

# Connect

YOUR COUNCIL MAGAZINE

Summer 2025-26



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## MAYORAL ELECTION

Meet your new Mayor and Deputy Mayor

## EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS

Places to visit and things to do

## STAY SAFE

Keep cool and safe this summer



# Engage with us

Head to Creating Cardinia to share your thoughts and feedback on Council projects and initiatives. You can stay up to date with your favourite projects by hitting the 'follow' button at the top of each project page.

Scan the QR code to view our current consultations and to provide your feedback.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay)



## Beacon Hills Ward

**Cr Brett Owen (Mayor)**

0418 993 370 | [b.owen@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:b.owen@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Henty Ward

**Cr Liz Roberts (Deputy Mayor)**

0428 436 326 | [liz.roberts@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:liz.roberts@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Bunyip Ward

**Cr Alanna Pomeroy**

0436 353 194 | [alanna.pomeroy@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:alanna.pomeroy@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Central Ward

**Cr Collin Ross**

0428 598 491 | [c.ross@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:c.ross@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Officer Ward

**Cr Samantha-Jane Potter**

0429 077 510 | [s.potter@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:s.potter@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Pakenham Hills Ward

**Cr Jack Kowarzik**

0439 620 809 | [j.kowarzik@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:j.kowarzik@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Ranges Ward

**Cr David Nickell**

0428 630 155 | [david.nickell@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:david.nickell@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Toomuc Ward

**Cr Casey Thomsen**

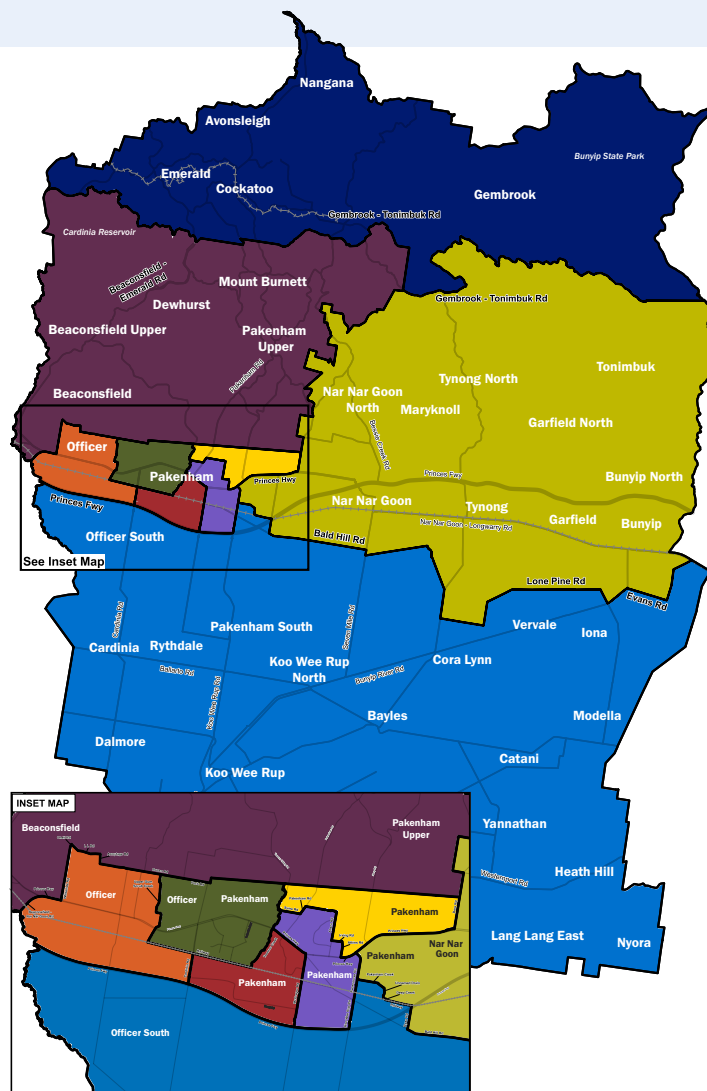
0428 185 791 | [casey.thomsen@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:casey.thomsen@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



## Westernport Ward

**Cr Trudi Paton**

0437 719 572 | [trudi.paton@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:trudi.paton@cardinia.vic.gov.au)



To find out which ward you're in, visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/communitycompass](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/communitycompass) and type your street address into the 'My Council services' tool.

## On the cover

Alice enjoys all that Officer District Park has to offer. Turn to page 5 for more information about our beautiful outdoor spaces.




## Your Council news

Sign up to *Connect+*, our monthly electronic newsletter, to receive the latest Council news direct to your inbox. Read about Council services, programs and projects as well as local events, activities and community engagement opportunities.

Our *Connect* print magazine is available from a number of locations around the shire, or you can request to be added to the mailing list by sending an email to [mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au)

To sign up to *Connect+*, to view previous editions of *Connect* magazine or to find out where you can pick up a copy, please visit our website.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/connect](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/connect)

A photograph of Mayor Cr Brett Owen and Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Roberts. Mayor Owen is on the left, wearing a blue and gold ceremonial robe with a chain of office and a medallion. Deputy Mayor Roberts is on the right, wearing a dark blue blazer over a colorful floral top and glasses. They are both smiling. In the background, there are flags, including the Australian flag and the Cardinia Shire flag.

## Meet your Mayor and Deputy Mayor

Welcome to Mayor Cr Brett Owen and Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Roberts.

Congratulations to our newly elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2025–26.

Beacon Hills Ward Councillor Brett Owen has been elected Mayor and Henty Ward Councillor Liz Roberts is our new Deputy Mayor.

Mayor Owen was first elected to Council in 2005 and represents Beacon Hills Ward. This is Cr Owen's fourth term as Mayor, having previously served as Mayor in 2012–13, 2016–17 and 2020–21, and as Deputy Mayor in 2013–14 and 2017–18.

Mayor Owen said it was an immense privilege to be given the opportunity to represent Cardinia Shire as Mayor.

"I'm excited for what lies ahead," Mayor Owen said.

"I want to ensure that continued collaboration is at the forefront of everything we do. Cardinia Shire has a diverse community, and the Ward I represent covers both rural and urban areas which gives me a great

understanding of the challenges faced by both.

"I'm aware of the huge responsibilities and the great privilege that come with this role. The role of Mayor can be incredibly rewarding, but it also brings with it a range of challenges.

"We have a challenging 12 months ahead to ensure the continued financial sustainability of Council, and I look forward to working with my fellow councillors and Council staff.

"I have what it takes to lead a unified and collaborative team and look forward to an exciting year ahead."

Cr Roberts was first elected in 2024 and represents Henty Ward.

Cr Roberts said she was looking forward to taking on the role of Deputy Mayor and working alongside the new Mayor.

"I've lived in Cardinia Shire for 20 years and I've been working for the shire ever since in one capacity or another, whether it be as an employee, on the local paper, with local community groups and now

as a Councillor and Deputy Mayor," Cr Roberts said.

"I look forward to supporting the Mayor and my fellow Councillors, and to serving my community."

Mayor Owen congratulated and thanked the outgoing Mayor Cr Jack Kowarzik and Deputy Mayor Cr Alanna Pomeroy, acknowledging their service and contributions.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/  
mayorandcouncillors](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/mayorandcouncillors)

### Council meetings

Council meetings are held monthly.

Check our website for the most up-to-date information.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/meetings](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/meetings)

You can watch Council meetings live or catch up on previous meetings at:



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/webcast](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/webcast)



# Calling all young people



*Cr Liz Roberts enjoyed a demo in the sound studio by young people Chris and Krish and Youth Services Officers Eileen and Brad during her recent visit to My Place.*

There are many ways for young people in Cardinia Shire to get involved, connect and access the resources and support they need.

Cardinia Shire Deputy Mayor and Henty Ward Councillor Liz Roberts encouraged young people to visit the My Place youth centre in Pakenham to meet the friendly Youth Services team and find out more.

“My Place is so much more than just a drop-in centre – it’s a welcoming and safe space where young people can make friends, build connections and access a range of resources and support,” Cr Roberts said.

“From programs and events to support services and creative spaces, there’s something for everyone.”

## Youth Action and Advisory Committee

Young people aged 15 to 24 are invited to apply to join the Youth Action and Advisory Committee (YAAC) for 2026 to help shape and deliver youth-led projects.

For more info about what’s on offer, or to complete a YAAC expression of interest form, visit:



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/youth](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/youth)

## Jobs and Skills Showcase

Discover your next career move at the Cardinia Jobs and Skills Showcase!

Join us on Wednesday 18 March at the Cardinia Cultural Centre for the Jobs and Skills Showcase.

- 9:15–10am: Jobseeker Information Sessions.
- 10am–12pm: Jobs and Skills Showcase.

Explore a wide range of exhibitors, discover current job vacancies and gain valuable insights to help you take the next step in your career.

You won’t want to miss out!



*Cr Alanna Pomeroy and Senior Economic Development Officer, Rosie, at the 2025 Cardinia Jobs and Skills Showcase.*



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/cardiniabusiness](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/cardiniabusiness)



# Explore the great outdoors

Our shire is well known for its valued outdoor spaces and facilities.

With the warmer weather upon us, it's a great time to get out and about and explore all that our beautiful shire has to offer.

We're spoilt for choice when it comes to our fantastic parks, playgrounds, reserves, sporting facilities and outdoor activities.



## Parks, playgrounds and recreation reserves

We have many parks, playgrounds and recreation reserves to explore right across the shire. There's something for all ages and abilities.



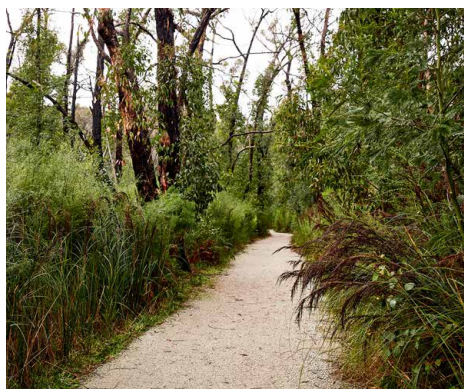
## Dog parks

A number of dog off-leash areas are located across the shire. When you visit, please follow the rules and remember to clean up after your dog.



## Outdoor fitness equipment

Outdoor exercise stations are located across the shire, providing opportunities to stay fit while enjoying the outdoors.



## Walking and cycling trails

Our walking and cycling trails provide opportunities to explore nature and enjoy the great outdoors.



## Skate parks and BMX tracks

A range for skate parks and BMX tracks across the shire vary in size and level of difficulty.



## Outdoor pools

Our outdoor pools in Koo Wee Rup and Garfield and the wading pool at Emerald Lake Park are open for the summer season.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pools](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pools)



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/cardiniaoutdoors](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/cardiniaoutdoors)

**Read all about it** Are you in need of a great read?

Visit Pakenham or Emerald libraries and immerse yourself in a good book. [www.myli.org.au](http://www.myli.org.au)



# Safety first this summer

Here are some tips to help you keep cool and stay safe this summer.

## Fire Danger Period is now in effect

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has declared the Fire Danger Period (FDP) across Cardinia Shire. When the FDP is in effect, fire restrictions apply across the municipality.

- You must have a permit to burn off during the Fire Danger Period.
- You are also required to notify Triple Zero Victoria as outlined in your permit conditions.

For details on fire restrictions, visit [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/firedangerperiod](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/firedangerperiod)

To check your property zone and conditions, visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/burningoff](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/burningoff)



## How to prepare in case of an emergency

What would you do if you were in an emergency situation and couldn't receive professional help for 72 hours?

The First 72 Hours helps you plan for what to do if professional help isn't available for three days:

- Make an emergency plan (include contacts, meeting points, triggers to leave and arrangements for pets and children).
- Back up important documents and photos and check that your insurance is up to date.
- Prepare an emergency kit with supplies for at least 72 hours.
- Stay informed via the VicEmergency app, Triple Zero (000) and SES updates.





## Pool safety

If you have a pool or spa on your property, you need to make sure it's safe.

- Any pool or spa capable of holding 300mm (30cm) of water or more must have a compliant safety fence or barrier. This includes temporary or inflatable pools.
- By law, pool and spa barriers must be inspected every four years and you must lodge the inspection certificate with Council.
- Council will send reminders when your inspection and certificate renewal are due. If the certificate isn't lodged by the due date, a follow-up notice will be issued.

Learn more and register your backyard pool or spa on Council's website.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/poolregistration](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/poolregistration)



## Caring for your pets

Heading out with your pets this summer? Keep them happy and safe with these tips:

- Always provide plenty of fresh water for them to hydrate.
- Ensure shaded areas or cool shelters are provided for rest out of direct sunlight.
- Never leave animals in cars unattended.
- Keep dogs safely contained and on a leash when walking.
- Visit one of our off-leash dog parks for safe play.
- Make sure your pet registration details are up to date with Council to help reunite you with your pet if they wander and to avoid fines.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pets)



## Emergency markers installed in popular nature reserves

Three of Cardinia Shire's most popular nature reserves – Emerald Lake Park, RJ Chambers Fauna and Flora Reserve in Pakenham Upper and Mt Cannibal Reserve in Garfield North – now have emergency markers installed.

These markers help Triple Zero (000) call-takers quickly and accurately confirm your location in the event of an emergency in public open spaces. Location identification is the first and most critical step in delivering a timely and effective emergency response.

### How to use an emergency marker:

- In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).
- Quote the emergency marker code (this is a unique three letter, three number code displayed on the sign).
- This code is linked to GPS coordinates and access details in the emergency dispatch system, ensuring help reaches you faster.



# Building a better Cardinia



## From roads to recreation: building today for tomorrow

We've been hard at work delivering projects that make our community stronger, safer, and more connected.

Over the past year, we've completed a range of major capital works that enhance local facilities and improve everyday life for residents.

Our \$65 million capital works program in 2024–25 focused on creating vibrant spaces and improving essential infrastructure.



### Highlights include:

- Officer District Park – a new destination for families and outdoor enthusiasts.
- Boolam Boolam Child and Family Centre – supporting early years and family services.
- Koo Wee Rup Bowls Club – a modern space for sport and social connection.
- Garfield North Community Centre – strengthening community ties.
- Worrell Recreation Reserve skate park and youth plaza – giving young people a place to play and connect.
- Significant upgrades to roads, drainage, and pathways, including resurfacing and rehabilitating almost 35km of local sealed roads as part of our proactive annual works and sealing close to 30km of unsealed roads across the shire.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, we're investing \$82.3 million into capital projects.

### Key initiatives include:

- Pakenham Revitalisation Project including Main Street Gateway and Drake Place – transforming the town centre with improved streetscapes.
- Key intersection upgrades throughout our growth corridor from Beaconsfield to Pakenham.
- Cardinia Youth Hub – a new space for future generations.
- Refreshing our parks, playgrounds, and community spaces.
- Expanded Community Capital Works Grants, giving local groups up to \$35,000 to upgrade their facilities.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/bettercardinia](https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/bettercardinia)





# Pakenham's future taking shape

Streetscape upgrades are now underway on the Pakenham Revitalisation Project, marking the beginning of a transformative journey to reimagine the town centre.

The Stage 1 Main Street Gateway precinct works will include streetscape upgrades near the Pakenham train station line through to the Main Street roundabout and into Drake Place.

Stage 1 has been broken down into six smaller phases to help minimise disruptions, and construction is underway in Drake Place.

Upgrades and changes will include:

- new road pavement
- new, wider footpaths for improved pedestrian accessibility
- enhanced lighting
- pedestrian crossing upgrades
- improved landscaping
- updated parking for safety and compliance
- new kerb and channel
- street furniture, bins and seating, and
- drainage improvements.



Works are ramping up on stage 1 of Pakenham Revitalisation, with construction restarting on both sides of Drake Place in early January, after taking a pause for the festive season.

## Pakenham is still open!

Local businesses remain open while streetscape works are underway in Drake Place.

Your favourite cafes, shops, and services are open and ready to welcome you.

Every dollar spent in Pakenham helps our community thrive, creates jobs, and supports the businesses that make our town unique.

While works continue, we encourage you to support local businesses in the area.

Please follow all detours and signage in the area to find parking and to access these businesses.

Thank you for your patience and support as we deliver these important upgrades.

Together we revitalise – shop local!

To stay up to date with the Pakenham Revitalisation project visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pakenham](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/pakenham)





# Setting the agenda for advocacy priorities

Council has set a bold vision for the future with the adoption of our Advocacy Agenda 2025–29.

The Advocacy Agenda will drive Council's advocacy efforts in the lead up to the 2026 State election and is anchored by five priority projects that will headline our 2026 Victorian State election campaign:

## **Cardinia Life regional basketball and gymnastics stadium redevelopment:**

co-investment from the State and Federal governments is sought to deliver the \$60 million stage one redevelopment through an equal three-way funding partnership.

**Lang Lang truck bypass:** \$57 million in funding is needed for a dedicated bypass for heavy vehicles that connects South Gippsland's quarries to the South Gippsland Highway.

**Strategic road sealing package:** co-investment from the State and Federal governments is required to seal priority

unsealed roads across the shire to improve emergency access, community safety, and climate resilience.

**Public transport package:** Council is advocating for improved bus services and public transport connections across Cardinia Shire to reduce car dependency, connect isolated communities to essential services and to make it easier for people to commute to work.

**Parks and open space package:** co-investment from the State and Federal governments is needed to deliver three critical open space projects that provide safe, inclusive recreation opportunities for young people and families across Cardinia Shire's growth corridor.

**Officer District Park:** \$7 million to deliver stage two.

**PB Ronald Reserve, Pakenham:** \$10 million for stage one.

**McMullen Recreation Reserve, Officer:** \$10 million.

These key priorities, along with 13 additional initiatives, will underpin proactive advocacy opportunities over the next four years, shaping Council's Federal Budget submission, strengthening the advocacy prospectus, and driving engagement with Members of Parliament, election candidates and key stakeholders to secure vital funding and support.

As one of Victoria's fastest growing local government areas with a population that is expected to grow by 40,000 over the next 10 years, we remain committed to advocating for what the Cardinia Shire community needs and it's vital that we continue to seek support and investment from other levels of government.

For a full list of advocacy priorities, please visit our website.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advocacy](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advocacy)

## Key plans to deliver for the future

Council has formally adopted its suite of key strategic documents to guide Council's activities and decision making over the next four years, and beyond.

The plans will enable us to deliver on our commitment to the community and ensure the shire remains a place that people are proud to call home.

### **Council Plan 2025–29**

The Council Plan is our overarching strategic document that will help guide our direction and decision making for this Council term, outlining how we will continue to deliver on the Community Vision, work towards our key objectives, respond to challenges, and leverage opportunities.

### **Updated Liveability Plan 2017–29**

This has been our second, four-year review of the Liveability Plan 2017–29, which has been developed to provide a clear framework for public health planning in the shire.

### **Financial Plan 2025–35**

The Financial Plan is a 10-year financial roadmap that will enable Council to deliver on the new Council Plan, continue to deliver valued services and projects, and ensure that the organisation remains financially sustainable into the future.

### **Asset Plan 2025–35**

The Asset Plan outlines Council's strategic approach to managing more than \$2.7 billion in infrastructure assets.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the community engagement activities that have helped shape these key plans.

You can view the documents on our website.



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/keyplans2025](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/keyplans2025)



# Helping the community clear the clutter

*Cr Collin Ross getting ready for the recent Recycling Drive and Drop event.*

The Cardinia Shire community once again embraced the chance to clean out their cupboards, garages and sheds when Council's popular Recycling Drive and Drop event returned early this year.

The two-day event, held at the Cardinia Shire Council depot in Pakenham, provided a free and convenient way to dispose of unwanted items.

Cardinia Shire Councillor Collin Ross said the strong turnout showed how valuable the service had become.

"After the success of our previous event last year, it was great to see hundreds of cars come through again," Cr Ross said.

"Together, we diverted tonnes of waste from landfill, with residents dropping off their unwanted e-waste, polystyrene, soft plastics, textiles and cardboard."

Thank you to everyone who attended. The next Recycling Drive and Drop event will be held on 11 and 12 July – please keep an eye on our website and social media channels for details.

 [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/dropoff](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/dropoff)



## Green waste drop-off event

Drop off your green waste for free at our February drop-off event.

- Saturday 7 February, 8am–2pm
- Sunday 8 February, closed
- Monday 9 – Friday 13 February, 7:30am–3:30pm
- Saturday 14 February, 8am–2pm

Location: Future Recycling Transfer Station, 30-32 Exchange Drive, Pakenham.

These events are a free service accepting residential amounts of green waste including garden prunings, tree branches and trunks (up to 30 centimetres wide and one metre long), weeds, grass clippings, leaves, and flowers.

Residents must present photo ID as proof of residence within Cardinia Shire to access the free service.

Waste will only be accepted from residential vehicles and trailers; commercial business operators cannot use this service.

 [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/dropoff](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/dropoff)

## Help keep our shire clean!


The Cardinia Shire community is encouraged to sign up for Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday 1 March.

Clean Up Australia Day is the nation's largest community-based event for collecting litter to reduce its impact on our environment. It's a great way to get involved and help keep our shire clean.

Community members, schools and businesses can participate by simply registering their own local park, reserve or walking track as a 'clean up' site or participating in a pre-registered clean-up site on the Clean Up Australia website. Once volunteers register, they'll receive a free clean-up kit through Clean Up Australia, including bags and gloves.

Cardinia Shire Council will help collect and dispose of the rubbish collected on the day.




 [www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au](http://www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au)

## New waste and recycling guide

Our annual A to Z waste and recycling guide is being delivered to letterboxes throughout January.

This updated guide includes everything you need to know about your kerbside bins, bookable hard waste service, drop-off events, and features a handy bin calendar. It also lists a wide range of common household and garden items, with tips on how to recycle or safely dispose of them.

Keep an eye out for the new guide, or find more information on our website.

 [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/atozwasteguide](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/atozwasteguide)



# From fragmented to flourishing: how our Biolink Plan is restoring nature's links

Cardinia Shire's Biolink Plan is all about creating healthier, more connected landscapes for our community. It's our long-term approach to protecting our natural assets and enabling people and animals to thrive together.

Rapid urban growth has fragmented habitats, isolating species and disrupting essential processes like pollination and migration. By linking bushland reserves,

waterways, and private properties, we're building corridors that help wildlife thrive, and make our shire a greener, more resilient place to live.

Underpinning the plan is the Biolink Map, available as an interactive map on Council's website. This mapping identifies 66 priority biolink nodes and 122 habitat corridors, guiding where revegetation, weed control, and habitat

restoration will deliver the greatest impact. These existing and future corridors can help wildlife move safely and create healthier ecosystems for everyone.

Since the Biolink Plan was adopted in 2021, Council has partnered with key agencies and community to achieve some big wins for our local environment and the broader region.



## Greening programs

We've supported the planting of thousands of native species on public and private land through annual planting programs and developed Shelterbelt Design Guidelines helping landholders to create windbreaks that double as wildlife corridors and boost resilience against climate change. In addition, our weed and pest control programs continue to improve the health and beauty of our natural spaces.



Photo credit: Jo Howell, Zoos Victoria

## Protecting our wildlife

Our work to conserve endangered species has achieved remarkable milestones, including introducing artificial habitats for the Southern Brown Bandicoot, strengthening local Superb Lyrebird habitats, and celebrating the historic return of Victoria's faunal emblem, the Helmeted Honeyeater, to the shire after 40+ years!

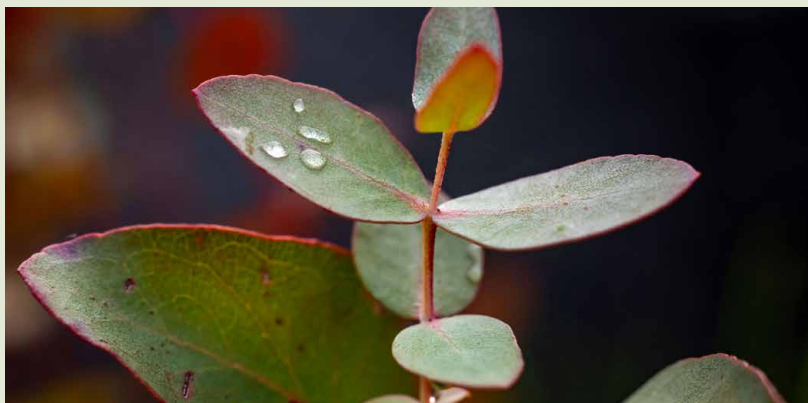




## Working together

Community programs and partnerships with local Friends, Landcare and other environmental groups have empowered residents to act, with the help of complementary Biodiversity Conservation Strategy programs like the relaunched Gardens for Wildlife and citizen science activities during Biodiversity Month. You can join Cardinia Shire's Gardens for Wildlife program on our website and get a voucher for six free native plants to help 'green' up your space!

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/gardensforwildlife](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/gardensforwildlife)



## Grants have grown

Expanding our weed control grants program in 2023, Council's new Greening Cardinia grants include three grant categories supporting resident, landowner and community projects that improve revegetation, weed control, and biodiversity on private and public land in Cardinia Shire. Check if you're eligible for one of these grants at

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/greeningcardinia](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/greeningcardinia)



## But wait, there's more!

Looking ahead, 2026 brings exciting projects including delivering the Koo Wee Rup Trial Biolink Project to support threatened species such as the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Ongoing initiatives, including biodiversity projects, weed mapping, and annual revegetation programs, will create even more opportunities for our community to get involved.

## Stay informed and get involved

We encourage you to find out more and join us to create a future where nature and people flourish side by side. Visit our website and sign up for our *Down to Earth* e-newsletter for updates, tips, and ways to join planting days and community projects.

## More information



[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/environment](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/environment)



# Connecting residents to financial support



Meet the South East Community Links team: Peter (CEO), Rachna (Head of Financial Wellbeing), Corinne (Financial Counsellor) and Nicole (Financial Counsellor).

We're pleased to welcome South East Community Links to Cardinia Shire Council's Civic Centre in Officer, as they expand their services to offer free and confidential financial counselling appointments for residents.

SECL receives Federal and State government funding to deliver a wide range of services aimed at improving social and economic outcomes. Their support programs across the southeast region span emergency relief, housing and homelessness support, employment pathways, financial wellbeing, family violence assistance, youth engagement and refugee settlement services.

In Cardinia Shire, SECL plays a critical role in supporting financial wellbeing. As one of only two key agencies funded to provide free financial counselling services locally, their presence is vital for residents experiencing financial hardship.

If you or someone you know is experiencing financial hardship, help is available. Contact the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 or seek SECL Financial Counselling on 9549 5288.

To access a range of support services and resources, please visit our website.



## Celebrating our community leaders

Congratulations to the graduates of our 2025 Cardinia Community Leadership Program.

The 16 motivated and aspiring leaders have successfully completed the six-month course which supported them to develop new skills and strengthen their existing leadership capabilities.

Participants engaged in workshops, case study discussions and collaborative group work designed to challenge and inspire them to contribute meaningfully to their local community. The program is facilitated and supported by external consultant Tony Matthews together with Council's Community Development Team.

Participants represented a diverse range of community groups and organisations from across Cardinia Shire and each

shared a similar aspiration for the program, to deepen their understanding of the community they live and work in and to contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming shire.



Graduates of the 2025 Cardinia Community Leadership Program.



## Pakenham Golf Course update

Council will invite expressions of interest for the future management of the Pakenham Golf Course at Deep Creek Reserve, Pakenham.

Council will undertake an EOI process to test the market and invite proposals for the site's future use, including golf and alternative proposals in line with the permitted zoning.

The Pakenham Golf Course Feasibility Study undertaken in 2025 considered a number of options relating to the future of the golf course, including the continuation of golf or the use of the site as open space. The findings of the feasibility study were shared with the community and feedback invited to help Council understand community views.

All three golf options identified in the feasibility study include continuing the operation of the function centre and cafe.

Cardinia Environment Coalition continues to operate from the site. Community members can also continue to visit the Deep Creek Eco Playspace, wetlands and kickabout area and use the public toilets. The function space will be available for bookings by community groups on week days during business hours.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/deepcreek](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/deepcreek)





## Rodeo inspired art installation

Lang Lang's newest art sculpture honours the town's proud rodeo heritage.

The Rotary Club of Koo Wee Rup-Lang Lang initiated the idea of this sculpture to celebrate the town's identity and rodeo heritage, attract visitors and foster community pride.

Located off McDonalds Track outside the Lang Lang Showgrounds, the

sculpture features three galloping horses mimicking the movements seen in rodeo – a bronc, a barrel racer and a roping horse. Adam Humphreys, the appointed artist behind the work, used up to 1km of steel to bring the vision to life.

Local community members including representatives from Lang Lang Show Society, Lang Lang Rotary, the Lang

Lang District Business and Community Group, senior citizens and students from Lang Lang Primary School came together to celebrate the unveiling of the sculptures.

The Lang Lang Public Art Project has been completed with funding support from the Victorian Government's Regional Development Victoria Tiny Towns Fund and Cardinia Shire Council.

## Celebrating Garfield's new community centre

The Garfield North Community Centre at Cannibal Creek Reserve is officially open!

The new multipurpose community facility is the result of strong community advocacy and collaboration between Council, the Committee of Management and local user groups.

Designed in consultation with the community, the facility provides a versatile space to support a range of activities and events. It features a social room, meeting room, kitchen, storage area, accessible toilet, and unisex toilets and can accommodate up to 80 people.

The project was jointly funded by a \$1.3 million grant from the Victorian Government's Growing Suburbs Fund and Council.

Thank you to the Committee of Management, Cannibal Creek Reserve user groups, and More Building Group for their collaboration and commitment

to delivering this important community asset.

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/bettercardinia](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/bettercardinia)



*Celebrating the official opening of the Garfield North Community Centre (from left) were Tony (former President Community Recovery Committee – Bunyip Complex Fires), Cr Samantha-Jane Potter, Cr Jack Kowarzik, the Hon Harriet Shing, Cr Alanna Pomeroy, former councillor Graeme Moore, Garry (President Cannibal Creek Reserve Committee of Management) and Cr Collin Ross.*



# What's on?

Here are just some of the events and activities happening across our shire

## Lights, culture, action!

Cardinia Cultural Centre (CCC) is the place to be for entertainment and inspiration.

Discover local goodies at the Cardinia Cultural Centre Gift Shop. This new retail space features a curated selection of handmade pieces by local artists.

Kicking off in February, the CCC is hosting a brand-new movie program, Friday Flicks.

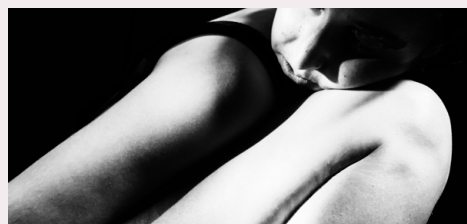
Return to the gallery for the 2026 exhibition program with Nikki Wilson: What's Left Unsaid video and photographic exhibition, and Arca Arcade: Round One. See details below.



[www.cardiniaculturalcentre.com.au](http://www.cardiniaculturalcentre.com.au)



## Cardinia Cultural Centre



### Nikki Willson: What's Left Unsaid

A video and photographic exhibition that explores the psychological and emotional states which we carry with us as we move through the world.

Saturday 7 February – Sunday 15 March

### Friday Flicks

Dirty Dancing (1987), 6 February, 2pm.

Top End Wedding (2019), 6 March, 2pm.

Tickets: \$7.

### Morning Melodies

- Growing Old Ungracefully, David Scheel, Wednesday 11 February.
- The Passion of Saint Nicholas, Geraldine Quinn, Wednesday 11 March.

Morning tea for both events at 10am, show time 11am.

### Arca Arcade: Round One

A poignant homage to the enduring allure and cultural significance of arcade gaming with machines that are adorned by te ao Māori influences and styles of Aotearoa New Zealand's eminent artists.

Thursday 19 March – Sunday 17 May

### Thursday Lounge

Every Thursday 6–8pm, free live music.

### Sunday Sounds: Summer Open Mic

Enjoy monthly waterfront outdoor open mic sets, 11am – 3pm.

## Libraries

### Special event

How to harvest your own seeds with food farmer Julie Bennett.

Pakenham Library

Friday 20 February, 6:30–8:30pm

### Community mosaic workshops (children and adults)

Pakenham Library

For dates and times, please visit [myli.au/events](http://myli.au/events)

Regular programs including Story Time, Rhyme Time and adult programs recommence in February. For details please visit [myli.au/events](http://myli.au/events)

Info about Council events: [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/events](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/events)

The information in this edition of *Connect* was correct at the time of print.

For the most up-to-date information about Council services, events and programs, visit [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au)

### Acknowledgement of Country

Cardinia Shire Council acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands of Cardinia Shire, and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

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