**Local Scoop**

**Your City of Whittlesea newsletter** **– December 2023**

**Merry Christmas from the City of Whittlesea**

**Upcoming Council Meetings**

• 19 December 2023, 6.30pm Council Chamber, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

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

For the latest information about Council Meetings, including 2024 dates and how you can get involved, visit <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/councilmeetings>

**Christmas opening hours:**

The Customer Service counters at Civic and the Whittlesea Service Hub will close at 2pm on Friday 22 December and will re‑open on Tuesday 2 January. The Customer Service phone lines will close for the public holidays on 25 and 26 December 2023 and 1 January 2024.

**Contact us**

Address: 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am - 5pm

Locked Bag 1, Bundoora MDC VIC 3083

Connect with us in your preferred language: 131 450

Phone: 9217 2170 (including afterhours emergencies)

National Relay Service: 133 677 (ask for 9217 2170)

Email: info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Website: [whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/)

**Panel of Administrators**

• Lydia Wilson – Chair of Administrators

• Peita Duncan – Administrator

• Christian Zahra AM – Administrator

Contact the City of Whittlesea Administrators via email info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or phone 9217 2170.

We recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

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# Be Merry, sustainably

**The season of celebration is the perfect time to practise sustainability.**

We all love gift giving and indulging in a feast, however there are many ways to avoid excess waste and responsibly dispose of rubbish.

**A gift with a difference**

Consider giving your loved ones an experience, edible or sustainable gift, rather than material products. Gifts such as plants, a homemade hamper of yummy treats or a voucher to do something they love, such as a painting class or dinner at a special restaurant, are thoughtful gifts that will help reduce waste. Grants offer a helping hand

**Re-think your wrap**

Australians use more than 150,000 kilometres of wrapping paper during the festive season! Traditional gift wrapping can be extremely wasteful and unnecessary. There are plenty of ways to wrap using repurposed, recycled or natural materials:

* tote bag or produce bag
* scrap fabric
* recycled paper
* scarf or throw
* container
* recyclable box.

**Make your list and check it twice**

Family feasts are a great way to spend time with loved ones, but it’s easy to end up with too much food. Before hitting the shops, make a list and buy only what you need. If you do have leftovers, offer your guests a take‑home pack. Any food that can’t be enjoyed later can be popped into your food and garden waste bin to be made into valuable compost.

**Donating unwanted gifts**

If you receive gifts that you don’t want, consider helping those less fortunate by donating them to a charity, such as those below:

* Australian Red Cross Shop
* Big Group Hug
* Brotherhood of St Lawrence
* Op Shop
* Sacred Heart Mission Op Shop
* Salvation Army
* Save The Children
* St Vincent de Paul Shop
* The Smith Family.

# Recycle right this Christmas

**The holidays offer a great chance to clear out unwanted items before starting the new year afresh.**

Recycling isn’t only about the things you can put into your recycling bin at home. There are many more household items you can recycle. Drop off the below items for free at one of our many recycling stations across the City of Whittlesea:

* x‑rays
* printer cartridges
* mobile phones and accessories
* cameras and accessories
* DVDs and CDs
* VHS/video and audio cassette tapes
* fluorescent light globesand tubes
* small e‑waste items like iPods and MP3 players
* batteries.

# Teens head for Norris Bank

**Norris Bank Reserve is now the place to be for young people with the unveiling of its latest stage.**

An upgrade to the western end of the reserve, located on McLeans Road, Bundoora, has delivered a multi‑use basketball court, bleacher seating, upgraded paths and gardens and a grass embankment.

Mitchell, who plays with the Marymede Flames Basketball Club, gave the eye‑ catching orange and blue court his tick of approval.

“It’s really nice. The colours of the court are great,” he said. “I can definitely see myself playing basketball here with friends and having fun.”

Ernie Camacho, the president of the Marymede Flames Basketball Club, said basketball’s popularity was booming.

The $900,000 first stage of the two‑ stage upgrade was made possible through a $300,000 contribution from Council and a $600,000 grant from the Victorian Government’s Growing Suburbs Fund.

The upgrade’s second stage will deliver a shelter for the youth space with free wi‑fi, speakers, feature lighting and a performance area.

“Outdoor courts are really important as it gives kids an opportunity to go out and play after school before they go on their gadgets.” – Ernie Camacho, Marymede Flames Basketball Club.

# Step into the past

**Ziebell’s Farmhouse and Gardens is a historical gem in Thomastown.**

Nestled within the heart of the Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct in Thomastown, the heritage‑listed Ziebell’s Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden stands as Victoria's oldest German immigrant building, constructed between 1851 and 1856.

Step into history as you tour the remarkable Ziebell's farmhouse and other buildings, featuring magnificent bluestone walls. The enchanting cottage garden, established in the 1850s, boasts approximately 130 plants and hosts the oldest rose, still thriving and blooming, planted by Sophia Ziebell in the early 1860s. It’s celebrated as one of the finest small cottage gardens in Victoria.

This historical gem, owned by the City of Whittlesea, has been lovingly maintained for nearly three decades by the dedicated Friends of Westgarthtown. Council will now take on management of this rich historical site and will continue to collaborate closely with the Friends of Westgarthtown to ensure its continued legacy.

Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson said Council was dedicated to enriching and safeguarding our cultural heritage.

“I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated efforts of the Friends of Westgarthtown for their outstanding management of this facility, which stands as a unique and vital hub for arts and culture in our municipality. Ziebell’s holds a special place in our city’s history, and we are committed to ensuring it remains a significant link to our past – a cherished space for the community to visit for generations to come,” she said.

Visit www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/localattractions

**Location:** 100 Gardenia Road, Thomastown

**Admission:** Adults $3, children 50 cents

**Opening hours:**

* Sundays: 10.30am to 3pm
* Tuesdays: 11.30am to 2pm

# Out and about with our Administrators

**A historic joint Council Meeting with Hume and Mitchell councils in October was one of the highlights of the past few months for the City of Whittlesea.**

The meeting formalised a partnership between the three councils who are taking a joint strategic approach to the development of the area known as Cloverton near Kalkallo.

You can read more about it on page 11.

In October we hosted a Community Forum and Council Meeting at Galada in Epping. It was a wonderful evening of conversation, dance performance and of course the Council Meeting. Thank you to all those who came along to talk with Council.

We were also pleased to endorse our Annual Report at a special meeting in October. The report details our achievements, milestones and actions over the past financial year. You can view the report on Council’s website www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

The long‑awaited Mernda Social Support Centre was officially opened in November. The $2.69 million facility hosts a range of programs to assist older residents to improve their physical and mental health. We were pleased to partner with the Victorian Government to fund this project and look forward to seeing all the programs and activities that will support our older community.

The 27th Annual Blessing of the Fleet was also a highlight, bringing together emergency services personnel and faith leaders from across the City of Whittlesea to offer their blessings ahead of the summer season.

And finally, Council was proud to support the Whittlesea Agricultural Show again this year. The show is always a highlight in the calendar each year and brings together people from far and wide to enjoy some family fun and traditional country hospitality.

If you have any matters you would like to discuss at any time, you can reach the Administrators at panel@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

# Free kinder offers a great start

**Every child deserves the best start in life, and the City of Whittlesea is committed to providing just that.**

Kindergarten is not just a place for play; it’s where young minds begin their learning journey. Children aged three and four develop essential skills in literacy, numeracy, and language, all while learning valuable social skills. These early years of education help them become curious, creative, and confident learners, preparing them for the future.

Families can now access two years of kindergarten for free.

There are a range of options for three‑ year‑old kindergarten, with varying weekly hours available at different kindergartens. This flexibility ensures that you can choose a program that best suits your needs.

Exciting news awaits Donnybrook residents as a new kindergarten is set to open its doors in 2024. Located on Olivine Boulevard, this addition will provide even more opportunities for families in the area to access quality early education.

Administrator Peita Duncan said the new kindergarten was being built by the Victorian School Building Authority with assistance from the City of Whittlesea.

“Council is pleased to partner with the Victorian Government to deliver the facilities required to support the growth of kinder in the City of Whittlesea,” she said.

“We know how important kindergarten is for children’s development and we’re pleased to see this new facility opening to support the growing population of Donnybrook.”

Local resident Whitney is excited about the new kindergarten in Donnybrook and has enrolled her son Albie, who will start in 2024.

“He’s eagerly been watching the building go up. It’s a great addition to Donnybrook,” she said.

“Albie is so excited to be going to kinder and talks about it every day.” – Whitney, Donnybrook

Applications for 2024, for three and four‑year‑old kindergarten, and 2025 for four‑year‑old kindergarten are now open. Families now have the added convenience of applying for both three and four‑year‑old kindergarten at the same time.

To find out more about the kindergarten options available or to apply, visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/kinder](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/kinder)

# Nature strip gardens growing street appeal

**Edible crops, plants and shrubs will soon be popping up in nature strips across our City, creating beautiful garden streetscapes and helping our natural environment flourish.**

The new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines provide residents with greater opportunity to add plants to the nature strip outside their homes. Residents will still need to upkeep their nature strips, as they do now, but the changes allow them to apply for a permit to extend their gardens and enhance the look and feel of their street.

Local resident Matt Odgers is excited about the changes, particularly the new 90cm height allowance, which will allow him to plant native grasses.

Matt also loves how nature strip gardens provide opportunities for enhanced streetscapes and community connection.

“I think they’ll give a lot more uniqueness and personality to the neighbourhood.” – Matt, Lalor

“The opportunity to bump into neighbours on the street is a great way to socialise and get to know your neighbours. Connecting with your community is so important and nature strip plantings are an excellent way to do that.”

To view the new guidelines and apply for a permit, visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/naturestrip](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/naturestrip)

# Sign up today!

Keep up to date on all the City of Whittlesea news and events that matter to you with our range of free e-newsletters:

* Accessibility
* Arts and events
* Business news
* Grants and training
* Rural news
* Sustainability
* Local Scoop digital

# It’s all here this summer

**This summer, explore some of the attractions in your own backyard. City of Whittlesea has something for everyone!**

**It’s all here in the outdoors:**

1. **Plenty Gorge Parklands**

Enjoy a picnic or barbecue in the park with recreation areas to suit everyone.

1. **Toorourrong Reservoir Park, 120 Jacks Creek Road, Whittlesea**

Come with friends and family and you’ll find large grassy open spaces for children to play, wooded areas to explore and generous facilities.

1. **Yan Yean Reservoir, 40 Recreation Rd, Yan Yean**

Plan a family barbecue or a romantic picnic in tranquil surrounds.

1. **Quarry Hills Regional Parkland**

With spectacular views, stunning landscapes and a rich, cultural history, Quarry Hills Regional Parkland is a wonderful place to get in touch with nature.

**It’s all here at our libraries**

1. **Donnybrook Pop-up Hub, Shared Cup Café, 995 Donnybrook Road**
2. **Galada Community Centre Hub, 10A Forum Way, Epping**
3. **Lalor Library, 2A May Road**
4. **Mernda Library, Mernda Town Centre (opening soon)**
5. **Mill Park Library, 394 Plenty Rd**
6. **Thomastown Library, 52 Main St**
7. **Whittlesea Library, 57 Laurel St**

**It’s all here for play**

1. **Mill Park All Abilities Play Space, Morang Drive, Mill Park**

The fully fenced and accessible new playground features water play, multi‑level climbing tower, basketball court, sheltered areas and more.

1. **Gumnut Park and Playground, 1025 Donnybrook Rd, Donnybrook**

Engage children’s imaginations at this state‑of‑the‑art playground inspired by May Gibbs’ classic stories.

1. **Mernda Adventure Playground, Mernda Village Drive**

Enjoy farm‑themed adventure play and recently upgraded amenities.

1. **Norris Bank Reserve, McLeans Road, Bundoora**

Play, skate, ride, run with the dog, or just relax – this park has everything you need. See page 4 for more.

1. **Sycamore Recreation Reserve BMX Track, Hawkes Dr, Mill Park**

The all‑weather track here is suitable for everyone from beginners to experts.

1. **Whittlesea Public Gardens, 158 Barry Rd, Lalor**

Let the kids burn off some energy in the revamped play space and a learn‑ to‑ride area.

**It’s all here for leisure**

1. **Mill Park Leisure, 33 Morang Drive, Mill Park**

Cool off in the three pools or make use of the outdoor play area for a family barbecue.

1. **Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre (TRAC), 54 Main St, Thomastown**

A large, inclusive facility, TRAC offers an indoor 25‑metre lap pool and leisure facilities. There is also an outdoor water park with activities for the kids and complete with barbecues.

1. **Whittlesea Swim Centre, 50 Walnut Street, Whittlesea**

This outdoor complex caters to all ages and abilities. Its splash pad, water cannons and tipping buckets are sure to be a hit with kids!

1. **Growling Frog Golf Course, 1910 Donnybrook Road, Yan Yean**

Enjoy a game of golf, practising at the driving range or a meal at the restaurant.

1. **Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre, 35 Ferres Blvd, South Morang**

Catch a theatre show, comedy or concert in City of Whittlesea’s own arts centre.

# Dive into summer pool safety

**As temperatures rise, many families are eager to cool off in their backyard pools. However, ensuring pool safety is of utmost importance to prevent accidents and tragedies.**

Here are some key tips to keep in mind.

**Pool fencing:** All pools must be enclosed by a compliant safety fence with a self‑latching gate. Regularly inspect the fence to ensure it is in good condition.

**CPR skills:** It is vital for pool owners to have first aid training. In an emergency, quick response can save lives.

**Pool maintenance:** Regularly maintain your pool equipment and ensure it’s in proper working order.

**Supervision:** Never leave children unattended near the pool. Designate a responsible adult to keep watch.

**Pool rules:** Establish and enforce pool rules to keep your friends and family safe, such as no diving in shallow areas.

**Pool covers:** Use a safety cover when the pool is not in use.

By following these guidelines, you can enjoy a safe and refreshing summer in your pool. Stay vigilant, be prepared, and prioritise safety above all else.

Find out more at [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/pools](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/pools)

# Help plan for emergencies

**Community members are invited to join a sub-committee that will help prepare our community for emergencies.**

The Community Sub‑Committee (CSC) is a group of local people who share their views on planning before, during and after emergencies.

The CSC will work to identify hazards in the City of Whittlesea and identify gaps in community knowledge. It will also support the various emergency services agencies to make sure our community is safer, better prepared and more resilient to emergencies.

“A healthy community builds community resilience against potential threats of all kinds, ensuring that the community will always be the safe and welcoming, extended family of which we can all be rightfully proud,” said previous committee member Ivan Peterson.

Previous member Ian Holman adds “My passion is to inform, support and work cohesively with our communities and authorities as a voice of experience to engage in developing a more prepared and resilient community.”

# Alliance to deliver new city

**The City of Whittlesea, Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire council have co-signed a historic Regional Partnership at a joint Council Meeting held in October as a commitment to collaboration for the planning and delivery of the new proposed city that will service the growing northern corridor.**

The three Councils will partner with the key landowner and the Victorian Government to plan for and deliver a new city in the north called Cloverton, which will span the three council areas.

Anticipated to commence development in the coming years and ultimately be delivered over the next 30 years, the hub for health, education and recreational opportunities will provide services for an estimated 380,000 people.

Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson said Council was delighted to be a key partner in the creation of a new city of such regional significance.

“By working together, we can create exciting new communities where people and families can grow and thrive. We want to create vibrant neighbourhoods that cater for the social, economic and infrastructure needs of our diverse community now and into the future.”

# Community grants now open

**Thinking of applying for a City of Whittlesea Community Grant?**

The City of Whittlesea’s new community grants program is now in place, with funding available in six grant categories – small, medium, large, individual, unincorporated groups and emergency grants.

To help you prepare to submit an application, follow these handy tips:

* read the Grant Guidelines, available on our website, and check the eligibility criteria
* check the closing date for submissions – individual and
* small grants are available monthly; medium, large and unincorporated groups are quarterly
* ensure you have all the relevant paperwork and quotes required for your application
* consider how your project aligns with the City of Whittlesea’s 2040 goals as outlined in the grants guidelines.

Applicants are also encouraged to contact us on 9217 2170 to discuss their applications. Free grant‑writing workshops are also run on a regular basis. For more information or to view the guidelines, visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/grants](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/grants)

# New incentive to recycle

**The Victorian Government’s new Container Deposit Scheme will provide our community with a great incentive to recycle.**

As part of the Container Deposit Scheme, old containers will become new ones. This will give them new life and reduce litter and landfill.

People will receive a 10‑cent refund for each eligible container returned while making a real difference to the environment through recycling.

Victoria’s Container Deposit Scheme is simple:

1. Collect eligible drink containers
2. Find your refund point
3. Earn or donate your refund
4. Containers are recycled.

To discover local refund points and learn about eligible containers, visit [www.cdsvic.org.au](http://www.cdsvic.org.au)

# Public holiday bin collections

Bins will not be collected on Christmas Day or New Year’s Day and will be collected a day later. Collections will run one day behind schedule for the rest of that week.

# Face-to-face Council support in Whittlesea

**Council’s friendly customer service team are on hand to assist you at the new Whittlesea Services Hub from 9.30am–5pm weekdays.**

Specialist Council staff are available on a roster throughout the week:

* Emergency management: Monday, 10am–2pm
* Business concierge: Tuesday, 9.30am–4pm
* Building services: Wednesday, 9.30am–4pm
* Planning services: Thursday, 9.30am–4pm

The Whittlesea Service Hub is located at 63 Church St, Whittlesea.

You can also visit Council’s Civic Centre in South Morang, call 9217 2170 or visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

# 2024 City of Whittlesea Business Awards

The City of Whittlesea Business Awards are back in the new year.

We’re excited to introduce a new category for next year, specifically tailored for home‑based businesses.

Award categories for 2024:

* Customer Service
* Innovation and Enterprise
* Sustainability and Environment
* Community Contribution
* Workplace Diversity
* Home‑based business
* Business of the Year

# Join the Business Network

**The Awards are exclusively open to members of the Business Network and nominations will open in February 2024. If you haven’t already joined our Business Network join today – it’s free**

Sign up at www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/businessnetwork and be ready to submit your nomination and be recognised for your efforts, commitment and successes.

# Support for business

**Council’s Business Concierge is a free service to guide and assist you through the process of starting or expanding your business.**

We understand that navigating through Council can be challenging and businesses may need one or more permits to start operating. That’s why we have established the Business Concierge service.

The Business Concierge can assist with:

* providing all the information you require to open or expand your business
* helping you to understand which permits you will require
* helping you complete and submit these applications
* providing advice on other aspects of running your business.

Contact the Business Concierge via email at business.concierge@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or call us on 9217 2170.

# Nominate a local hero

**Nominations are now open for the 2023 Community Awards.**

Administrator Christian Zahra AM said the awards are a great way to acknowledge and celebrate outstanding contributions made by members of our community.

“If you know someone in the community deserving of recognition for the work they do in helping others or the environment, we encourage you to submit a nomination,” said Christian.

Awards are presented in five categories:

* 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.

When Steven Lim heard he was nominated in the City of Whittlesea’s Community Awards, he was left feeling very humbled.

“Serving our community and keeping individuals socially connected has been very fulfilling and rewarding. I was grateful to have been nominated as it was both unexpected and humbling,” said Steven, who received the 2022 Access and Inclusion Citizen of the Year Award.

Nominations close Sunday 18 February 2024.

Visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/communityawards](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/communityawards) to submit a nomination.

# Have your say on transport

**Council is consulting the community about future transport needs.**

Council is currently developing an Integrated Transport Plan (ITP). This will help Council to plan and respond to future transport challenges and opportunities over the next 10 years.

The ITP will set clear policy directions for an efficient, fair, safe, sustainable and accessible transport network.

The aim is to offer our community more choice in how they move around and enhance the quality of life for residents. The plan will include walking and cycling, transport by road, public transport, freight movements and road safety.

We need your help to develop our transport priorities and outcomes for the new plan. The first round of community engagement is open from now until 11 February 2024.

We’ll also be hosting community focus groups.

Please consider being a part of them and have your voice heard. To express interest in joining a focus group, visit [www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/itp](http://www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/itp)

# Let’s talk

Visit [www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://www.engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au) to have your say on Council projects and sign up for updates about upcoming opportunities to get involved.

# What’s on

These events may be subject to change – please check [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events) for the latest information.

### Donnybrook Repair Corner

**Saturday 3 February 2024, 10am–2pm at Donnybrook Primary School, 145 Olivine Blvd Donnybrook**

Have an item that needs repairing? Come along to the launch of the Donnybrook Repair Corner, where skilled volunteers will be waiting to assess and repair all kinds of items. Fixing items gives them a new lease on life, saves you money and helps the planet by keeping more waste out of landfill.

### Whittlesea Country Music Festival

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Friday 2 February 2024, 6.30pm** | **Saturday 3 February 2024, 3–10pm** |
| **Whittlesea Bowls Club, 101 Church Street, Whittlesea** | **Walker Reserve, Laurel Street, Whittlesea** |

The Whittlesea Country Music Festival is a free all‑ages event that brings together a great line‑up of Australian musicians, with food, market stalls and a relaxed, family atmosphere. The festival culminates with a Twilight Concert at Walker Reserve that will bring the whole community together.

### Community Festival back for 2024

**Sunday 17 March 2024 Civic Centre lawns, 25 Ferres Blvd, South Morang**

Save the date, Sunday 17 March, because the City of Whittlesea Community Festival is on again. The theme of the 2024 Festival is

‘Connections’ and it truly promises to connect our community through a day of fun family activities, arts, live performances and roving entertainment, makers market and food vendors, as well as celebrations of our cultural heritage and diversity.

Look out for more details in the next edition of Local Scoop.

### Discovering Biophilia: Mindfulness and Observation in Nature

**Saturday 3 February 2024, 11am–1pm**

Part of our 2024 Sustainable Communities Workshop Series, this session is grounded in the understanding of biophilia, or love of nature and living things. During the workshop, attendees will do some nature sketching and meditation, observe nature outdoors, and will create a handicraft with found natural materials.

To register visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events) for details or to register your interest in having a stall.

### Summer school holiday fun

**There’s plenty happening in the City of Whittlesea this January to keep the kids entertained.**

Council will run an exciting array of low‑cost or no‑cost activities for young people aged 10 to 25 years these summer school holidays.

There is something for everyone:

* A circus skills workshop
* Hip Hop dance
* The movies – City of Whittlesea have booked out amovie theatre foryoung people aged 10 to 18 to enjoy.

### Carols by Candlelight

**15 December 2023 6pm – 9pm, Civic Centre lawns, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang**

Pack your Santa hats, picnic, bring your family and friends and join us for an evening filled with festive fun and sing-alongs. This event is free to enter.

Find out more at [www.arts.whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://www.arts.whittlesea.vic.gov.au)