must be four letters or more
- * Find at least one nine letter word
- * No swear words
- * No verb forms or plurals ending in 's'
- * No proper nouns and no hyphenated words

TODAY'S FOCUS Good: 14 words
Very good: 22 words
Excellent: 39 words

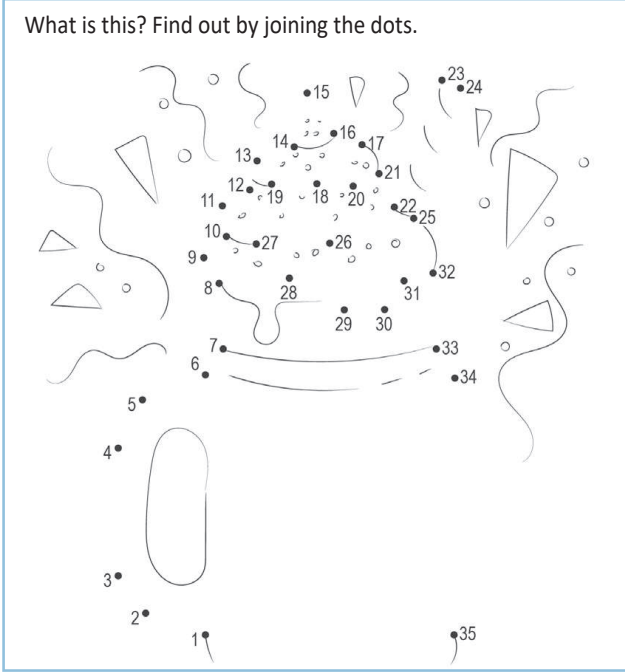


Reference: Macquarie Concise Dictionary
Focus No. 3980

Spot the 5 Differences

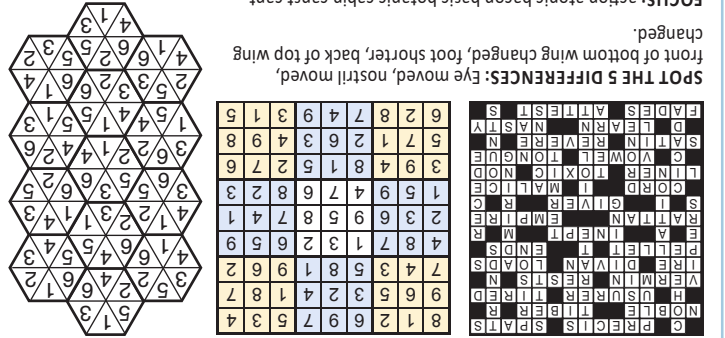


Join the Dots



Solutions

Puzzles and pagination supplied by Auspax Media



What's on around town & beyond!

Local Calendar

Your 'Local Calendar' lists free events. Max 4 lines. It is the responsibility of the organisation to update their information.

March



Sat 21 March - Forster Farmers Market
8am to 12pm in the grounds next door to Forster Court House on Little St.
Enquiries: Linda 0421 347 273

Sat 28 March - Tuncurry Market
8am to 1pm at John Wright Park, Tuncurry.
Enquiries: Anne 0417 400 994

Sun 29 March - Pacific Palms Market
9am to 1pm Pacific Palms Community Centre. Community Library Stall open in hall.
Enquiries: Jennifer Doyle 0401 968 516

April



Sat 4 April - Real Food Market
8am - 11am Pacific Palms Community Centre.
Enquiries: Sue Williams 0438 433 063.

BLACK HEAD BAZAAR

Sun 5 April - Black Head Bazaar Market
8am to 1pm Wylie Breckenridge Park, Black Head Rd. Check website for ground closures.
www.facebook.com/blackheadbazaar

Sun 5 April - Hallidays Point Car Boot Sale
7am to 12pm Hallidays Point Shopping Village
Enquiries: 0403 042 088

Sun 12 April - Forster Town Park Market
8am to 1pm, Town Park, Oyster Pde Forster.
Search Forster Town Park Market on Facebook.

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88.0

FORSTER-TUNCURRY

Forster Gallery's Annual Art Prize is on!



This year's judge is Ali Haigh.

By Elizabeth Ho – Forster Gallery

The highly anticipated annual Forster Art Prize is on again at Forster Gallery and it is an event you won't want to miss! With a record 322 entries across eight categories the works are from both local and Australia-wide artists. The prize is into its 44th year and carries a purse worth over \$10,000.

The exhibition opens with a gala event on Saturday 28 March, which will be attended by sponsors, VIPs, members and their guests, when all will be revealed and the delighted winners will be presented with their certificates.

The quality of the works entered makes judging a daunting task and this year's judge is Ali Haigh. Entrants' details are hidden until the judging is finalised. Each entry is judged on its artistic merits and when the judging is finalised, the artists' details are revealed.

"The Forster Art Prize is without a doubt our busiest time of the year," says Vice President, Pat Mackaway, "and we are grateful to our sponsors and our wonderful team of volunteers who enable us to bring it to you."

"With the gallery experiencing excellent growth in membership and with new classes and workshops being introduced, we are expecting this momentum to continue. The renovations have created a larger space for both exhibitions and classes, it's light and bright and welcoming to our members and visitors," she said.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is always the People's Choice award which is given at the close of the exhibition and this year's raffle is a two night stay at an Air B&B in Sydney.

The Forster Art Prize exhibition runs Saturday 28 March to Sunday 26 April, with the gallery open from 10am – 4pm daily including public holidays. Entry is free and all the artworks are for sale. The gallery is wheel-chair friendly with a convenient drop-off zone, it has an accessible rest room and off-street parking to ensure a welcoming experience for all.

Located just minutes from the heart of town, Forster Gallery is a must-visit destination for anyone seeking inspiration, connection or simply a quiet moment among beautiful works of art. Find us on Facebook and Instagram where we invite you to leave a review.



The Forster Gallery is at 34 Lake St, Forster.
www.forstergallery.org



THE FORSTER ART PRIZE 2026

28 March – 26 April

FORSTER GALLERY

34 Lake St, Forster, 10am – 4pm daily, entry free
www.forstergallery.org



What's on around town & beyond!

Two free author talks at Forster Library

MidCoast Libraries

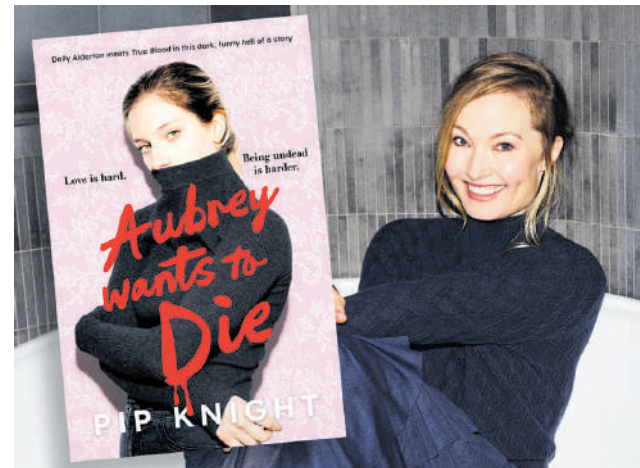
Pip Knight

Join bestselling author, Pip Knight, for an in-conversation discussion featuring her latest novel 'Aubrey Wants to Die'.

Pip's hugely popular dark and sexy psychological thrillers feature a dash of romance and black humour, featuring brilliantly flawed women.

Find out more and book tickets at: <https://library.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Whats-on>

Forster | Saturday 28 March | 2:30pm



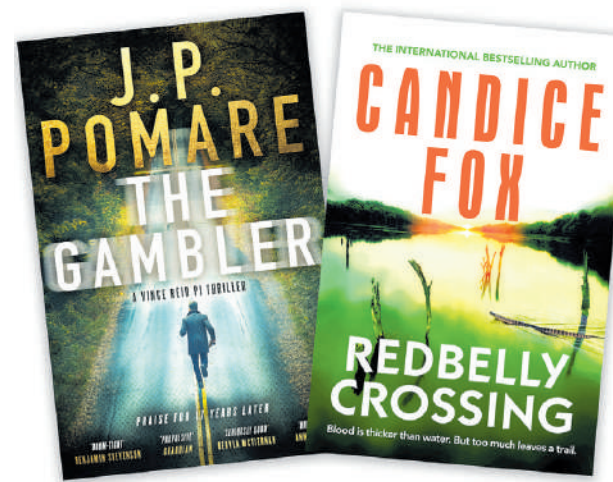
Candice Fox & J. P. Pomare

Candice Fox and J.P. Pomare join forces to discuss their latest novels and examine the similarities and differences in their approaches.

Be treated with this intriguing investigation by TWO acclaimed, award-winning crime fiction authors, whose works have also been developed for the screen.

Find out more and book tickets at: <https://library.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Whats-on>

Forster | Monday 30 March | 11:00am

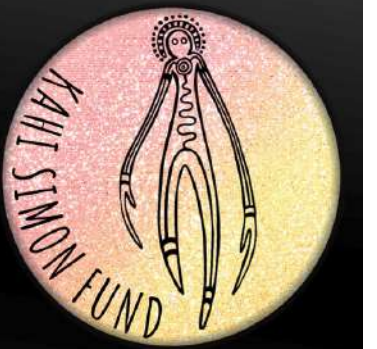


Suicide Prevention Fundraiser

6-11pm on Saturday 30 May
NEX (Newcastle Exhibition & Convention Centre)

Join us for a special Fundraiser Evening supporting the Kahi Simon Fund - a night of connection, purpose, and community.

The evening will feature guest speakers, live and silent auctions, raffles, and music, all coming together to raise awareness and support for mental health and suicide prevention in Forster.



Tickets can be purchased through Humantix at:
<https://events.humantix.com/kahi-simon-suicide-prevention-fundraiser>

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Mixed bag and Feedback

Letters to the Editor

'Letter to the Editor' is the place for our community to share their thoughts and feedback. Maximum 250 words unless prior arrangement. Material that is offensive, defamatory or overtly political will not be published. This newspaper intends to provide an opportunity of reply for any person/organisation involved before publication. The author's name and town are required, unless specifically requested otherwise. Send your letters to info@forsterfortnightly.com.au



Great Lakes College

Local P&C needs support to keep school canteens going

I would like to inform you about an important matter discussed at the recent Great Lakes College Parents and Citizens (P&C) Annual General Meeting.

Unfortunately, at the last meeting, we were unable to fill all the executive positions including President, Secretary, and Canteen Coordinator. As a result, there is a serious risk that the canteens at both Tuncurry and Forster campuses may need to close. These canteens are run by the P&C and are our sole fundraising activity, providing essential funds to purchase resources and equipment to support our students and staff.

To avoid this outcome, we urge you to attend the next P&C meeting on Wednesday, 1st April at 6:00 pm at the Tuncurry Campus. At this meeting, we will be seeking volunteers to fill the roles of President, Secretary, and

Canteen Coordinator. The commitment is not extensive with meetings once a month during the school term and run for approximately an hour. Without your support and involvement, the closure of the canteens is unfortunately likely, which would be a significant loss for our school community and will directly impact our students.

We strongly encourage all parents and caregivers to consider how they might contribute. Your involvement is crucial in keeping these important services running and supporting our students' educational experience.

If you would like more information on these roles, please contact Stuart Small at Stuart@GreatLakesCollegePancD.onmicrosoft.com

Thank you for your attention and support. We look forward to seeing many of you on 1st April.

Graeme Jennings - College Principal

Pray for Peace

We invite you to come join us in praying for peace. We live in a time when peace is something we long for and is not a reality.

Prayers are offered for - peace within, with others, for our community, and peace for the world.

Mondays at Tiona Chapel, Tiona (home of the Green Cathedral) at 10.30am for a 30 minute service.

Wendy Ballard - Community of Christ

Blueys Beach Shops – Road Works

The following is a copy of my response to the 'Have Your Say - Blueys Beach Village Concept Designs'.

For people who don't live in the area, the Blueys Shops have angled parking in front of the shops and a median section, with palms trees, that allows parallel parking between the angled parking and the main road. It is essential that the centre parking continue for use by tradies with trailers, campervans, and tourists with camper trailers. Not to do so will be widely remembered in our community and by visitors as a failure of Council.

Council gives three reasons to discontinue centre parking- safety, appearance, and cost. It might also be that Council is fixated on having a roundabout, when a T-junction would be more practical. See second dot point below.

Safety:

- Council was asked to put a mirror on the eastern light pole to assist traffic visibility when exiting. Nothing happened even though the convenience store has a spare mirror they offered for use.

- With the amount of heavy traffic using Boomerang Drive, it looks inescapable that buses, coaches, gravel trucks with trailers, and concrete mixers will simply go straight over a roundabout.

- Without proper and convenient parking for tradies with trailers, campervans, and camper trailers, safety becomes a real issue.

Turning to the Boomerang Beach area:

- Council has put a footpath directly onto the roadway in Boomerang Drive, contrary to basic public safety 101 that separates pedestrians and road traffic. It claimed cost instead of doing a proper job.

- Council has filled in a traffic calming dip on Boomerang Beach Road quite needlessly, again wasted money.

- Council has covered up a trip hazard on the path to the beach at the centre carpark with a load of sand, now blowing away, rather than dealing with it properly.

- At the southern end of Boomerang Beach the parking is on the side away from the beach and toilets on the inside of the curve that limits visibility thereby risking children especially running across the road. To fix it requires relocation of parking signs and some road paint. Despite repeatedly drawing this to Council attention, nothing has been done

Claims for safety would make a cat laugh. Cost:

- Evidently cost comes before safety and public use. A more considered use of public money would provide for both.

Appearance:

- Practicality comes first.

John King - Boomerang Beach



www.moir.com.au

Aussies taking Iran War seriously now petrol and sport are involved

The Shovel

Satire: Punters across Australia have discovered the US is at war with Iran, after the conflict impacted two sacred pillars of Australian culture: sports and petrol.

When the first US strikes hit Iran, the news story was deemed secondary to the much more monumental fallout occurring on the Kyle and Jackie O show. However, as \$10 prices soared above two bucks a litre, some Aussies suspected not even Sandilands was to blame for this one.

The news broke all at once for Newcastle physio, Ryan Berger, while he was watching the Matildas play Iran at the Women's Asia World Cup.

"When Iran's players were saluting during their national anthem, I got really confused. That's when I went to news.com, scrolled down four pages, and found out there's actually a war going on. Who knew!" he shared in disbelief.

Upon learning that the impacts on football and filling up his Subaru Forester were both because the United States started a war with



Iran, Ryan became opposed to Australia's complicity in the violence.

"I can't believe nobody mentioned anything about the war earlier!" Ryan exclaimed, almost two weeks into the strikes.

"We need to do something. It's completely un-Australian to let people get hurt in the name of football. That's more of a FIFA thing."

As it stands, Australia has only offered to support the war with limited military aircraft. However, geopolitics experts theorise that the PM won't hesitate to deploy ground troops if the price of beer is also impacted.

Screen Reviews

TV Show Reviews by Leon Batman - Forster

56 Days - Prime, 1 Season 8 Episodes released February 2026

An American thriller that alternates between two timelines - one with two people in a relationship after a chance meeting in a supermarket and the other 56 days later when a body is found in their apartment with two detectives trying to solve the case. This show is a real thriller and you need to keep your eyes glued to the TV at all times as there are many twists and turns in this show, together with the alternate timelines. You will be continually wondering what will happen next, who is the killer and who is the victim.



Marshals - Prime, released March 2026, 1 Season (so far) 4 Episodes (so far) currently being released weekly

Marshals is a spinoff from the 1883/1923/Yellowstone series featuring Kayce Dutton, a rancher and former Navy Seal who was married to Indian Monica Long-Dutton. His wife has since passed after developing cancer and Kayce, becoming bored farming cattle, joins a former Navy Seal who is a US Marshall tasked with protecting Montana. This American neo-Western/Police procedural series is also a sequel to Yellowstone 2018-2024. Great scenery and action. Worth watching if you like the Yellowstone franchise.



Resident Alien - Prime, released January 2021, 4 Seasons

An American science fiction comedy drama about an alien who crash lands on earth near a small Colorado town. He changes into human form to try assimilating into the town as the local doctor after watching TV shows about doctors. Unfortunately, this alien has two problems to deal with - firstly his secret mission on earth is to destroy it and also the mayor's young son can see the alien in his true form. I found season one extremely funny, however, I have found season 2 to be not as funny but I will continue watching to see how the story unfolds.

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The Nabitac Show was held on Saturday 7 March. Hosted by the Wallamba Agricultural & Horticultural Association Inc. Photos by Mary Yule.



The organising committee volunteers.



MP Alison Penfold handed out some prizes.



Jan Lee's quilt won a First Prize. (See last edition).



Local Identity – Jillian Brown

Interview by Vanda Gooley - Forster

Jillian Fay Brown, (Nee Jahnsen) 79, is a true local. She was born in Taree hospital and lived all her life in Forster Tuncurry. Her family lived in Tuncurry until Jillian was four and half when they moved to Lake Street, Forster. She lived in that house until she married. Jillian and her husband Robert then moved across the road to Boundary Street, Forster, where they still live today. Jillian hasn't moved homes very far but she has experienced a mountain of history in-between.

school." She was a pupil of this teacher for three consecutive years. Jillian said he would punch children in assembly if they spoke. She remembers he smashed an umbrella over a child and broke the blackboard with a boy's head. He also threw a boy out of the classroom window. That experience impacted on her learning enormously and subsequently Jill was 'petrified' of teachers. Hence, she left school as soon as possible, at the age of only fourteen and 9 months.

What Jillian lacked academically she compensated through her excellence in sport. She was a school champion breast stroker

and diver and later, a proficient water skier and state champion roller skater and teacher.



Above: Jillian at French's rink next to the butter factory, Tuncurry 1964.

Jillian is also a prolific collector of photos and other memorabilia which she has meticulously organised and catalogued into numerous albums.

Jillian's father, Alf Jahnsen, was a well-known boat builder and her mum, Mavis, a cleaner at a guest house owned by the Blacks. Jillian's father and George Bilton were the longest living residents in Forster. Jillian has an older brother, Barry (deceased 2022) who joined the navy and later joined their dad, boat building. Jillian had an older sister, Lorraine (deceased 2004) and a younger brother Harvey, who still lives in the family home in Lake Street. Together with his father, Alf, Harvey built hundreds of vessels; yachts, ferries, boats, dinghies, racers and cruisers. The Alma G was built in Tuncurry by Alf and commissioned in 1946. It was built for service between Tuncurry and Forster and was often used for a run out to the Wallis Island Air Strip. The Jahnsen boats kept businesses in this area afloat. Harvey is one of the last commercial wooden boat builders left.

Jillian has fond memories of growing up in Forster, a very active childhood. The kids rode their push bikes everywhere, playing outdoors, loved swimming and sliding down the sandhill.

Jillian attended Forster Primary. Unfortunately, her time and education there was profoundly impacted by one particular teacher who she described as being violently cruel toward his pupils. In her own words, Jillian said, "I hated

to arrive. They would ferry across the lake to go to Tuncurry, sometimes waiting hours.



Above: Jillian was 1st in Figure skating at Long Jetty 1984.

At age 15, Jillian worked in a grocery shop – the owner had two shops in Forster, one in the main street and the other opposite the PO. He also owned the service station (currently JKL Real Estate). Her now husband, Robert, would come and chat to Jillian. Romance grew and the rest is history. They were both twenty when they married and have been married for 58 years, Jillian laughed saying, "You get more time for murder." Jillian resigned from the grocery shop a few days before she and Robert married. They have two children, Melissa and Michael, 6 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. Robert worked for Graham Barclay Oysters from the age of 17 and still works two days a week at 79 years old.

Before Robert and Jillian were married, they took up water skiing. They joined the ski club with Graham Barclay and both performed in the annual ski show on Wallis Lake during Christmas and New Year. Jillian was a ballerina skier (she'd had ballet, tap and toe lessons as a child) and Robert performed in slalom skiing, jump skiing and cut throat (3 skiers dodge in and out of each other). He also performed as a clown in a bathtub. Jillian said she absolutely



Above: Photo of Jillian Brown today by Vanda Gooley.

loved their time on the team and she and Robert skied together for around 20 years.

They were also invited to perform for Queen Eliabeth the Second when she sailed into Botany Bay on her royal yacht Britanica, on April 29 1970, to commemorate the Bicentenary. They performed a modified aquatic show as the conditions were bad and Jillian and Kay Barclay were scared of sharks – a joke someone had led them to believe.

Jillian later took up roller skating and said, "it was one of the loves of my life." She initially fell in love with the sport as a young girl where she practised in the family driveway. She then roller skated in the old RSL hall in Tuncurry which is now the Salvation Army Hall. After that closed down, a new rink opened at 'The Old Butter Factory' in Tuncurry, owned by the French family. Another outdoor rink then opened next to the 'Memorial Hall' in Tuncurry run by the Gambel family.

After that, an open air rink was opened in Wharf Street, Forster (Where Tartt café is now). A scout spotted Jillian's talent for roller skating and wanted her to develop her skills in Sydney. Unfortunately, Jillian's parents wouldn't allow it as she was only 16. Later 'Dancing Wheels' opened on The Lakes Way, Forster, owned by Allan Borthwick.

Jillian approached Allan for work at the rink. He originally declined. By this time Jillian had two children who also loved roller skating and the two children and Jillian would practice on the pavement. They eventually attended 'Dancing Wheels', where Jillian's skills became apparent. Allan offered Jillian work teaching which she loved and did for many years. She loved teaching students of all ages and found it very rewarding witnessing their progress. She also loved the social aspect. Jillian ended up competing, and at the tender age of 38 in 1984 she achieved second place in the State titles. Many locals thought Jillian was too old to be competing but her medal proved them wrong.

Jillian's two children also competed successfully but she loved helping all children. In particular, she remembers a young disabled boy who had difficulty with his balance and communicating, Jillian worked with the child and was able to get him to skate on his own. The boy's mother was in tears and it was a very proud moment for Jillian.

In 1986, Jillian had a mishap on the rink while helping a child limbo under a low bar. She broke her foot. However, this did not deter Jillian. With a plaster up to her knee and on crutches, she continued to teach at the rink. She said teaching was her passion and she loved it. Jillian still proudly has her original

white roller skates and dancing Wheels costumes and said if she was able, she would skate today.

Jillian said her biggest challenge today is facing 'old age,' finding frustration in not being able to do simple chores and not being able to do what she once did.

Jillian thought her biggest inspirations were Torvil and Dean. She was a fan of theirs and when Torvil and Dean performed their first show in Christchurch, NZ – Jillian managed to get tickets. Jillian is also a huge Elvis fan and has been fortunate enough to visit Gracelands for Robert's 60th birthday in 2006, and Elvis's 28th anniversary of his passing. They stayed in the Heartbreak Hotel in Lonely Street. Jillian has a whole photo album dedicated to their trip to Gracelands.

Throughout their married life, Jillian has worked various jobs; a clothing shop in Forster village, (Chix boutique), roller skating teacher, stacking shelves at Super K Mart, Forster Bowling Club (cooking and waitressing) and cleaning at Golden Ponds.

Jillian and Robert have travelled extensively by land, air and sea. They began their adventures in 1979 when they flew with their children to Norfolk Island. Since that time, they have travelled to Noumea, Bali (multiple times), Hawaii (several times), Singapore, Canada, USA, Tasmania, NZ, China and Thailand. They love cruising but any more sailing trips from now on, would be around Australia.

Jillian and Robert both said Forster is the best place live to despite their extensive travels. "It's always lovely to get back home to Forster." They love their home and the water.



Above: Jillian (on left) performed in the annual Water Ski Show on Wallis Lake during Christmas and New Year.



Left: Jillian water skied with her husband Robert for 20 years. Photos supplied.

Jillian's niece, Karon Parton said this about her Aunty...

"As a child, my earliest memory of my Aunty Jill was of the "fun aunty". She was always the one keen to take us to the carnival or swims. She saw the cheeky side of everything. She was always on the go, interested in everyone and everything.

Her sewing was impeccable and she could make anything and mostly just by looking at it – an amazing talent.

She very patiently taught me to roller skate, and to waterski, (no mean feat being a clunky kid) and she taught me to laugh at myself; making mistakes wasn't "failing", it was just "learning." "Give it another go," she would say.

She was always looking out for her parents (my grandparents) as they aged, visiting daily to ensure their needs were met and always checking up.

She was always very community minded, we knew we could always ask Jill if we needed to know what was going on.

In recent years she has had some tough health challenges which she attacks with incredible resilience that is awe inspiring. I'm so very lucky to have her in our lives."

Pelican Boardwalk extension to enhance Forster waterfront



MidCoast Council

MidCoast Council will further extend the popular Pelican Boardwalk on Memorial Drive at Forster.

A new 80 metre section of boardwalk will provide an over-water experience heading east towards the Red Spot boat shed.

Council has awarded the construction tender to GPM Marine Constructions.

Some preliminary activity started on Monday 9 March. On-site construction is due to begin from Monday 16 March. Works should finish by late June 2026.

Council's Executive Manager Public Spaces, Liam Bulley, said "this new section of boardwalk will be a welcome addition to the boardwalk and kayak launching platform that opened late last year".

"It was great to see so many locals and visitors to the area enjoying the new suspended boardwalk over the Christmas holidays."

The current work includes extending the suspended boardwalk. Balustrades will be built along both sides of the structure. Provision will be made for a public pump-out system.

Contractors will work to minimise noise and inconvenience to the public during the works.

The recently completed section of Pelican Boardwalk is now open for public access. A few finishing touches will complete that section soon. The boardwalk will remain open and accessible during those works.

The project is being delivered with funding support from the NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund Round Two.



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Little Street in Forster – First settlers

Great Lakes Museum

Little Street Forster originally started at the School of Arts along the lake front to Mark Street. This was the area the first settlers came to pioneer. On John Hall's map, presented to the Minister of Lands in October, 1870 there was no street for Little Street. In 1861 Surveyor Vernon pegged out two 40 acre lots of land in Minimbah Lot 1: Murdock McIntosh, Lot 2: George Godwin.

The following three pioneers left a considerable mark on the development of our community.



Murdock McIntosh

Murdock McIntosh 1847-1918.

Born in Karras, Scotland, he immigrated to NSW with his family aged 4 settling in Raymond Terrace. Magnus Cromarty, McIntosh's

brother-in-law purchased Lot 1 in the name of 17 year old Murdock. This section today included Helen, Robert and Bruce Street from the lake front to McIntosh Street. In 1876, Murdock took up more land known as Charlotte Bay where he met and married Elizabeth Godwin, daughter of George Garlick Godwin. Murdock dabbled in many things being one of those who took up oyster leases in 1884 at Tuncurry and Cockatoo Island, at the beginning of the leasing system and after the first leases were available. Murdock McIntosh was a man who also joined in community affairs, both socially and politically and was one of the pioneers who helped develop the amenities of the settlement as a village early in its growth. Both he and Elizabeth are buried at the Forster cemetery.

An additional item of interest is that after Murdock's death his wife Elizabeth donated a block of land in Bruce Street, Forster and upon this was built the first Church of England in the Forster area. The land was later sold to the Presbyterians.

George Garlick Godwin 1803-1890

Born in Wiltshire England, convicted of stealing a pig and was transported to Australia in 1839 on the "Burrell." George was given a pardon in 1846 and worked as a carrier and bullock driver around Kincumber, before marrying a much younger Mary Anne Jones in 1852. In 1861 the family journeyed north by bullock wagon, blazing a rugged and treacherous trail through Raymond Terrace, Stroud, Bulahdelah and onto Minimbah. George and his family were the first white settlers to this area. In 1863 George purchased Lot 2 40 acres that being today Mark Street to Richard Phegan's boundary near

South Street, from the lake front to Godwin Street. The family only stayed a short time becoming tired of farming and in 1874 George moved to the 40 acre property he purchased at Wamwarra-Bungwahl Flat area. He operated a wine house for gangs of men returning oysters, timber and fish to the Sydney markets on John Booth's ship 'Oberon.' The original property Lot 2 lapsed and was transferred in the name of John Wylie Breckenridge. George and Mary are buried at Neranie Cemetery.

Richard Phegan 1834-1916

Born in Tasmania, Phegan came to Forster with his family in 1870 after selling his shipbuilding business in Balmain. He purchased 40 acres at the corner of South and Little Street back to



Minnie (Lowe) Phegan.

McIntosh Street and wasted no time installing a pit saw on the waterfront of his property. He set up stocks and laid the keel of the vessel 'Eliza' a modest ketch he launched May 1872. Richard then built the largest sailing vessel in the Cape Hawke area, the 'Water Witch' a two masted brigantine of 165 tons. The third ship was the 'Minnie Lowe' built in 1876 and named after his beloved wife. In 1878 Phegan built and licensed the Cape Hawke Hotel, a two storied dwelling, on his Little Street property. Minnie ran a fine house it was said, and it was a meeting place for mariners and timber men. Another vessel the 'Berlinda' was built and launched August 1881. Richard left Forster in the late 1880's and returned to the shipping circles in the Balmain area. Richard and Minnie are buried at the Waverley Cemetery overlooking the ocean.

The Great Lakes Museum is at 1 Capel Street, Tuncurry. Open hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 10am-1pm and Sunday 1pm-3pm.

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Bingo From 10:30am
Pizza's L \$20 / S \$15
\$15 Seniors Lunch + Drink

Sunday
Chook Run Bowls from 10:30am
Kids Meals \$5 (16y) with Meal Purchase

Wednesday
Raffles from 6pm
Club Super Draw from 6pm
220gr Porterhouse w/Chips & Salad \$25



Village Idiots
Fri 20th March

Thursday
Mufti Bowls & Raffle from 12:30pm
Happy Hour 3pm to 5pm
Ribs Night \$25



Max Marvell Duo
Fri 27th March

Friday
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Nations will release an extra 400 million barrels of oil to the market. All we need to do now is not panic at the pump

By Tony Wood – The Conversation, 12 March 2026

Despite being one of the world's top exporters of fossil fuels (coal and gas), Australia has little left of its own oil. Neither does New Zealand.

Both Australia and New Zealand sit at the end of a long supply chain for their transport fuels. The US-Israel war on Iran has led to this supply chain being squeezed. Iran's move to shut down the crucial Strait of Hormuz has effectively frozen 20% of the world's oil trade. Three ships were hit by projectiles in the strait yesterday.

When supply reduces, we expect prices to rise. That's why petrol and diesel prices have shot up. Farmers and trucking companies are worried about possible fuel shortages, especially for diesel.

Many people will wonder why governments aren't acting. But they are not sitting idly by. Australia and New Zealand are among the 32 member nations in the International Energy Agency (IEA) that have agreed to release reserves of oil to tackle price spikes, though it's unclear how much this will help.

New Zealand's fuel reserves could last perhaps four weeks if all new supply was completely cut off, while Australia has a little more after recent expansion of fuel reserves.

It's important not to panic. Losing 20% of oil supply affects prices. But the other 80% of oil is unaffected by the war. Current price spikes are likely to be more affected by panic buying and perhaps even price gouging than by an actual supply shortage.

What are authorities doing?

Yesterday, the IEA announced its members would release a collective 400 million barrels of oil onto the market to try to bring oil prices down – the sixth and largest release in the agency's history.

Globally, oil prices have spiked 25% since the Iran conflict began on February 28. In turn, petrol and diesel prices have risen at the pump.

Some have asked whether prices rose before supplier costs increased. This is something the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is watching. Commissioner Anna Brakey has said: We are closely watching market behaviour and if there is conduct that is collusive or misleading or deceptive, we will investigate it and take action where appropriate.

New Zealand's Commerce Commission is watching closely as well. This scrutiny won't fix supply problems, but it could avoid price gouging.

Australia has just two oil refineries left in operation, down from eight about 20 years ago. New Zealand's last refinery closed in 2022. As refineries have closed, their fuel storage capacity has gone too.

This is one reason why Australia has long fallen short of the goal set by the IEA to have 90 days' worth of stored fuel. In 2018, diesel reserves fell as low as 16 days. To counter this, the Morrison government arranged in 2020 to store more fuel in the United States, while the Albanese government has been expanding domestic reserve capacity – especially for



Above: Diesel is a particular concern for Australia, given the country's reliance on trucks for freight. Lukas Coch/AAP

diesel, which fuels trucks moving freight around the country.

After the Ukraine conflict began, the government introduced minimum stockholding levels for fuel companies.

So while 36 days of petrol, 32 days of diesel and 29 days of aviation fuel sounds low, it's more than it has been for a long time.

As wars and tensions increase around the world, the Australian government may have to expand these reserves again.

What else can authorities do?

Federal energy minister Chris Bowen has blamed price spikes on panic buying. This is a big factor – many people are filling up ahead of expected price surges.

If petrol and diesel prices stay high, we can expect to see more calls for action.

The problem is, the government can't do too much in the short term. It can't easily increase supply into Australia. If it moves to cap petrol prices, this would quickly send suppliers broke. If suppliers are profiting excessively by raising prices well above the higher costs, this is something the ACCC will examine.

Releasing reserves onto the domestic market could temporarily drop prices. But Australia and New Zealand's reserves are not huge, which limits how effective this could be. If the Iran conflict drags on, it could even prove a bad move.

Over time, unaffected oil producers such as the US will likely raise their output. Embargo limits on Russian oil are being loosened.

Don't forget gas

Gas from Qatar – the world's second-largest producer – has also stopped flowing. Gas prices have risen far more than oil in Europe and Asia – up by 50%.

After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, gas prices skyrocketed globally. While Australia is a major gas exporter, domestic gas prices usually follow international prices. In response, the Australian government put a domestic price cap on gas of A\$12 a petajoule. This, it turned out, didn't do much to lower prices. But over time, prices fell back.

Right now, Australian gas exporters are profiting hugely as the supply from Qatar has stopped. But windfall profits at the expense of Australian consumers can – and, I argue, should – be taxed.

What's next?

This fortnight has shown how vulnerable Australia and New Zealand's supply chains are for their transport fuels. This crisis should prompt policymakers to take a hard look at how else we can boost our resilience in what is becoming a very uncertain world.

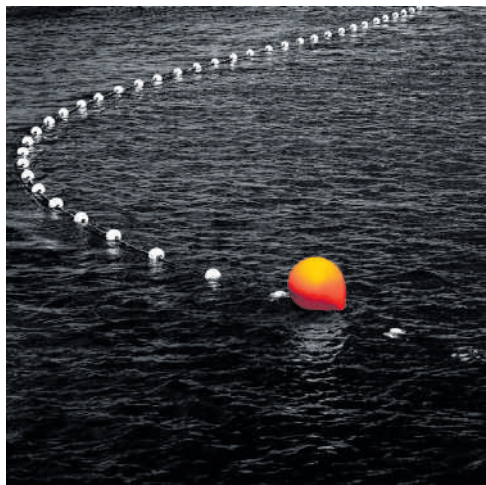
FDPC January results



Above: In the Open Competition Janice Amato was awarded the Judges Award with her image "Forster Aurora."

By Keith Pascoe - Forster Digital Photo Club

For the month of January we had a total 48 images entered for the Set Subject Minimalism and 51 images for the Open category.



Above: The Judges Choice award Minimalism was awarded to Grahame Wilson with his image "Tuncurry Pearls."

The Judge's Choice award Minimalism was awarded to Grahame Wilson with his superb image "Tuncurry Pearls" taken at the popular Tuncurry Rock Pool.

In the Open Competition Janice Amato was awarded the Judges Award with her awesome image "Forster Aurora" This locally taken photo shows we can see the Southern Aurora even in Forster as long as you are willing to get up real early to see and photograph this amazing event.

Our congratulations to both members. Here are the results for both competitions.

Minimalism

Merits: Tuncurry Pearls by Grahame Wilson (Also Judges Choice) Pelican on Pole and Ten Past Five by Lesley Walter, Willy the Pearl

Lugger by Malcolm Walker, Follow the Leader and Shades of Brown by Yvonne Moule,

Credit: Floater by John Hulme, Early Morning Norway by Robyn Pascoe, Detritus by Lyn Wilson

Open

Merits: Forster Aurora by Janice Amato (Also Judges Choice), Catching the Ferry by Robyn Pascoe, Get Out of My Way by Kathy Majewski, Busselton Jetty at Sunrise by Malcolm Walker,

Credits: Tangle Foot by Helen Walker, Bengal Beauty by Robyn Pascoe, Discarded in the Flinders Ranges by Lesley Walker, All the Pinks by Yvonne Moule, Monkey Magic by Dale Rabbett, Angry Engine by Grahame Wilson, Desert Road Karijini National Park by Malcolm Walker



Above: "Get Out of My Way" by Kathy Majewski received a Merit in the Open category.

Huge weekend of football - 2026 Viking Challenge



Office of MP Alison Penfold

Over 170 teams were in Tuncurry over the weekend, 7-8 March, for the 6 a-side Viking Challenge run under the incredible stewardship of the Great Lakes United Football Club.

It was an honour to press the starting button with games kicking off at 8.30am on Saturday 7 March with 18 football pitches marked up for this fast-paced and action packed weekend for football.

Open men's and women's teams as well as over 35s and 45s from across NSW and QLD played on the Saturday for grading and knockout rounds on the Sunday.

Thanks to the Neil and the Lakes United Football Club Organising Committee for their 30 plus years of running this event, to the Forster Tuncurry Hawks Rugby League Club for running the canteen and keeping everyone fed and hydrated and St John Ambulance for being on hand to tend to the players.



Image credit: Tuncurry Forster Football Club.

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Cape Hawke Surf Club celebrates women, volunteers & new facilities on International Women’s Day



Above: (L-R) SLSNC Branch President Bernadette Nicholson, Mayor Claire Pointin, Cape Hawke Surf Club President Gary Curtis and Life Member John Hahn with MP Tanya Thompson. Photo by Mary Yule.

By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

Members of the Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club gathered on Sunday to celebrate International Women’s Day while officially opening a new training and fitness space at the club’s beachside headquarters.

Club president Gary Curtis described the occasion as “a day of celebration,” recognising the contribution of women in surf lifesaving, the dedication of volunteers and the expansion of the club’s facilities.

“We’re celebrating women in Surf Life Saving, and we’re celebrating our volunteers and the opening of the new space,” Mr Curtis said during the event.

The ceremony brought together community leaders and club members, including Tanya Thompson, Claire Pontin, and representatives from Surf Life Saving Australia’s Lower North Coast branch.

The club’s history, Mr Curtis said, began modestly. Its earliest clubhouse was a small room just a few metres wide attached to an amenities block. Over time, members expanded the building

piece by piece, largely through volunteer labour.

Eventually, however, the ageing structure could no longer meet the needs of the growing organisation. After a decade of fundraising, the club constructed its current building about 15 years ago. Since then, membership has surged.

In the past three years alone, the club has recorded 30% growth across its key membership areas, including nippers, patrol members and social members. Junior participation has expanded from roughly 80 children years ago to more than 200 today.

The latest extension was designed to create additional training and fitness space, allowing members to maintain the physical conditioning essential for lifesaving duties.

The project was supported by a grant of more than \$90,000 from



the New South Wales Government’s Office of Sport through the Surf Club Facilities Program, along with approximately \$40,000 raised by the club.

Local builder Daniel Stallworthy led the construction, though persistent rain delayed work for months.

Mayor Ms Pontin praised the club’s volunteers (in their ‘green shirts’) and the club community for their efforts.

“That’s a big increase in membership over a short period of time and I can understand why you need more space,” she said. “Congratulations to everyone who worked toward this outcome.”

Ms Thompson, who also serves as the state’s Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, thanked the volunteers who patrol local beaches and contribute to the broader community.

“You give day after day to keep our community safe,” she said.

The celebration also highlighted the growing role of women in surf lifesaving, with the club hosting a special “pink patrol” — an all-female patrol that morning— in recognition of International Women’s Day.

The ceremony concluded with a ribbon cutting alongside club life member John Hahn, recently awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his decades of service to the club and the wider community. The green shirts then moved upstairs for refreshments to thank them for their commitment to the Cape Hawke Surf Club.



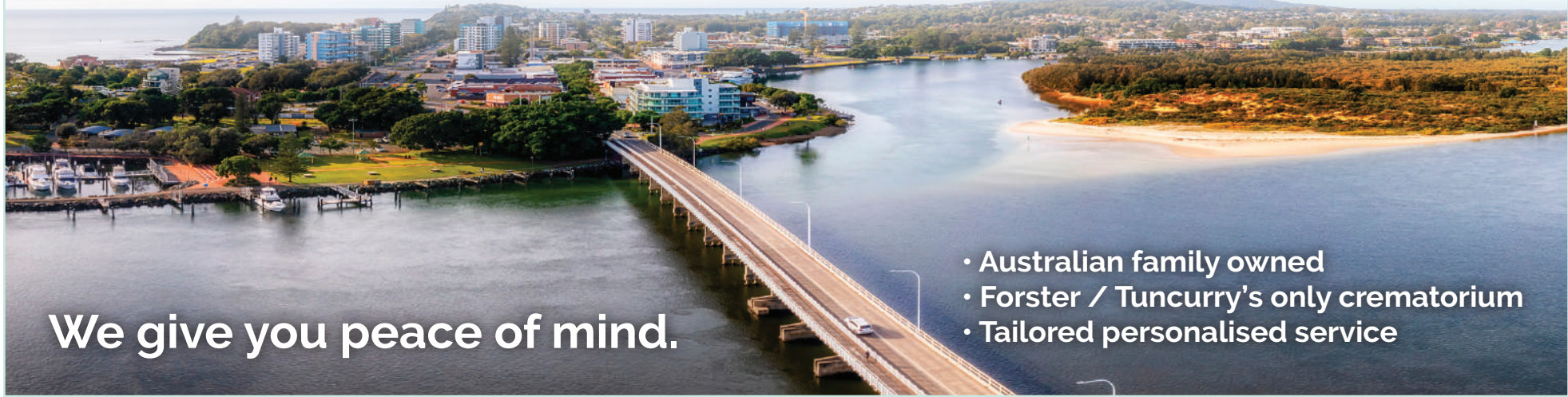
Above & top right: Cape Hawke Surf Club hosted a special “pink patrol” in recognition of International Women’s Day. Photos supplied.



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'Football Team Colours Day' at Social Golf

By Warren Warner - Club Forster Social Golf Club

Our most recent game of single stableford “football team colours” day was played at the Forster Course on 1st February. There was a good selection of footy apparel with Jill Magee awarded best dressed footy team colours. The weather started off mild but our back finishing groups were saturated when the weather turned.

Results

Mens: A Div. 1st Grant Mathews 34, 2nd Dave Thompson 33, 3rd Wayne Richards

B Div. 1st Bruce Pottinger 40, 2nd Damo Vaughn 39, 3rd Al Bowden 38

Ladies: 1st Kim Clark 35, 2nd Maree Fieldhouse 29, 3rd Di Wilson 29

Nearest to pin 2nd shot

Hole 4: Grant Mathews, Warren Warner, Kim Clark

Hole 6: Dave Thompson, Damo Vaughn, Kim Clark

Hole 11: Grant Mathews, Tom Welch, Maree Fieldhouse

Hole 14: Pete. Wilson, Martin Pottinger, Warren Warner, Di Wilson



Above: Panthers V Broncos: Ray Anderson & Jill Magee.

Next Game

Our Easter Egg Cup is on 29 March at Tuncurry Course. 7am for 7.30am hit off. For all enquiries contact Ken Woods on 0401 767 257.



First placed winners: (L-R) Grant Mathew, Bruce Pottinger and Kim Clark.

Kew Curry Cup First Round

By David Blanchard - Forster Mens Vets Golf

On Monday 9th March 88 players including 20 from Kew Country Club arrived at the Tuncurry Championship Course to compete for the first round of the annual Kew Curry Cup. We were welcomed to the course by heavy rain but miraculously came hit off time it had dissipated, and all players got through 18 holes all dry.

The Kew team now has the lead for the trophy with a score of 364 points to Forster’s 340 points, with the second round to be completed later in the year at Kew.

Following the game all players were treated once again to a magnificent BBQ lunch prepared by our great volunteer ladies, after which a mega raffle was held and prizes presented. A great day was had by all.

Due to its popularity, we are welcoming new

members each week. We welcome anyone wishing to come and have some fun.

Please contact the Forster Clubhouse accordingly (conditions apply).



Above: (L-R) Don Stiegrad, Kew Vets President with Tony George, Forster Vets Captain. Photo supplied.

Surprise visitor to Elizabeth Beach



Above: (L-R) Wendy Elliot, Jerry Edwards (Captain), Cathy Dodds, Alison Penfold, Alison Sims, Simon Truskett, Brian Munn, Rhys Munn and Shaun Sears. Front: Chelsea Lyons and Olivia Elliot.

By Jerry Edwards – Pacific Palms Surf Club

March 1st saw a surprise visit to Elizabeth Beach by Alison Penfold, Member for Lyne.

Pacific Palms Surf Live Saving Club’s Powell Patrol was delighted to meet Alison and provide her with a good understanding of the patrol’s responsibilities and the scope of operations for the club, including some recent events to demonstrate how such a picturesque place can still also manage major incidents!

Being a self confessed “Bushie”, Alison was keen to learn that the club is one of only four located in National parks, and how this dictates

to some extent operational viabilities of some assets - such as drones, and the risk assessment aversion procedures for the beach. The importance of patrol engagement with visitors was also explained and how being proactive can help avoid danger and keep their visit a safe and happy one! She was introduced to all the patrolling members on that day including Nipper’s Age Manager Wendy Elliot.

Pacific Palms SLSC would like to thank her for showing she is keen to connect with our community.



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Local International Women’s Day Run & Walk Fundraiser



treat the event as both a fun fitness activity and an opportunity to meet and chat with other women in the community.

The morning began with a lively warm-up before younger girls were given the honour of calling out “Ready, set, go!” to start the event. Participants received goodie bags at the start, and the morning wrapped up with running gear giveaways and product samples.

The event has grown in popularity, with this year’s fundraiser nearly doubling last year’s total. Around \$3,000 was raised, with proceeds to be donated to the Great Lakes Women’s Shelter and the Oncology Ward at Forster Private Hospital.



By Mary Yule – Forster Fortnightly

More than 100 women of all ages gathered early on Sunday morning to take part in the annual International Women’s Day Run & Walk, crossing the Forster–Tuncurry Bridge proudly wearing their new black event tops. Participants completed a 3–5km course starting and finishing at the Forster Surf Life Saving Club on 8 March, celebrating International Women’s Day while enjoying the chance to exercise and connect with others.

Local organisers Hayley Moody and Justine Lea from the Womens Running Collective encouraged participants to



Left: Local organisers (L-R) Justine Lea and Hayley Moody.

Photos by Patricia Macvean and Mary Yule.



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