

# Connect

YOUR COUNCIL MAGAZINE

Autumn 2026



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## EXPLORE OUR PARKS AND RESERVES

Cardinia Shire is coming alive this autumn

## REIMAGINING PAKENHAM

Future streetscape plans unveiled

## PROTECTING THE BIOSPHERE

Working together to protect our local waterways

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# **We want to hear from you!**

Help shape the future of Cardinia Shire by having your say on our upcoming proposals, projects and initiatives.

Head to Creating Cardinia to provide your feedback - it helps guide our decision-making and plans to ensure we're delivering what the community needs.

Scan the QR code to explore current consultations and follow project pages to receive updates.

## **Councillor contacts**

### **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)

### **Toomuc Ward**

Cr Casey Thomsen

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

### **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.

## **Your Council news**

Stay up to date with what's happening across the shire by exploring our range of publications.

Subscribe to our monthly Connect+ e-newsletter to receive updates on new services, upcoming projects, local events and opportunities to have your say.

You can also subscribe to our specialty newsletters: Cardinia Business, Down to Earth, Youth News and Ageing Well.

## **On the cover**

Carly, Alivia, Hughie, Bryce and McKenzie the dog are enjoying a stroll through Emerald Lake Park.

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## **Mayor's message**

Since starting my term as your Mayor, I've enjoyed getting out and about – meeting residents, attending local events, visiting community groups and schools, and listening to what matters most to people across our shire.

Autumn is the perfect time to get out to explore our beautiful parks, reserves and trails. Whether you're walking, riding or joining a local activity, I encourage everyone to get outdoors and enjoy the places that make our shire such a wonderful place to live.

I continue to be inspired by the remarkable generosity, community spirit and dedication demonstrated across Cardinia Shire. Our volunteers play an essential role in supporting others, building connections and enriching local life, and it was a pleasure to celebrate some of these incredible individuals and groups at our 2026 Australia Day Awards.

To further support and empower our local volunteers, Council is developing a new Volunteer Strategy to ensure volunteering remains accessible, rewarding and sustainable for years to come. The community will be invited to have their say on this strategy shortly.

We have a big year ahead, as we work to ensure financial sustainability, navigate new planning frameworks, prepare for the upcoming State Election and continue to deliver vital services and projects for the community.

Our shire continues to experience rapid growth, welcoming more than three new families every day. To help ensure that

residents can access the services they need close to home, we are undertaking an Education and Health Services Gap Analysis to help guide future planning and advocacy.

We remain committed to listening to our community and working collaboratively to strengthen local services, support sustainable development, and improve quality of life for all those who call this shire home.

Thank you to every volunteer, resident, community organiser, and new citizen who contributes to our shire. Your commitment and participation make all the difference, and I look forward to continuing this important work together.

**Cr Brett Owen**  
Mayor of Cardinia Shire

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

## **Council meetings**

Council meetings are held on the third Monday of every month, with a new start time of 6pm.

Check our website for the most up-to-date information. You can also watch Council meetings live or catch up on previous meetings.

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

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# **2026 Australia Day Award winners: Honouring the heart of the shire**

Cardinia Shire Council proudly shone a spotlight on the heart and soul of the community at the 2026 Australia Day Awards.

Held on Thursday 22 January at the Cardinia Cultural Centre, the annual celebration recognised the extraordinary contributions of individuals and groups whose dedication makes Cardinia Shire a vibrant, compassionate and connected place to live.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Councillor Brett Owen congratulated the 2026 winners and nominees and thanked them for their valuable contributions.

“These community members are the heart of Cardinia Shire — quietly giving their time, energy and passion to help others and strengthen our community.

“Our awards give us a chance to recognise the selfless people who dedicate their time and energy towards making Cardinia Shire a better place.”

Every year, residents are encouraged to nominate individuals and groups who continue to make a positive difference within the community. All nominations are carefully reviewed by our councillors and panel of past award winners to help select the finalists and winners.

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

## **Citizen of the Year - Robb Evans**

Robb has been recognised for his extraordinary efforts in building nationwide support for families navigating the devastating impacts of eating disorders.

Transforming unimaginable personal loss into a powerful movement for change, Robb established Liv's Legacy to honour his daughter, Olivia, who passed away at 15 from anorexia nervosa. Robb has now dedicated himself to improving support, treatment and awareness for young people and families impacted by eating disorders.

Robb's impact has been far-reaching, helping secure more than \$56 million in funding for eating disorder research and treatment programs, including hospital in the home services and therapy dog initiatives at Alfred Health and Monash Children's Hospital.

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## **Senior Citizen of the Year - Maureen Timms**

Maureen Timms has been recognised for her unwavering service to the community and compassion for people who are living through their most vulnerable moments.

A dedicated volunteer with Palliative Care South East since 2012, Maureen has contributed more than 150 hours through their companionship program.

Known for going above and beyond, Maureen's empathy and reliability have made her a vital pillar for families and care teams alike.

Maureen is known for regularly taking on extra clients in times of need, providing exceptional emotional and practical support and volunteering with other community organisations including Relay for Life, Monash Casey, and St John of God.

## **Young Citizen of the Year - Eliza Owen**

Recognised for her exceptional dedication to community safety, Eliza Owen has been an inspiring young leader in the Hills region.

Eliza has served with both the Emerald SES and CFA, stepping up during major storms. She began supporting emergency logistics and welfare from a young age – even after her own home was destroyed during major storms.

By age 15, Eliza officially joined the SES, quickly becoming a trusted responder involved in storm response, flood recovery, landslide operations, community engagement and resilience-building initiatives.

Eliza holds the CFA Five-Year Service Award and continues to mentor and encourage other young volunteers in Emerald and Cockatoo.

**Event of the Year - Emerald Arts Society's Annual Art Exhibition**

Marking 55 years as a cornerstone of the local events calendar, the art exhibition showcases paintings, sculptures, drawings, and mixed media from emerging and established artists of all ages.

A dedicated committee from the Emerald Arts Society spends six months preparing for the show, which runs over the Cup Day long weekend at the Hills Hub in Emerald.

The much-loved exhibition celebrates creativity and community connection, showcasing over 200 artworks from across Victoria and interstate each year, and welcoming more than 400 visitors across its four-day program.

The event's longevity and vibrancy highlight the importance of arts in building a thriving, connected community.

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# **Cardinia Shire is coming alive this autumn!**

As the leaves turn golden and the air cools, Cardinia Shire is transforming into a vibrant playground of colour, creativity and community spirit.

This autumn, we're encouraging residents of all ages to step outside, explore our beautiful parks and reserves, and take part in our lively program, which is designed to keep everyone active and connected.

From music by the lake to spotting local wildlife and finding new ways to stay active, Council's autumn events and activities program offers plenty of opportunities to get outside, participate and connect with nature and each other. Ranges Ward Councillor David Nickell said autumn was an ideal time to explore the shire.

"Autumn really highlights the beauty of our local parks and reserves. It's the perfect time to step outside and experience all the shire has to offer.

"We have some incredible gems just on our doorstep. I encourage residents to take advantage of the cooler weather to get out and explore. The shire puts on a show in autumn — and it's all just a short drive from home."

Emerald Lake Park and Nobelius Heritage Park are beloved by locals and visitors for being a destination rich in scenery, history and activities for the whole family.

Take a wander through the luscious trails, go for a run in the Hills, enjoy a picnic around the lake, visit Puffing Billy or the Heritage Museum, or simply take in the peaceful surroundings.

“Our activity calendar has been designed to help foster new connections and showcase our incredible open spaces,” Cr Nickell said.

“So, grab a jacket, gather your friends, and open your calendar – Cardinia Shire is coming alive this autumn.”

[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/autumn-events](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/autumn-events)

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# **Funding local ideas and strengthening local communities**

Every year, Council offers a wide range of grants to help support community groups, local organisations, volunteer groups, and businesses.

These grants focus on improving community wellbeing, supporting local infrastructure, enhancing cultural and business initiatives, and assisting environmental sustainability.

## **Arts and Culture**

Designed to inspire creativity, these grants support local arts initiatives, performances, cultural events and community-led creative projects.

## **Business Support**

Empowers local businesses, trader associations and groups to implement initiatives to support the business community, stimulate growth and foster economic prosperity.

## **Community Capital Works**

Assists groups to upgrade Council-owned and Crown Land facilities to improve the quality, safety and accessibility of our community spaces and infrastructure.

## **Festivals and Events**

Festivals and events are an important part of life in Cardinia Shire. These grants help fund local celebrations, cultural events, neighbourhood gatherings and community festivals.

## **Wellbeing Support**

Supports initiatives, projects and programs from groups that aim to improve residents' health and wellbeing, support volunteering opportunities, encourage community connection and enhance sustainability.

## **Greening Cardinia**

These grants help local landowners manage invasive weeds and protect biodiversity across the shire.

## **Heritage**

These grants assist with conserving and protecting heritage properties and places that hold historical significance for our community.

## **Apply now**

Council grants help turn great ideas into lasting local benefits – from upgrades and new initiatives to events. Visit our website to apply now and bring your project to life!

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

## **We're working to create a safer shire**

Council is proud to work closely with Victoria Police and community partners as part of our Safer Communities Partnership Committee.

Although Council is not responsible for policing, we play an important role as a connector – bringing people, services, and ideas together to improve community safety and support crime prevention activities.

Simple daily habits help keep our community safe. Many local thefts occur when doors or cars are left unlocked, which is why we actively support the 9PM Routine – a friendly reminder to secure your home, car, and valuables at the end of each day.

We deliver bi-monthly Coffee with Community and Safe PL8 events with Victoria Police to address community concerns about safety and crime. Head to our website to see all upcoming events.

We encourage you to report issues and crimes to the Police, as every report helps build a safer shire. Call **000** for emergencies or **131 444** for non-urgent assistance.

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

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# **Pakenham Revitalisation Project**

## **A new gateway for Pakenham**

We've been busy upgrading the Main Street Gateway precinct, as part of Stage 1 of the Pakenham Revitalisation project.

The Main Street Gateway precinct stretches from the Pakenham train line through to the Main Street roundabout and into Drake Place.

All Stage 1 works have been broken down into smaller phases to help minimise disruption and support local business.

Major construction is now complete in Drake Place near the roundabout, with final landscaping, lighting, seating, bins and pavement works expected to be completed in mid-2026. Works are currently underway along Main Street, stretching from the roundabout down towards the station.

Upgrades include:

- Pavement reconstruction and kerb upgrades.
- New accessible footpaths.
- Improved drainage.
- Lighting and landscaping.
- Street furniture installation including seating and bins.

The Main Street Gateway upgrades are the critical first step towards reimagining Pakenham's town centre, setting the scene for future stages and streetscape works.

Construction on the Main Street Gateway precinct is expected to be completed by mid-2026, conditions permitting.

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## **Future plans unveiled**

The Pakenham Revitalisation project is moving into its next exciting phase, with plans for the upcoming Stage 2 and 3 works being unveiled.

Stage 2 will include streetscape upgrades throughout Drake Place from the Railway Hotel to John Street, and Stage 3 works will take place along John Street from Drake Place towards the Main Street roundabout.

Cardinia Shire Mayor Councillor Brett Owen said the project was all about creating a safe, inviting space.

“This precinct connects directly into the town centre and the new Pakenham Community Hospital, so it’s important that people feel safe, supported and comfortable to get around.

“Our focus has been to improve accessibility and community safety within this precinct. We’re making this space more pedestrian-friendly by installing wider footpaths and new crossings, as well as additional lighting to improve visibility and community safety. We hope that these upgrades will make a real difference for locals, businesses and visitors alike.”

To transform this precinct into a safer, greener and more welcoming space for everyone, proposed upgrades include:

- New wide footpaths and safer pedestrian crossings.
- New road pavement and paving.
- Additional lighting and new power bollards.
- Drainage improvements and landscaping including mature shade trees and garden beds.

- More comfortable seating, benches and picnic tables.

Henty Ward Councillor and Deputy Mayor Councillor Liz Roberts said the works would help bring new life and activity into Pakenham's town centre.

“We're creating places that encourage people to stay, spend time and enjoy their surroundings.

“With more greenery, more seating and better lighting, this precinct will become a true community hub.

“We're future proofing these spaces to improve visitation, the local economy and community safety, but also so events, pop-ups, outdoor dining and community activities can be held right here in the heart of Pakenham.

“We're working to create a connected, vibrant and accessible local centre for all people. A place where the community can shop, relax, gather and enjoy safe, welcoming public spaces.”

To minimise disruptions, Stage 2 and 3 works will be phased into smaller sections, and more information will be shared in the coming months.

Construction is anticipated to start around mid-2026, pending contractor availability.

**Pakenham's still open!**

With construction underway, we are encouraging everyone to shop and support our local cafés, retailers and services. All businesses remain open, with signage and detours in place to help navigate the area.

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

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# Building a Better Cardinia

We're focused on building stronger, connected and more liveable communities, that's why we're investing more than \$74 million this year into upgrades and projects that help improve our open spaces, community facilities and local roads.

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

## Under construction

- Construction and upgrade works are progressing across the shire to improve safety, accessibility and community wellbeing.
- Alma Treloar Dog Park (Cockatoo).
- Bessie Creek Road – road sealing works (Nar Nar Goon North).
- Bunyip Sanctuary BMX Track renewal.
- Cockatoo Community Complex upgrades.
- Cora Lynn Pavilion.
- Huxtable Road – road sealing works (Pakenham Upper).
- Koo Wee Rup Netball Court redevelopment.
- Lauriston Court playground renewal (Koo Wee Rup).
- Mt Burnett Road – road sealing works (Mount Burnett).
- Pakenham Outdoor Pool remedial works.
- Road Resurfacing Program – maintaining the shire's extensive sealed road network.
- Ron Andrews playground renewal (Pakenham).
- Upper Beaconsfield Reserve Pavilion.

## Upcoming projects

Projects expected to start construction in 2026:

- Arena Parade and Princes Hwy intersection upgrade, Officer.
- McGregor Road, Henty Street and Rogers Street intersection upgrade, Pakenham.
- Cardinia Youth Hub, Pakenham.

## Completed works

Several key projects have recently wrapped up:

- The Cardinia Life carpark has been resurfaced to ensure that the community can continue to safely access the popular centre.
- The public toilets at Cockatoo Little Athletics Club have been upgraded to improve convenience and accessibility for local sporting clubs and events.
- The Greenland Court Reserve playground in Garfield has been upgraded to create a safer, more welcoming and engaging space for all.
- Upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning at Pakenham Hall and Emerald Library.
- The refreshed Lakeside Boulevard pedestrian crossing has made getting around the bustling Pakenham Lakeside precinct safer for all.
- The Mountain Road Recreation Reserve now boasts new sports ground lighting (pictured below).
- We've completed two more Sealing the Hills projects, sealing the Stoney Creek and Old Gembrook catchments to improve connectivity, reduce dust and enhance safety.

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# **Rising tide of responsibility: Protecting the Biosphere**

Cardinia Shire or Cardinia Shore? I bet you didn't know that the shire isn't just made up of rolling hills and bustling townships, we also have a coastline right on our doorstep...

Cardinia Shire forms part of the Western Port Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO-recognised region and Ramsar-protected wetland of international importance, celebrated for its rich biodiversity and unique coastal habitats. This recognition means our coastline, ecosystems and wetlands are among the most environmentally significant places on the planet, valued globally for protecting nature while supporting local communities and everyday life.

The Western Port Biosphere Reserve is made up of five local government areas and the entirety of Western Port Bay, including the townships of Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang. Mangroves, seagrass and saltmarsh thrive around these areas and support the natural ecosystems that help keep our waterways clean, protect the shoreline and support a wide range of marine life.

The Western Port Biosphere Reserve isn't just an environmental treasure; it benefits the community every day. The natural systems within the Biosphere help:

- Preserve biodiversity, supporting 65% of Victoria's bird species and more than 20,000 water birds.
- Provide places to relax, walk, kayak, and connect with nature, supporting mental and physical health.

- Support local agriculture, including dairy, beef, and vegetable growing.
- Absorb carbon and regulate climate, helping buffer the effects of a changing environment.

Council works in partnership with the Western Port Biosphere Foundation to protect Western Port and Councillor Samantha-Jane Potter represents council as part of the Western Port Biosphere Councillor Liaison Committee, helping guide local environmental priorities and championing regional cooperation.

“We work with the Western Port Biosphere Foundation and nearby councils to help protect these natural areas. Together, we support projects that restore mangroves, improve coastal resilience, and help local communities prepare for climate change and sea level rise,” Cr Potter said.

“Western Port and its waterways are incredibly important but can be impacted by erosion, pollution and changes in water quality. That’s why Cardinia Shire supports regional plans aimed at protecting the bay’s environment and improving the health of our creeks, wetlands and coastal areas.”

Westernport Ward Cr Trudi Paton is a long-time advocate for the protection of our coastline.

“Protecting Western Port Bay starts with the people on the ground who care for the waterways that flow into it. Community action plays a critical role in reducing pollution and sediment that can disrupt this sensitive environment.”

“We’re incredibly fortunate to have dedicated, local volunteering groups, who work hard to keep the nasties out

of our local waterways and protect the habitats that make this place so special. Looking after these waterways means protecting our coastline, farms, wildlife, and the future of our communities.”

**Do your part**

By caring for our creeks, wetlands, and coastline, we help keep the Western Port Biosphere healthy.

Find out how you can do your part on our website:

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

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## **Let's talk rubbish**

Illegal dumping affects everyone in Cardinia Shire, and thanks to growing community awareness, we're already seeing real improvements in keeping our neighbourhoods clean and welcoming.

More than 100 new 'Dob in a Dumper' signs have been added to 68 public place bins across the shire, helping residents understand the impacts of dumped rubbish and how to report it quickly and easily. With more people speaking up, Council is responding faster and restoring affected areas sooner.

A recent example on Haunted Gully Road in Officer shows the power of community action. When household waste was dumped, nearby residents immediately shared information and footage, allowing Council to clean the area promptly and prevent further dumping. In Pakenham East, increased awareness has also helped address soil dumping, with developers working closely with Council to clean up sites and stop repeat incidents.

Both reports led to prompt action and clean-up, as well as fines for those found responsible for illegally dumping rubbish.

Every report helps protect our environment. If you see dumped rubbish, call **1300 787 624** or report it online.

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

## **Planning for the future**

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on our draft Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2026–36. Council will review the feedback before considering the strategy for adoption later this year.

The draft strategy is Council’s long-term vision for waste management, recycling and resource recovery. It aligns with national and state requirements and aims to deliver sustainable, cost-effective services that meet local needs.

## **Waste services snapshot**

- More than **4 million** kerbside bin lifts
- **30,366** hard waste bookings
- **1,045** public place bins
- **2,075** illegal dumped rubbish cleanups and investigations
- **23,240** tonnes of rubbish
- **9,700** tonnes of recycling
- **9,980** tonnes of food and garden waste
- **470** tonnes of green waste drop-off

*\*Data from 2024–25.*

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# Calling for more time on new bin rollout

Council is delaying the rollout of glass only bins for all households, calling on the Victorian Government for more time, information and support for councils.

While reducing landfill remains a key focus of our draft Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2026–36, we don't believe a glass-only bin will help us achieve this goal.

Cardinia Shire Council has written to the Victorian Government to provide Service Standards that give councils certainty when planning services, and to share its business case for kerbside glass recycling to help clarify the need for the service. Council has written to relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Mayors to outline concerns about the service's cost and inefficiency.

Council is part of a 36-council advocacy group led by the City of Maroondah which has commissioned independent research into the household and environmental impacts of a glass only service.

Introducing a glass only bin would cost around \$4 million for a typical council to implement and a further \$1.4 million each year to operate. For the average Cardinia Shire household, this means paying an extra \$28 in charges per year.

Our current recycling system is working well, with less than 2 per cent of glass bottles and jars in the shire ending up in landfill, and 84 per cent of households putting out their fortnightly yellow-lid bin.

Council believes expanding the Victorian Government's Container Deposit Scheme to include wine and spirit bottles would achieve similar environmental benefits at a lower cost.

## **Be a good sort**

Making sure you're sorting your rubbish and placing the right things in your bins helps keep valuable materials out of landfill and ensures they can be properly recycled or composted.

The top five contaminants in Cardinia Shire recycling bins are bagged recyclables (we can't get them out of bags), soft plastics, general rubbish, textiles and food waste. None of these items should end up in your yellow lidded bin so 'be a good sort' and help us keep the recycling stream clean.

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

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# Don't fur-get to register your pet

As more households welcome furry companions, it's important we work together to make the shire a paw-sitive safe place for people and pets.

Whether you're a longtime resident or a new pet parent, we all have our part to play, including making sure your pets are registered with us. All cats and dogs over three months old must be registered.

Pet registration isn't just a formality – it's a commitment to your pet's safety, your neighbours, and the wellbeing of the entire community.

Pet registrations must be renewed by 10 April each year. It takes only minutes, but the benefits last all year round. Residents can register or renew their registration online, over the phone or in-person at the Civic Centre.

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

## Why you should register your pet

- **Helps reunite lost pets quickly:** When a pet slips out a gate or takes itself on an unexpected adventure, updated registration means we can get in touch faster to reunite families with their furry friends.
- **Supports community safety:** By knowing how many pets live in our neighbourhoods, we can better manage roaming animals, reduce risks, and make our streets, parks and playgrounds safe and welcoming for all.

- Funds important animal services: Your registration fees directly support pet management services, including lost and found service, investigating dog attacks and nuisance complaints, managing domestic animals, and delivering education programs.
- Improves our dog parks: A portion of fees goes toward maintaining and improving the places we all enjoy — better dog parks, more waste bag dispensers and cleaner, safer public areas for families, joggers, cyclists and four-legged locals alike.
- Encourages responsible pet ownership: Registration goes hand in hand with microchipping, desexing and general good pet care. When everyone does their part, we create a kinder, more responsible pet-friendly community.

## **Time to get kinder-ready!**

Have you got a little one who's ready to take their first big step into the world of learning, friendships and fun?

Kindergarten registrations for 2027 are now open — so it's the perfect time to jump online and secure their place!

Council manages registrations for all community kindergartens across the shire, making the process simple, central and stress free. Families can register for both 3-year-old and 4-year-old kinder through our online portal.

Want the best chance at your preferred kinder? Submit your registration by 30 June 2026 to be considered in the first

round of offers, which will start to be emailed to families from 13 July 2026.

Don't worry if you miss it – second and third round offers will follow later in the year (subject to availability).

Thanks to State Government funding, kindergarten registration is now free for Cardinia Shire families, helping ensure every child can access and enjoy an early learning program.

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

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# **Work smarter, not harder: Join Cardinia's Lean Business Series 2026**

Calling all local business owners!

We're excited to present the Lean Business Series 2026 – a practical, six-part workshop program designed to help local businesses boost productivity, streamline operations and prepare for sustainable growth.

Held at the Cardinia Cultural Centre and delivered bi-monthly, each workshop builds on the last, giving you simple, hands-on tools to:

- Eliminate wasted effort and improve workflow.
- Harness AI for smarter, more informed decisions.
- Focus your time where it truly adds value.
- Stabilise processes before growing your business.
- Engage teams in continuous improvement.
- Celebrate wins and plan your next steps.

Whether you're looking to sharpen your operations or simply get more out of your day-to-day systems, businesses can choose to attend one session or the whole series, depending on their interests and needs.

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

## **Coaching your business to success**

Running a business can be challenging, and sometimes a little expert guidance can make all the difference.

That's why Council offers the Business Coaches Program — a free initiative connecting local business owners with experienced industry mentors.

Our Business Coaches Program matches local businesses with a coach from our panel of business professionals and industry experts.

Coaches can provide a range of business support including:

- Three FREE one-hour sessions.
- One-on-one advice to meet individual business needs.
- Grow the skills and capability of your workforce.
- Gain access to resources in business management, strategic planning, finance and more.

If you're a business owner looking for support or simply want to explore new ideas, this free coaching program is a great place to start.

## **Take control of your bills at Bring Your Bills Day!**

Struggling with rising household costs or feeling overwhelmed by overdue bills and notices?

We're here to help, with Bring Your Bills Day returning to Pakenham.

Following the huge success of last year's event, South East Community Links (SECL) will again host this free community

support day at Pakenham Hall on Tuesday 21 April from 10:30am to 3pm.

Residents are invited to bring along their bills or paperwork to receive personalised, confidential advice from SECL's experienced financial counsellors.

Whether you need guidance with your electricity, gas or water bills, help understanding tenancy or consumer rights, support with fines, rates, housing issues, or information about utility relief grants and concessions, SECL's team will be ready to assist.

No bookings are required. Residents are welcome to drop in at any time though wait times may apply.

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

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# What's on?

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

## Cardinia Cultural Centre

### Arca Arcade: Round One

Arca Arcade: Round One is a free exhibition at the Cardinia Cultural Centre that celebrates the nostalgia and artistry of arcade gaming. The exhibition offers a fresh look at arcade culture by blending retro gaming with modern art and creative storytelling, creating an engaging and interactive experience for visitors.

19 March – 17 May 2026, 9am–4pm, daily

### Stephen K Amos: Now We're Talking

Internationally acclaimed comedian Stephen K Amos is bringing his brand-new show to the Cardinia Cultural Centre for one night only!

Thursday 16 April at 7:30pm

### Morning Melodies

Upcoming activities include:

The Little Mermaid on Wednesday 15 April at 10am

The Voice of an Angel on Wednesday 13 May at 10am

Sing For Your Supra on Wednesday 17 June at 10am

All tickets are \$24.

### Friday Flicks

Come along to watch the classic 1952 film, Singin' in the Rain. All tickets are \$7.

Friday 1 May at 2pm

## **SideQuest 2026**

SideQuest celebrates comics, cosplay, gaming, film, television, anime, sci-fi, fantasy and creative fandom culture, while showcasing local makers, independent artists, and small businesses.

Saturday 2 May, 10am – 3pm

## **Dolly Fever**

Dolly Forever is a lively, feel-good tribute show that celebrates Dolly Parton's iconic music, personality and journey, featuring live performances of her classic hits and heartfelt storytelling.

Saturday 16 May, 7:30pm – 9:30pm

More details: [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/ccs](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/ccs)

## **Libraries**

### **Making the Shrine – Author talk with Laura J. Carroll**

Pakenham Library Tuesday 21 April from 1–3pm

### **Libraries After Dark: Music After Dark with The Joy Birds**

Pakenham Library Friday 24 April from 6:30–8pm

### **Libraries After Dark: Art for Mindfulness Pakenham Library**

Second Friday of each month, 6:30–8pm.

### **Digital tech skills workshops Pakenham Library Selected**

Tuesdays from 1–2:30pm.

**Movie mornings (free)** Emerald Library Fourth Wednesday of every month at 10am

More details: [www.myli.au/events](http://www.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.

### **Cardinia Shire Council**

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Email: [mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au](mailto:mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au)  
Web: [www.cardinia.vic.gov.au](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au)

### **National Relay Service (NRS)**

TTY: 133 677 (ask for 1300 787 624)  
Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay): 1300 555 727  
(ask for 1300 787 624)

### **Translator Interpretation Service**

131 450 (ask for 1300 787 624)

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For more information about Connect:  
[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/connect](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/connect)