

DECEMBER 2025



Local Scoop

Your City of Whittlesea news



**City of
Whittlesea**

**Delivering on
major projects**

Pages 6 and 7

**Christmas
community
events**

Page 9

**Sustainable
Christmas ideas**

Page 10



Adventure awaits

New park is a hit with families Page 3



Connect with us

📍 Civic Centre, South Morang
25 Ferres Boulevard
Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm

📍 Whittlesea Service Hub
63 Church Street
Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5pm

📞 9217 2170
(including after hours emergencies)
National Relay Service
133 677 (ask for 9217 2170)

✉️ Locked Bag 1,
Bundoora MDC VIC 3083

✉️ info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

👉 whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Upcoming Council Meetings

Tuesday 16 December, 6pm

Tuesday 17 February, 6pm

Tuesday 17 March, 6pm

Council meetings are held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.

▶ Meetings can be viewed live on the City of Whittlesea YouTube channel.

For more information visit
👉 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/councilmeetings

The information provided in this newsletter was accurate at the time of print. Visit Council's website for the latest information.

🖨 Printed on PEFC™ certified paper using vegetable inks.



Free telephone
interpreter service
131 450

Your Councillors



Deputy Mayor Cr Daniela Zinni*
Bundoora Ward
📞 9438 8084
daniela.zinni@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Blair Colwell
Mill Park Ward
📞 9438 8087
blair.colwell@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr David Lenberg
Epping Ward
📞 9438 8088
david.lenberg@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Christine Stow
North Ward
📞 9438 8090
christine.stow@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Lawrie Cox
Ganbu Gulinj Ward
📞 0476 205 715
lawrie.cox@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Deb Gunn
Painted Hills Ward
📞 9438 8082
deb.gunn@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Aidan McLindon
Kirrip Ward
📞 03 9438 8081
aidan.mclindon@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Mayor Cr Martin Taylor*
South Morang Ward
📞 0448 904 630
martin.taylor@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Michael Labrador
Lalor Ward
📞 0407 286 873
michael.labrador@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Nic Brooks
Thomastown Ward
📞 0400 752 042
nicholas.brooks@whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Cr Jarrod Lappin
Mernda Ward
📞 9438 8085
jarrod.lappin@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Visit our website to find out which ward you live in and who is your local Councillor.
👉 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/Councillors

* At the time of going to print, Cr Martin Taylor was the Mayor and Cr Daniela Zinni was the Deputy Mayor. Mayoral elections were scheduled for Tuesday, 18 November 2025.

Inside this edition



Whittlesea Public Gardens car park and path

PAGE
7

Celebrate a greener Christmas

PAGE
10

خدمة الترجمة الشفهية المجانية

Chinese Simplified 免费电话传译服务

Chinese Traditional 免費電話傳譯服務

Greek Δωρεάν τηλεφωνική υπηρεσία διερμηνέων

Italian Servizio di interpretariato telefonico gratuito

Бесплатна телефонска услуга за преведување

Persian/Farsi خدمات مترجم شفاهی تلفنی رایگان

Punjabi ਮੁਫਤ ਟੈਲੀਕੋਨ ਦੁਤਾਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਸੇਵਾ

Turkish Ücretsiz telefonla tercümanlık servisi

Vietnamese Dịch vụ thông dịch qua điện thoại miễn phí



COVER Byron, 8, tests out some of the play equipment at the Granite Hills Major Community Park.

Nature calling: Granite Hills Major Community Park

The family playground everyone's talking about.

For Jess and her adventurous young boys, Byron and Ayden, their weekends are often planned around which local park they will visit.

The Mill Park All Abilities Play Space and Splash Park is a frequent destination, as is the playground at Redleap Recreation Reserve.

But there is a new park, the Mernda-based family will need to add to their rotation, and it might just become their new favourite.

The Granite Hills Major Community Park at bunjil nganga Parkland Quarry Hills truly has something for everybody.

The new park includes a playground equipped with giant slides, flying fox, lawn maze, swings and many other features certain to appeal to children of all ages and abilities.

Designed to maximise the area's natural beauty, the park also includes nature play elements, wetlands, a boardwalk and walking trails that connect to the wider park precinct.

To ensure the comfort and convenience of all users, there are public toilets, picnic and barbecue areas, shelters and a Changing Places facility for people with higher care needs.

Jess said she was thrilled to have an exciting new playground to visit with her boys on weekends.

"We spend so much of our weekends going from park to park."

"Any opportunity to get the boys out of the house and exploring new places is great because they love to explore."

The park is accessible from the southern end of Cravens Road, Mernda and is serviced by a large car park.

The City of Whittlesea contributed \$5.5 million towards the project, with the Victorian Government providing \$2.5 million from its Growing Suburbs Fund.

For more information, visit
👉 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/granitehills

Helping homes go electric and save money

Looking to cut energy bills and stay cool this summer?

The City of Whittlesea has joined Solar Savers, connecting you with trusted, affordable suppliers for home energy upgrades.

Solar Savers makes it easy to upgrade your home. Through the service you can access:

(split system heating/cooling)

(heat pump hot water)

(induction cooking)

(electric vehicle (EV) chargers)

(insulation and draught proofing)

(home batteries, rooftop solar and more.)

For more information scan the QR code or visit
👉 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/solar-savers





Message from the Mayor

Cr Martin Taylor*

As Mayor of the City of Whittlesea, I am pleased to welcome you to the December edition of *Local Scoop*.

Council has recently adopted several key documents that will shape the future of our municipality including the *Community Plan 2025–2029* and the *Community Action Plan 2025–2026*. These plans outline the strategic priorities and actions we will take over the coming years to continue building a connected, sustainable and inclusive city.

I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their time, ideas and feedback during the extensive community engagement process. Your insights have been invaluable in helping Council ensure that these important documents reflect the aspirations, needs and priorities of our diverse community.

At the City of Whittlesea, we believe that authentic community engagement leads to better decision making. It fosters a strong and lasting partnership between residents and Council one that ensures our community continues to thrive. On page 14, you can see firsthand how community input has directly influenced Council decisions and helped shape new projects across the municipality.

Each year, through our Community Priorities consultation, we ask residents to tell us what matters most now and into the future. The feedback we receive forms the foundation of the plans and policies that guide Council's work. I encourage everyone to take part in the second phase of consultation, now open at engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/cp2026, and help shape the future of our city.

Across the municipality, we are delivering exciting projects from park and lighting upgrades to improvements in local recreation facilities. These investments reflect our ongoing commitment to creating safe, vibrant, and sustainable neighbourhoods where people of all ages can enjoy active lifestyles.

Summer is a wonderful time to explore what our city has to offer. With over 2,000+ parks and open spaces and 256 play spaces, there are endless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Be sure to visit Granite Hills Park, our newest addition, and take a moment to experience the community spirit that defines Whittlesea.

Over the past six months, I have had the great privilege of attending numerous community events, speaking with residents, and hearing both your concerns and your stories of local pride. These conversations remind me daily of the passion, kindness, and resilience that make our community so special.

I sincerely thank everyone who has taken the time to connect with me whether at an event, a school visit, or simply while out and about in our great city. It has been an honour to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to continuing to work together to shape a bright and sustainable future for all.

Mayor Cr Martin Taylor*

*At the time of going to print, Cr Martin Taylor was the Mayor and Cr Daniela Zinni was the Deputy Mayor. Mayoral elections were scheduled for Tuesday, 18 November 2025.

Councillors out and about



ABOVE Cr Labrador, Cr Lappin, Deputy Mayor Cr Zinni, Cr Stow, Mayor Taylor, and Cr Cox at the Emergency Services Expo 2025.



ABOVE Mayor Taylor at Coffee with Council.



ABOVE LEFT Cr Stow at Coffee with Council.

ABOVE RIGHT Cr Stow, Cr Brooks and Deputy Mayor Cr Zinni at Walking Thomastown.



ABOVE Cr Colwell and Cr Brooks at Coffee with Council.



Yan Yean Reservoir Park, Yan Yean

'Tis the season to shop locally

With over 1,300 shops across the municipality and lively neighbourhood hubs, everything you need this festive season is right here in the City of Whittlesea.

From Thomastown to Whittlesea, Epping to Doreen, our vibrant retail activity centres are full of hidden gems waiting to be discovered. Find something different, something unique and support your local retailers this Christmas. Shop local, give meaningful gifts and keep the community spirit alive.

Every purchase you make locally supports jobs, strengthens our economy, and helps our community thrive.



For more information, visit
[whittlesea.vic.gov.au/
BusinessDirectory](https://whittlesea.vic.gov.au/BusinessDirectory)



For more information, visit
explore.whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Scan the QR code to find out more and nominate online

Nominate a local hero

Help us recognise and celebrate community contributions

Nominations are now open for the 2025 **City of Whittlesea Community Awards**

- Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Senior Citizen of the Year
- Access and Inclusion Citizen of the Year
- Sustainable Environment Citizen or Group of the Year

Nominations close Sunday 15 February 2026.



PROJECT UPDATES



McDonalds Road bicycle path

Construction is underway on a new 900-metre, 2.5-metre-wide bicycle path along the north side of McDonalds Road, connecting Epping to Westfield Plenty Valley.

The path runs from Scarborough Road to the E6 Reserve and includes three new raised crossings at Scarborough Road, Derby Drive and Cabot Drive to improve safety and connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians.

The project, fully funded by the City of Whittlesea, supports the goals of the Walking and Cycling Plan 2022–2027.



The Stables Kindergarten redevelopment

The \$5.58 million redevelopment of The Stables Kindergarten in Mill Park will deliver a new two-room facility with an outdoor play area, car park and accessible pathways to meet growing demand for kindergarten services.

Demolition is complete and construction of the concrete foundations has begun. The kindergarten is temporarily operating from the Mill Park Drive Maternal Child Health Centre.

The project is funded by the City of Whittlesea and a \$4 million Victorian Government Building Blocks grant.



Freeman Park upgrade

Freeman Park in Mill Park is undergoing an upgrade to make it a more welcoming place for families to visit.

The redevelopment, which commenced in September and is expected to be finished shortly, is part of the City of Whittlesea's park and playground renewal program.

The project will see the installation of new play equipment, exciting nature play elements, more seating and the planting of additional trees to provide shade.

The \$270,000 upgrade is fully funded by the City of Whittlesea.



ABOVE Local family Hattie, Lottie, Jude and mum Jodie, with Ziggy the dog, say the new car park will make visits to the gardens easier.



Findon Road intersection

A new set of permanent traffic lights will help motorists and pedestrians negotiate one of South Morang's busiest thoroughfares.

The installation of traffic lights controlling the Findon Road-Williamsons Road intersection will improve safety and regulate traffic flow for people travelling to Middle Gorge railway station, Marymede Catholic College and other nearby destinations.

The project, which was fully funded by Council, also included road widening, drainage works, streetlight installation, signage, line marking and landscape works.

The intersection upgrade follows the completion of the Findon Road extension, running from Williamsons Road to Danaher Drive, in mid-2023.



Public lighting in local streets

Council is continuing to invest in improving the public lighting in local streets across the municipality to ensure residents feel safe after dark. Public lighting in Heather Avenue and Spring Street car park in Thomastown, Rosemary Drive in Lalor and Hazel Glen Drive in Doreen have all recently been upgraded.

Assessments and design work are underway for upgrades to lighting in Dallas Drive, Lalor; Maserati Drive, Epping; Flaxen Hills Road, Doreen and Church Street, Whittlesea.

Upgrades range from the replacement of new bulbs or poles through to the installation of an entirely new streetlight in some cases.



Wi-Fi access at community facilities

Council has introduced free public Wi-Fi to enhance the visitor experience across several community facilities, ensuring reliable access to high-speed internet.

This significant upgrade provides faster speeds and smoother connectivity for all visitors utilising the Wi-Fi network in offices, meeting rooms and public spaces.

The program has been rolled out to the Miller Community Centre, Janefield Community Centre, Spring Street Hall, Nick Ascenzo Community Centre, May Road Senior Citizens Centre, RGC Cook Community Pavilion, Wollert Community Centre, Painted Hills Community Pavilion, Epping Community Centre and the Olivine Pavilion.

Whittlesea Public Gardens new car park and path

Visitors to the Whittlesea Public Gardens in Barry Road, Lalor will benefit from a major upgrade to the popular attraction's parking facilities.

The latest stage in the gardens' ongoing redevelopment will deliver both a new car park and an upgrade to the existing one, making parking more convenient and accessible.

The project also includes the construction of a new concrete path that will connect the park to the existing concrete path along Barry Road. The upgrades form part of Council's Whittlesea Public Gardens Master Plan, which guides a staged renewal strategy to ensure the park meets the community's needs.

The first stage of the redevelopment featured a new playground with a large play tower, flying fox, rope climbing unit, swings, slides and trampolines.

A learn-to-ride circuit, nature play elements and new public toilets rounded out the first stage, which was completed in December 2022.

A 100-metre-long street-style skate park was the centrepiece of the second stage, completed in June 2024, which also featured two half-court basketball courts and a rock-climbing wall.

Regular visitor Jodie said the park holds special memories for her family.

"We had our daughter's 6th birthday party here, which felt really special because this is where all my kids learned to ride their bikes."

"The playground and open space have always been favourites for our family, and once the new car park is finished, it'll make visits like these even easier for everyone."

The gardens' off-leash dog park was also upgraded in 2025 with support from a \$300,000 grant from the Victorian Government's New and Upgraded Dog Park Program.



For more information, visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/PublicGardens



ABOVE Bundoora United players and City of Whittlesea Mayor Cr Martin Taylor at the opening of the new pitch.

Hillsview soccer pitch and lighting upgrade

A new synthetic soccer pitch and upgraded lighting at Hillsview Recreation Reserve in South Morang is giving local women and girls greater opportunities to play the sport they love.

The \$1.61 million upgrade has delivered a soccer pitch built to international football standards, along with improved lighting that will allow more matches and training sessions to be held at night.

The project supports Council's Fair Access Policy, which aims to increase usage of community sports infrastructure and improve experiences among women and girls.

A lack of quality facilities is often cited as a barrier to attracting and retaining women and girls in organised sport. In many cases, local participation rates remain below the state average.

Sustainability was also a major focus in delivering the new pitch, with repurposed olive pith – a waste product from the olive oil industry – used as an organic infill material.

As part of the lighting upgrade, outdated metal halide systems over pitches one and two were replaced with 100-lux LED lighting, in line with Football Victoria standards.

Council contributed \$1.11 million to the project, with the Victorian Government providing \$500,000 through a Community Sport and Recreation Grant.





ABOVE The mobile library bus. RIGHT Families enjoying the Mobile Library children's area.

Your library on wheels – the Mobile Library Bus is here!

Did you know you don't have to travel far to enjoy everything your library has to offer? The Yarra Plenty Regional Library Mobile Library brings books, movies, magazines and free Wi-Fi right to your neighbourhood.

This state-of-the-art library on wheels offers something for everyone, with over 12,500 items in stock and a welcoming space for all ages. There's even a children's area on board, plus free Wi-Fi and two public computers.

The Mobile Library has been on the road for more than 70 years, making it easier for families, students and book lovers of all ages to borrow, browse and connect without needing to travel to a library building.

Each week, the Mobile Library makes five stops across the City of Whittlesea:

- The Y Leisure City, Epping
- West Wollert Community Centre, Wollert
- Murnong Community Centre, Donnybrook
- Laurimar Primary School, Laurimar
- Orchard Road Community Centre, Laurimar.

Visit your local library

You can also explore other City of Whittlesea libraries:

- Lalor Library
- Mernda Library
- Mill Park Library
- Thomastown Library
- Whittlesea Library
- Galada Library Services Hub (Click & Collect available)
- Kirri Library Services Hub (Click & Collect available)

Scan the QR code or visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/libraries

Pre-Prep is starting in 2026

Exciting news for local families!

From 2026, the Victorian Government will begin changing four year-old kindergarten to Pre-Prep, starting with a small group of eligible children.

This first stage will give some families access to extra funded hours of early learning each week, giving children more time to learn, play and grow before starting school.

In 2026, children may be able to access between 16 and 25 hours per week of Pre-Prep if they are:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- from a refugee or asylum seeker background
- children who have had contact with Child Protection
- children supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their three year-old kinder year.

This change means more time for children to explore, make friends and build confidence, setting them up for success at school and beyond.

For all other families, the current 15 hours of funded kindergarten will stay the same until Pre-Prep is fully rolled out.

"As an early childhood teacher, I view Pre-Prep as a powerful step toward recognising the importance of early childhood education. Pre-Prep gives every child the chance to access high-quality early learning experiences, setting them up for long-term success. I'm excited to be part of a system that values early education as the key to lifelong learning."

— Jackie V, kindergarten teacher

If your child starts four year-old kindergarten in 2026 and you think your family may be eligible, speak with your kindergarten.

Scan the QR code or visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/PrePrep For more information and to check your eligibility, visit



Celebrate Christmas with community events

The City of Whittlesea is proud to support these fun, free Christmas events through our community grants program. Everyone is welcome!



Donnybrook Community Carols

Saturday 6 December, 5pm–8pm
Hume Anglican Grammar, Donnybrook Campus, 40 Eucalyptus Parade, Donnybrook

Join Donnybrook's annual Christmas Carols! Enjoy a community choir, nativity scene, sausage sizzle and a visit from Santa. There's also music and activities for kids from Animals of Oz and Damo Music.

Run by Donnybrook Community Church with Olivine Community Group.

• dannybrookcommunitychurch.org



Ek Nathalaanchi Saanz 2025

Saturday 13 December, 3pm–8pm
Epping Memorial Hall, 827–835 High Street, Epping

A festive celebration of Konkani culture and Christmas, featuring music, dance, a nativity play, games, delicious traditional food and fun activities for all ages.

Run by Karaval Konkans Australia Inc
• karavalkonkans.org.au

Whittlesea Christmas Festival

Saturday 13 December, 4pm–9pm
Whittlesea Showgrounds, Yea Road, Whittlesea

Celebrate Christmas with live music, food trucks, community carols, a twilight market, classic cars, kids' activities, a nativity scene and the Christmas Tree Extravaganza. Special guests include the Grinch and Santa!

Run by New Horizons Church for the Combined Churches of Whittlesea and the Whittlesea Agricultural Society

• nhchurch.com.au/festival

Got an idea for your community?

The City of Whittlesea offers community grants all year round to help bring local programs, events, and projects to life.

Whether you're an individual, part of a group, or planning something big or small, there may be funding available to help make it happen.



Learn more and apply at
• whittlesea.vic.gov.au/grants



ABOVE
Wonderful day of smiles and community spirit at our seniors program.

Friendship, fun and positive ageing in 2026

Have you seen the new Positive Ageing Program 2026?

This program is packed with activities for older residents to stay active, learn new things and make friends. From craft, games, fitness and music sessions to group outings, every activity is designed to support wellbeing and promote healthy, active ageing.

One recent session even inspired a poem from a participant, capturing the heart of the program:



"Well, it's that time again
It's Tuesday, time to go
and sit with friends

Exercises we all do, we all
try hard to do our best
And then after that,
we have a little rest
We do some crafts
or play some games

To help us all use our brains
Then after that, we play
a game of bingo or two
Because bingo is such
a fun thing to do

See who calls out bingo first,
from the first to the last

We all don't care, we are all having
a great time, what a blast.
Just love Tuesdays to be with friends

I hope it never ends."

Scan the QR code or visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/leap or call 9217 2170 (option 4).



Celebrate a greener Christmas

Christmas is a time for fun, family and giving – but it can also create a lot of extra waste. From wrapping paper and toys to food scraps and decorations, it all adds up. The good news is, with a few simple changes, we can all enjoy the holidays while being kinder to our planet.



Smarter wrapping

Not all wrapping paper can go in your recycling bin – especially shiny, metallic, or glittery types. Instead, try:

- reusing last year's gift wrap, bags, boxes or ribbons
- getting creative with brown paper, newspaper, kids' drawings or old maps
- wrapping with purpose – use scarves, tea towels, or tote bags that double as a gift.

These ideas save money, cut down on landfill and make your presents feel extra thoughtful.



Repair and reuse

Before throwing things away, see if they can be fixed at a local Repair Café. Friendly volunteers can help with bikes, small electrical items, clothes, jewellery and more.

- Mernda Repair Café – Monthly on Saturdays, 10am–2pm, Mernda Neighbourhood House, 2 Heals Road.
- Donnybrook Repair Corner – First Saturday of each month, 10am–2pm, Shared Space, 995 Donnybrook Road.



Find out more at whittlesea.vic.gov.au/RepairCafes



Thoughtful gifts

You don't always need to buy new to give something special. Why not try:

- giving an experience, like a voucher for a local café, restaurant, or activity (see our Shop Local story on page 5)
- making something homemade, like jam, baked treats, or crafts
- sharing plants from your own garden
- swapping or donating unwanted toys and gifts so others can enjoy them.



Bin collections and Christmas trees

- Free Christmas tree pickup: Monday, 19 January. Call 9217 2170 to book.
- No bin collections on Christmas Day or New Year's Day. Collections will happen one day later for those weeks.



Check your bin collection day at whittlesea.vic.gov.au



Recycling smart

Got old electronics or other bits and pieces lying around? Many items can be recycled locally, including:

- mobile phones and chargers
- printer cartridges
- video game consoles
- medical blister packs.



Check the A-Z Waste Guide to find the right place for your waste whittlesea.vic.gov.au/a-z-waste



Bright ideas for lights

Christmas lights bring joy, but they don't have to cost the earth. Try:

- choosing long-lasting LED lights
- putting them on a timer or only switching them on for a few hours each night
- using solar-powered lights outside for a festive, eco-friendly glow.

Safety tip: If it lights up, makes a sound, or moves, it has a battery. Please don't put batteries in your household bins – they can cause dangerous fires. Take them to a recycling station instead.



Waste vouchers

City of Whittlesea residents can access free and discounted waste and recycling vouchers for things like household, green, timber, brick and rubble waste.

Facility hours over Christmas:

- Heidelberg Materials – closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day
- Repurpose It – closed Christmas Day
- EcoDynamics – closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

With a little planning, we can all enjoy a greener, cleaner and more community-minded Christmas this year.



Find out more at whittlesea.vic.gov.au/WasteVouchers



Fined \$6,105

Dirty deeds, big fines. We're taking action

We Love Where We Live and we're not afraid to get our hands dirty to protect it. Our team is hard at work investigating illegal rubbish dumping across the City of Whittlesea.

Recently, while on duty, our staff spotted a tipper truck dumping around 900 litres of contaminated soil right next to a residential property. When questioned, the offenders couldn't provide any paperwork confirming what they were doing.

They were given a verbal direction to remove the soil by 5pm, which they complied with, but further investigations revealed they were repeat offenders. They were issued a \$6,105 fine.

Illegal dumping doesn't just make our streets look messy, it can damage the environment, attract pests and put the health of our community at risk.

Dumped rubbish

See it **Report it**

Snap Send Solve app

9217 2170

whittlesea.vic.gov.au/litter

Dumping rubbish costs everyone. Plan ahead – it's free.

City of Whittlesea residents receive annual digital vouchers for free or discounted waste and recycling disposal at local facilities.

Use them for household waste, bricks and rubble, green waste and timber offcuts. Simply log in to the customer portal to download your vouchers – safe, secure and ready when you need them.

Each household receives:



2 Green waste vouchers



4 Timber waste vouchers



1 General waste voucher



2 Brick and rubble vouchers



To learn more and to access vouchers, visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/WasteVouchers

Branch out: show us your favourite tree!

Life in the City of Whittlesea is cooler, greener and more welcoming thanks to our leafy friends and now it's your chance to celebrate them!

The Favourite Tree competition is back. Share a photo and story of your favourite tree for a chance to:

- win a copy of *Silent Sentinel: The Story of a Redgum* by local artist Amaria Stark
- be featured in the *Local Scoop*.

2024 entry highlight

"The structure of this tree reminds me of monkey puzzle trees; it's mesmerising following the branching. The hollows throughout the tree have turned it into a living hotel for wildlife. It's the first thing new people comment on due to its dominating presence."

– Matt from Doreen, Orchard Road Tree Reserve

Why trees matter

Trees cool our streets, clean the air, provide homes for wildlife and make our parks and streets peaceful and vibrant. The Greening Whittlesea Tree Hub has tips to help you plant and care for trees – making life cooler for everyone.

How to enter

Snap a photo, share your story and submit by 28 February 2026 at

engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/trees

or scan the QR code





ABOVE make sure your pet registration and microchip registry contact information is correct.

Be pup-pared and avoid cat-astrophe

Do you own an adventurous animal that might try to escape while you're out of the house over the holidays? Have you been putting off mending that hole in your fence? Is your dog the type to get spooked by fireworks on New Year's Eve?

As the festive season approaches, it's important to make sure your pet registration and microchip registry contact information is correct. Updating your information online is quick and easy and increases the likelihood you'll be swiftly reunited with your pet if they decide to wander off.

 Scan the QR code or visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/petregistration

If your pet goes missing, or you find a fur baby without an owner, you can contact the wat djerring Animal Facility at 20 Companion Place in Epping, or on 03 8401 6200.

Managed in partnership with Merri-bek and Darebin councils as Victoria's first shared services animal facility, the wat djerring Animal Facility promotes responsible pet ownership and provides a loving, supportive environment for animals in need.

In addition to providing an adoption program, the facility works with animal rescue organisations to care for, and find loving forever homes for, a range of four-legged friends and pocket pets.

 Scan the QR code or visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/AnimalFacility

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026–2030

The Domestic Animal Management Plan was due to be presented at the November Council Meeting. The plan will guide how cats and dogs are cared for and managed in our community.

More than 1,280 residents shared their views on pet ownership, safety, and animal welfare to help shape the plan. It focuses on responsible pet ownership, animal welfare (including mandatory cat desexing) and safe community spaces.

 To view the plan visit engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/damp26



Simple steps to stay safe this summer

With warmer weather on the way, it's time to start getting your property ready for summer.

Simple steps can make a big difference in keeping your home safe:

-  cleaning your gutters
-  trimming long grass
-  clearing away leaves
-  removing flammable materials

The City of Whittlesea is also doing its part, carrying out annual bushfire prevention works such as roadside slashing, weed control and checking high-risk properties. If our Fire Prevention Officers notice a property that needs attention, they may issue a Fire Prevention Notice – a formal request to reduce fire risk, such as cutting long grass or removing flammable materials. When fire restrictions are in place during the summer period, burning off is not allowed. It's important to stay informed about local fire danger ratings and any warnings in your area. Download the VicEmergency app to receive real-time updates and keep yourself and your property safe this fire season.

You'll find everything you need to know about preparing your property and staying safe this fire season at

 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/emergency

Don't forget to download the VicEmergency app, the official Victorian Government app for live updates, maps and local emergency warnings.



ABOVE bunjil nganga Parkland Quarry Hills.

Festive fun for everyone

From fantastic food to fun in the sun, there's no shortage of entertainment in the City of Whittlesea this holiday season.

The festive period is the perfect time to explore our amazing community and discover the hidden gems in your own backyard.

Whether you want to plan a family outing, show visiting friends a good time, or set aside a few hours for yourself, there's something for everyone.

Looking for something new to do? It's all here.

 Scan the QR code or visit explore.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

explore *City of Whittlesea* | **here** *It's all here*

Up for an adventure?

Explore the outdoors with a social stroll or ride along one of our many scenic trails, or find a quiet spot at Yan Yean Reservoir or Kinglake National Park.

Keen to keep cool?

Mill Park Leisure Centre, Whittlesea Swim Centre and Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre have got you and your family covered.

Fancy a bite?

Grab a hearty breakfast, long lunch, or late-night drink from one of our diverse dining options – we've got options for all hours and appetites.

Community Plan reflects our shared hopes

Endorsed by Council in October, the Community Plan 2025–2029 sets out 12 themes that capture what matters most to our community, forming a blueprint for a more connected, inclusive, sustainable, vibrant City of Whittlesea.

It includes 55 strategic priorities Council will deliver over the next four years, with the Community Action Plan 2025–2026 outlining the first year's focus. The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and Disability Action Plan are embedded in these priorities to keep community health and wellbeing at the heart of our work.

 To view the final plan visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au



ABOVE
Podcast guest Kate Opitz and host Amy Bajada.

Listen up: new podcasts for Business Network members

We're excited to launch a brand-new podcast series designed especially for local business leaders and innovators in the City of Whittlesea.

Exclusively available to members of the City of Whittlesea Business Network, each episode shares local success stories, practical strategies and industry insights to help your business grow and thrive.

By joining the free Business Network, you'll connect with other local businesses, gain access to networking events and unlock exclusive resources – including these podcasts!

A sneak peek at the first two episodes:
Pasta Master

Nick Costanzo, founder of Nick's Negozio in Mill Park, shares how tradition and entrepreneurship shaped his artisan pasta business.

Worth Her Salt

Kate Opitz tells how her passion for pets and sustainability turned a side hustle into thriving Epping-based pet food business The Saltiest Dog.

 Scan the QR code to become a Network member
 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/BusinessNetwork

Out and about with the City of Whittlesea

This year we've asked for community feedback on 58 different projects.

These include some of Council's most important plans, like the Community Vision, the Asset Plan 2025-35, the 2025-26 budget and financial plan, Health and Wellbeing Priorities, and the Community Plan 2025-2029, as well as some of our smaller projects, including park and streetscape upgrades.

A huge thank you to the 5,000-plus community members who have taken part this year.



Whether you've filled in a survey, joined a community Focus Group, or come along to a face-to-face session, your input has been invaluable.

Your ideas and feedback are shaping the future of the City of Whittlesea. Together, we're building *a place for all*, a community where everyone feels welcome and has a say in what matters.



What matters most at our dog parks

Consultation for Whittlesea Public Gardens and Allumba off-leash dog parks was open for community comment in mid-2024.

We asked which features were valued most in an upgrade to the off-leash dog parks.

We listened and earlier this year we updated the Whittlesea Public Gardens off-leash dog park and the new Allumba dog park was officially opened by Mayor Cr Martin Taylor and Bronwyn Halfpenny MP, State Member for Thomastown.



Council knows what is important to you



quiet dog zone to cater to dogs that prefer calmer surroundings



secure fencing and double-entry gates for safer access



seating and drinking fountains



shaded areas with shelters



Let's talk

How can I have my say

Online

Visit and join our Engage Whittlesea platform to see what projects are open for community consultation. Your voice matters, so help shape local projects by providing feedback, sharing your ideas and letting us know if we're on the right track.

engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

In person

Share your feedback in person at one of our community-based pop-ups. If you see our team out and about at a shopping centre, library, community centre, or local event, stop, say hello and have your say!

Focus groups

Join a Focus Group – keep an eye out for Expression of Interest call-outs.

Social media

Follow us on Instagram or Facebook.

facebook.com/cityofwhittlesea

[@CityWhittlesea](https://www.instagram.com/citywhittlesea)

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

What's on this season

Read, Play and Connect

**Wednesday 3 December, 10am–11.30am
Olivine Community Space,
995 Donnybrook Road, Donnybrook**

Bring your little ones for a morning of storytime, games and fun activities at your local library. Meet other families, connect with Council and find out about programs, services and events for early years in your neighbourhood.



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events



Living green workshops

**Thursday 4 December, 6.30pm–8pm
Online webinar**

Stay cool this summer without spending a fortune! Join RENEW and the City of Whittlesea for a free online workshop full of practical tips to keep your home comfortable, energy-efficient, and ready for the heat.

Register now to save your spot!



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/LivingGreen



Social Tenpin Bowling

**Every Friday until 12 December,
10am–12 pm**

**Oz Tenpin Epping,
41–53 Miller Street, Epping**

Give your tenpin bowling skills a go and meet new friends at Social Seniors Tenpin Bowling. Everyone is welcome, no matter your experience level.



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events

Westfield Plenty Valley – Village Play and Engage

**Wednesday 17 December, 10am–12pm
Kids Zone, Westfield Plenty Valley,
415 McDonalds Road, Mill Park**

Bring your little ones for a morning of crafting and playful adventures! Enjoy hands-on activities while connecting with local early years support services and learning about programs and services in your community.



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events

Positive Ageing Program 2026

You can download the 2026 Positive Ageing 6-month Program brochure or select from the weekly and monthly programs.



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/leap

Carols by Candlelight

**Friday 12 December, 6pm–9pm
Terrace Lawns, Civic Centre,
South Morang**

Get ready for a festive night out! Bring your family and friends, pack a picnic, and pop on your Santa hat. Sing along with our Carols Community Choir, explore the twilight market, grab some tasty treats from food trucks, and enjoy fun activities for everyone.

Plus, Santa will be making a special appearance!



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/carols

Summer school holidays

Various times and locations – January

Make the most of your summer holidays!

There are a bunch of free or low-cost activities for ages 8–18.



Scan the QR code or visit
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/youthevents



Free event

Carols by Candlelight

Friday 12 December

Civic Centre Lawns, 25 Ferres Blvd, South Morang

**6PM
UNTIL
9PM**



**City of
Whittlesea**



whittlesea.vic.gov.au/carols

