**Local Scoop**

**Your City of Whittlesea newsletter** **– April 2024**

**Celebrating our local heroes**

## Upcoming Council Meetings

• 21 May 2024, 6pm Council Chamber, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

• 18 June 2024, 6pm Council Chamber, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

• 16 July 2024, 6pm 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 how you can get involved, visit <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/councilmeetings>

## Connect with us

**Civic Centre:** 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

Open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm

**Whittlesea Hub:** 63 Church Street, Whittlesea

Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5pmOffice hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm

**Postal Address:** 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](mailto: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](mailto: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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# Our local heroes

**Meet the 2023 City of Whittlesea Community Award recipients.**

Congratulations to our five deserving recipients, who received their award at the Community Festival on Sunday 17 March.

## Citizen of the Year: Judith Clements

As a member of the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management, Judith has been volunteering to support the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Whittlesea Park for over 30 years and also works tirelessly to support various other community associations and the broader Whittlesea community.

## Senior Citizen of the Year: Christine McDonald

Christine is the founder of the Doreen Baby Boomers Facebook page, a group where seniors in the community can get together, meet new people and socialise. The group has helped many seniors in the area to connect and form friendships.

## Sustainable Citizen of the Year: Ben Coleman

Ben manages environmental sustainability group EnviroFriends, actively working to restore wetlands. An Environmental Science teacher at St. Monica’s College, Ben also runs the BirdNET-Pi education program and is passionate about teaching young people about climate change and helping them get involved in environmental sustainability.

## Young Citizen of the Year: Kaynat Virk

Kaynat is an active voice for young people in the community. Kaynat has dedicated herself to projects and campaigns addressing young people’s health and wellbeing. Kaynat is also a member of the City of Whittlesea Youth Council.

## Access and Inclusion Citizen of the Year: Norma Medawar

Norma is the founder of the Zenobia Association, a not-for-profit agency that supports refugee and migrant women to build a new life in Australia. Norma is a respected mentor and leader within the Syrian community and takes pride in her role as a Jobs Victoria Mentor at Whittlesea Community Connections.

## Returning to an elected Council

**Local government elections will be held in October this year, where a new group of councillors will be elected to represent the City of Whittlesea.**

The election will be by postal ballot and will be conducted on behalf of Council by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC).

Following a review by the VEC, the City of Whittlesea will be moving to 11 single-member wards, which means there will be 11 wards, with one councillor per ward. The wards are: Thomastown Ward, Lalor Ward, Bundoora Ward, Mill Park Ward, South Morang Ward, Painted Hills Ward, Epping Ward, Kirrip Ward, Ganbu Gulinj Ward, Mernda Ward and North Ward.

City of Whittlesea Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson welcomes the return to locally elected officials.

“My Administrator colleagues and I have been proud to serve the City of Whittlesea over the past four years. We are excited to welcome back locally elected councillors, who will bring with them a real sense of grass roots community representation from all corners of our municipality,” said Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson.

## Who can vote?

Voting at the election in October is compulsory for residents of the City of Whittlesea who are on the Victorian electoral roll.

Corporations, occupiers, and ratepayers who are property owners but reside outside the municipality may also be eligible to vote.

To check your enrolment status and to find out how to enrol, visit whittlesea.vic.gov.au/councilelections

# Out and About with Administrators: Celebrating our community

**It’s been a busy start to the year as we move closer to finishing our journey as Administrators at the City of Whittlesea and look forward to welcoming back elected representatives to Council in October 2024.**

One of the highlights so far this year has been presenting the City of Whittlesea Community Awards at our March Community Festival.

It was such a delight to meet the incredible individuals who are doing so much to support our local community. We would like to congratulate and thank all of our Community Award winners for their outstanding efforts.

The Community Festival itself was such a joyous celebration and it was fabulous to meet so many community members who were having a wonderful time in spite of the heat.

In March we celebrated International Women’s Day and joined with women from our business community for a networking event in Mernda.

It was wonderful to hear from some of our very successful local businesswomen to shed light on their entrepreneurial triumphs and challenges.

We have also been out and about talking to people about what’s important to them at our monthly Coffee with Council at local cafes.

You can stay up to date with our next locations on Council’s website at whittlesea.vic.gov.au

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

# Step forward for sporting precinct

**Council has approved the concept design for the Regional Sports Precinct’s indoor stadium and outdoor netball facilities in Mernda.**

The sports precinct, to be built at Everton Drive, will include four indoor multipurpose courts and up to eight outdoor netball courts.

The design also provides for car parking, landscaping, wetlands development and the installation of supporting infrastructure at the site.

Construction of the Regional Sports Precinct will be staged to allow for other facilities, such as aquatic and leisure facilities, to be potentially added in the future.

City of Whittlesea Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson said the Regional Sports Precinct was Council’s largest single investment in social infrastructure and would have profound health benefits for the community.

“These new courts will go a long way to ensuring people can play the sports they love close to home,” she said. “We know that a lack of netball and basketball courts in the northern corridor is a major barrier to participation.

Visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/regionalsportsprecinct](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/regionalsportsprecinct) to find out more.

# Local events shine thanks to Community Grants

The City of Whittlesea’s Community Grants program is available year-round and has already helped many individuals and businesses take their local programs and events to the next level.

Thomastown Neighbourhood House recently received a grant through the program to support its annual Promisetown Picnic and Market.

The popular community event featured interactive art and cultural community dances, market stalls from local makers, circus, magic and fire displays.

“We are so proud to be able to support community events such as this and help bring people together to enjoy experiences and activities in their local area,” said Administrator Peita Duncan.

“We could not bring the event to life without the Whittlesea Community Grant Program and the great support of our partners at TRAC,” said Liz Skitch from Thomastown Neighbourhood House.

Find out how your community organisation could benefit from the Community Grants program. Our website has all the information you need:

• grant categories

• eligibility criteria

• how to apply.

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

# Loving the new library

**The new Mernda Library is proving popular with booklovers in the city’s north, with more than 600 new members signing up in the first month since doors opened.**

The library, which is operated by Council’s partner Yarra Plenty Regional Library, opened at the Mernda Town Centre on 22 January.

It has a broad collection of books and resources, public computers and printer, free Wi-Fi, areas for reading, study or work and self-checkout. There is also a ‘Click and Collect’ service that allows members to order items from the library’s catalogue and pick them up at a convenient time.

Doreen’s Wendy Millsom, who cares for her two-year-old granddaughter Riley two days a week, said the new library was a welcome addition.

“We’re planning on coming each week and we’ll bring our books back and get some new ones. I’ve read to Riley since she was two days old and while I’ve got plenty of books at home, the library just gives us something different to do,” she said. “And, while we’re here, we can go to the supermarket, too.”

In its first month of operation, the library had 7,447 visitors borrowing 8,274 items, with many people taking advantage of the facility’s proximity to public transport.

City of Whittlesea Chair Administrator Lydia Wilson said Council was committed to providing library services to residents right across the municipality.

“Libraries provide a wide range of important educational, recreational and social services that benefit residents of all ages and backgrounds,” she said.

“The Mernda Library is a wonderful new addition to our suite of library services, which includes branch libraries at Lalor, Mill Park, Thomastown and Whittlesea.”

“We also have a library hub at Galada Community Centre in Epping, a soon-to open library hub in the Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert and a mini-branch library opening in Donnybrook’s Murnong Community Centre in 2025.”

## Visit Mernda Library

* Mernda Town Centre, 16/180 Riverdale Boulevard, Mernda

OPENING HOURS

* Monday to Friday 9.30am–5.30pm
* Saturday 10am–5pm

For more information or to become a member, visit yprl.vic.gov.au

# Do you own a caravan or trailer?

A new Community Local Law aimed at addressing a wide range of important community issues including fire safety, animal welfare, property regulations, vehicle management and public behaviour will come into effect on 1 July 2024.

There are some important changes for caravan and trailer owners.

## Where can I park my caravan or trailer?

To ensure access for road users and emergency vehicles, you’ll need to store your caravan and trailer on your own property or off-site storage.

Caravans and trailers should not be parked on roads for more than seven days in a month. No vehicle, including caravans and trailers, should be parked or permanently stored on nature strips.

Council receives a lot of complaints regarding caravans stored on roadways for long periods, particularly where road space is constrained or safety is compromised.

The Community Local Law isn’t just about caravans and trailers, it covers a wide range of topics.

Find out how the Community Local Law will impact you at engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/LocalLawReview

# A step toward green living for renters

**A greener lifestyle is within reach for renters, who can now sign up for a food and garden waste bin service.**

Recycling food scraps and garden waste through the green-lidded bin will help cut down on landfill and lower methane emissions. It’s a simple way to make a big impact on the environment.

The food scraps and garden waste collected will be transformed into nutrient-rich compost that will be used in parks and gardens.

The bin comes with a small 7-litre kitchen caddy and 150 compostable liners every year to help you collect food waste at home.

The cost is $105.15 per year (July to June).

If you already have a food and garden waste bin, you are eligible to have one free roll of caddy liners delivered to you each year. See the website to claim yours: [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/food-garden](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/food-garden)

# Bike-riders celebrate dirt jumps trial

**Riders will be able to hone their tricks when the City of Whittlesea commences a dirt jumps track pilot program at Painted Hills Recreation Reserve in Doreen. The purpose-built track will cater to beginner, intermediate and advanced riders.**

The sport’s popularity has grown in recent years, with demand for a track made evident through a 1000-signature petition that prompted Council to embark on the pilot program.

The construction of unauthorised tracks on Council land has raised concerns over the safety of the home-made jumps and their impact on the natural environment, such as in conservation areas.

The pilot program’s success will be determined by how well the jumps are used and maintained by riders. If successful, the jumps will be made permanent.

Noah Jablonski, of Doreen, shared his thoughts on the design during the community consultation period earlier in the year.

The 17-year-old said that his interest in dirt jumps grew out of riding his bike with friends.

“I started off with a mountain bike and then got a BMX in COVID,” he said. “There’s a really good community.”

Noah’s mum, Linda, said she was proud that her son and his friends had stayed involved in getting the track built.

“There is definitely a big demand from kids who ride bikes and want to do more things than just ride on the road,” said Linda.

# Cleaner, greener kinders

**Residents are reaping the benefits of a program replacing gas appliances at the City of Whittlesea’s kindergartens with cleaner, more energy efficient alternatives.**

The Community Energy Transition Program is helping to reduce operating costs by installing solar systems and battery storage at kindergartens and community facilities.

Many community facilities are reliant on gas for heating, hot water and cooking, but Council is committed to further reducing emissions by replacing gas appliances with electric appliances.

This is the next step towards Council’s zero net emissions target after signing up for the long-term purchase of electricity from renewable sources for Council facilities and streetlights in 2021.

Over the past two and a half years, Council’s Community Energy Transition Program has delivered more than 340kW of solar PV and more than 300kWh of battery storage at more than 20 Council facilities, and replaced gas appliances with electric at 11 kindergartens.

Epping mum and Greenbrook Kindergarten Parents’ Committee president Simone Kakoullis said the program was a “fantastic initiative”.

“My daughter Isabelle is four so she’s part of the next generation and for Council to have a zero net emissions target, you can’t get better than that,” she said.

In the 2021–22 and 2022–23 financial years, Council and the Victorian Government, through its Growing Suburbs Fund, each spent $500,000 on the Community Energy Transition Program.

# Energy check: new home audit kits available

**Are you looking for a way to increase your home’s comfort, reduce your power bills and minimise your emissions?**

We now have four new home energy efficiency audit kits that are available for loan from your local Yarra Plenty Regional Library.

These kits can help you make small changes around your home that result in positive impacts. For example, you can use the kit to assess energy use patterns and draughts, helping you improve your home’s comfort, save money and reduce energy use.

The kits can be checked out the same way you borrow a book.

Questions? Contact [sustainability@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:sustainability@whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

# Tree-riffic Triumph

Congratulations to Joan Tolliday from Wollert, whose stunning photo of a majestic gum in Belknap Conservation Reserve was the winning entry of our 2024 Favourite Tree competition.

This tree has been Joan’s favourite since she moved to the area in June 2016. She loves its majesty and estimates it has been here for hundreds of years.

“It is one of my favourite trees to photograph, especially at sunset as the sun’s rays meander through the branches,” Joan said.

The competition was a moment to reflect on the many benefits of trees, including improving our wellbeing and providing much-needed habitat for wildlife.

Through maintenance and investment in the growth of our local trees, the City of Whittlesea will ensure the community continues to reap the benefits trees provide us. Thank you to everyone who made a submission.

“The City of Whittlesea has some beautiful small parklands with beautiful trees, old and new. It’s just delightful to see them,” said Joan.

# Guided walks inspire love of nature

**Join free guided walks and learn about our local plants and animals in the new Conservation Walk and Talk Series.**

The series includes the upcoming Forest Therapy on Sunday 28 April, an experience crafted to induce relaxation and mindfulness.

Host Rob Richards from It’s Naturally You, says the forest therapy walk is all about slowing down and connecting with nature.

“We know from the extensive research that has been done around the world that these things are really good for your health,” Rob said.

“Everyone takes away something different from activities like forest therapy. There’ll be something there for you that you can practise in the future,” said Rob.

Other free walks in the series include mushroom identification and delving into the history and bird life of the Darebin Creek.

To learn more visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events)

# 2024 Business Awards finalists

**The City of Whittlesea is thrilled to announce the outstanding finalists for the 2024 Business Awards.**

Congratulations to the incredible businesses who have showcased their commitment to customers, innovation, community and environment.

The awards night, where we announce category winners and the 2024 Business of the Year, is on Thursday 23 May 2024.

Limited tickets to this event are now on sale. Visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/businessawards](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/businessawards) to find out more and secure your spot.

## The 2024 finalists are:

### Customer Service

* HDH Legal
* Inner Active Pelvic Health and Physiotherapy
* Mantra Melbourne Epping
* Nuovo Skin and Health
* Whittlesea Physiotherapy and Clinical Pilates

### Innovation and Enterprise

* Art-ish
* Distinctive Features Cosmetic Tattoo and Beauty
* Elite Print Solutions
* Hellenic Cheese Pty Ltd
* My Audacious Child

### Sustainability and Environment

* Eco Green Group
* Maple Tree Cafe
* Nugal biik plants and seeds/
* Whittlesea Community Connections/ Hanson
* Sports for All

### Community Contribution

* Big Group Hug
* Chwyla Real Estate
* Move Play Grow Physiotherapy
* Oneway Lebanese Bakery
* Whittlesea Mental Health and Wellbeing Local

### Workplace Diversity

* Australian Food Industries
* Edlyn Foods Pty Ltd
* Floridia Cheese
* NP Fulfilment Pty Ltd

### Home-based Business

* A Grade Resumes
* Always Time For Cake
* Amy Bajada
* Premier Project Management

# NBN boxes get a makeover

**A series of NBN broadband boxes across the City of Whittlesea have been given a colourful makeover.**

The normally grey roadside boxes have been adorned with Aboriginal artwork as part of a project to help promote the municipality’s soon-to-be-built Aboriginal Gathering Place.

The Gathering Place to be built at Quarry Hills will provide a culturally safe and inclusive space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to come together to feel socially and culturally connected while also supporting educational services to the wider community to foster reconciliation and community healing.

Local artist and Wamba Wamba woman Louise Moore says she is proud to have her artwork, Food Sources of the River, on display in Mernda.

My artwork represents what I grew up in – the landscape, the waterways and rivers were a part of my life, the food sources were everywhere on land and rivers,” she said.

This project was delivered in partnership with NBN Co.

# Book in for your boosters

**As winter approaches, now is the perfect time to get your annual flu vaccine.**

Protect yourself this winter and boost your immunity by booking in at one of our public immunisation sessions.

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

# Coco’s new life

**Coco, an American Staffordshire bull terrier, found her forever home through the wat djerring Animal Facility, challenging negative stereotypes about her breed.**

Her new owners, Bianca and Samuel, discovered her online and felt an instant connection during their visit to the facility.

Coco’s adoption has enriched their lives with joy, purpose and a new routine.

Bianca has created an Instagram account for Coco to challenge misconceptions about ‘Staffies’ and promote adoption.

“There are many reasons why dogs are put up for adoption, and not all of them should be seen as damaged. I will always encourage people to adopt dogs,” said Bianca.

The wat djerring Animal Facility plays a crucial role in providing second chances to animals and matching them with suitable families.

Coco’s story highlights the transformative impact of pet adoption, encouraging others to consider opening their homes to animals in need.

You can follow Coco’s adventures on Instagram @coco.rescuedog

Explore pet adoption opportunities at [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/animalfacility](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/animalfacility)

# Let’s talk

**We want to hear from you so we can build the best neighbourhoods we can together. Join the Engage Whittlesea platform to share your feedback and help inform Council decisions.**

## Open Space Plan

Help us develop the roadmap for our public areas – including parks, reserves, streetscapes and town centres.

## Integrated Transport Plan

Help shape the future of transport in the City of Whittlesea. The draft Integrated Transport Plan will give our community greater choice in how they move around and guide transport planning and advocacy for the next 10 years.

## VR Michael Reserve Master Plan

Provide feedback on the draft Master Plan which will guide future upgrades to the reserve to improve accessibility, facilities and the overall character of the park.

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

## Olivine Boulevard, Community facility update

**Last year, we asked for your feedback on the naming of the future community facility at 183 Olivine Boulevard, Donnybrook.**

The name Murnong Community Centre has now been approved by Geographic Names Victoria following our community consultation process. Murnong means ‘yam daisy’ in the Woi Wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people.

# Study provides insights into community life

**A new Community Insights study will help Council to gain a better understanding of our residents and their experiences over time to support our future planning.**

The study will be undertaken three times each year, with the surveys to explore different aspects of community life, including wellbeing, liveability and resilience.

The data collected will help Council measure community sentiment on important factors that affect people’s everyday lives.

It will help us to build an understanding of our community and how we are progressing towards our Whittlesea 2040 goals.

It can also help us prioritise and allocate resources to where they are most needed, identify areas for improvement and see the changes taking place with our community.

Residents will be randomly selected to participate in the voluntary study and invited to complete a survey by mail or email.

For more information, visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/communityinsights](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/communityinsights)

# 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.

### Business Mentoring

**Thursday 16 May, 5pm–9pm  
Online or via telephone**

City of Whittlesea, in conjunction with the Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS), is offering Business Mentoring Sessions to support local businesses. If you’re planning, starting or wanting to grow your business, these free sessions can help guide you.

### Sustainable Communities Workshop Series

**Various dates**

Learn tips and tricks for a sustainable, climate-resilient lifestyle with these free, hands-on workshops. Sessions include basic grafting (Sunday 5 May), pickling and curing olives (Saturday 11 May), seed saving (Saturday 18 May), designing your home food garden (Friday 7 June) and produce gardening for renters (Wednesday 12 June).

### Nature Discovery Walk

**Sunday 5 May 2024, 10am–2pm  
Harvest Home Recreation Reserve**

Enjoy a walk amongst the majestic trees of Epping North Conservation Reserve and learn about nature. Along the trail children can do nature activities, get a stamp for their nature passport, and learn about the trees and the animals that live here. No registration required.

### Ageing Well Expo

**Tuesday 18 June, 10am–3pm  
Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre,  
35 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang**

Whether you are planning for your own future or caring for a family member, the Ageing Well Expo is the ultimate resource hub. The expo brings together a range of products, services, information and educational resources and everyone is welcome.

### Bringing Up Kids Expo

**Tuesday 7 May, 10am – 1pm  
Westfield Plenty Valley, 415 McDonalds Road, Mill Park**

This expo will bring together family support agencies to provide information on services, programs and events offered in the City of Whittlesea community. Activities for children will be provided on the day.

For more information visit [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/events) or email familytraining@whittlesea.vic.gov.au

# Calling young musicians and event planners

**Do you know a young musician who wants to perform locally?**

City of Whittlesea’s FReeZA program is seeking expressions of interest from talented young musicians aged 12 to 25 years for paid opportunities to perform in local events, festivals or concerts.

**Do you love event planning?**

We are also interest in hearing from young people aged 12 to 25 who would like to be part of the FReeZa committee.

You’ll build self-confidence and develop professional relationships while exploring education and employment pathways in the music industry.

Visit [Youth events - Whittlesea](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/arts-events-recreation/things-to-see-and-do/youth-events/) to learn more and to register.

FReeZA is a Victorian Government initiative that supports young Victorians to plan and run alcohol, drug, smoke and vape-free events for other young people.