

# The Toodyay Herald

Your locally owned  
community newspaper  
Est. 1902

5000 copies circulating in Toodyay, West Toodyay, Goomalling, Bolgart,  
Calingiri, Morangup, Northam, Coondle, Hoddys Well, Wattening, Dewars  
Pool, Culham, Bejoording, Nunile, Julimar, Bakers Hill, Clackline,  
Woorloo, Wundowie, Gidgegannup and local districts.

February 2026  
Edition 453



Our Toodyay fire and rescue service volunteers do an awesome job whenever there's a call out for help anytime and anywhere across the state. (Photograph supplied).

## Rashelle Predovnik

THE tireless efforts of local volunteer bushfire brigades this fire season has drawn heartfelt thanks from the shire president and high praise from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

There have been six large bushfires in the Shire of Toodyay since 1 November, 2025.

Two were sparked by lightning, one was caused by mechanical failure and another was considered suspicious.

About 1,000 hectares were impacted by these fires in a number of locations, including Dumbarton, Morangup, Coondle, Julimar and West Toodyay.

Local brigades in Bejoording, Coondle-Nunile, Julimar, Morangup, Toodyay and Toodyay Central were some of many who took up the fight to keep homes safe.

Generous food donations from The Toodyay Bakery and the Salvation Army kept the volunteers going.

Local farmers and water carters also mobilised to help.

DFES superintendent Garth Civil said that level of practical, local help was vital because firefighting relies on reliable food, hydration and resupply.

He said their support helped crews respond faster, fight fires more effectively and, most

importantly, stay safe.

Local businesses Fire Mitigation Services, Avon Earthworks, Goodes Machinery and Toodyay Tyres also pitched in.

Supt Civil said heavy machinery helps fire crews build a control line that fire can't easily cross so they can work more safely.

As an added bonus, he said that local operators knew the land which reduced risk.

The fire high threat period runs from December to April and last month, 20 fires were lit by 2,000 lightning strikes.

Superintendent Civil said the high threat period was marked by fast moving fire weather and multiple significant incidents in quick succession.

He said major fires sparked the need for everyone to work together across the state.

"Rotating crews help our teams fight a fire for longer and it allows local brigades to rest and be ready for the next flare-up."

Supt Civil said that from an operational perspective the outstanding performance of local volunteer brigades, under repeated and sustained pressure, really stood out.

"Particularly around the Toodyay and Moodyne fires in December," he said.

People might not realise how much we rely across the state, not just on our local volunteers, but on volunteers who go out and help across the state.

"We've got 30,000 volunteers across Western Australia and all those people give up their time willingly to help the community.

"And while some don't get as busy as others sometimes people spend thousands of hours a year helping out the community."

Supt Civil also thanked residents who made an effort to be bushfire ready because their vigilance makes a real difference.

He said there was early, decisive action from local brigades and incoming crews (supported by six aircrafts) on the Moodyne blaze.

The fact that many residents kept their properties maintained so fire crews could easily get access was a game changer.

He said timely alerts via the Emergency WA website or app and the ABC's emergency broadcasts helped residents enact their plans at the right time.

However, information and warnings can become silenced by power outages and Supt Civil stressed the importance of keeping a battery-operated transistor radio at home.

Toodyay shire president Mick McKeown issued a statement to thank those who helped so much.

"Following an incredibly demanding period for our region, I would like to extend grateful thanks to all the fire brigades, agencies, businesses, and individuals who

supported our community during the recent fire incidents," he said.

"While we regret to report the loss of two structures and several outbuildings, we are thankful that no primary residences were destroyed."

Supt Civil also thanked the volunteers and businesses who rallied together during the recent spate of fires.

"Our volunteers did an outstanding job under challenging conditions, and the community's cooperation makes a big difference."

## Coming events

Mega Splash Toodyay

February 14

Toodyay's first ever triathlon

Sunday March 8

## This month

Emergency services	7-8
Environment	29-30
Health	30
Letters	4, 6
Puzzles	28
Sport	31
Trades and services	22-24
Where and when	27

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# IN MEMORIAM

## Richard Taylor (1943–2025) Clinical Psychologist

THE passing of Richard Taylor on November 20 last year came as a profound shock to many in the Toodyay community.

With over 20 years of practice as a clinical psychologist, Richard became known not only for his professional expertise but for his generosity, compassion, and unwavering belief that psychological help should be available to everyone, regardless of means.

Richard's commitment to accessible care led him to run a bulk billing practice and, over the years, he held clinics in Bindoon, Gingin and Wongan Hills.

He combined exceptional clinical knowledge with a warmth and understanding that has left a lasting impact.

Richard's academic journey began at the University of New South Wales, where he studied psychology and sociology – the latter providing him with a broad view of humanity that shaped his approach to life and work.

Early placements, including at Long Bay Gaol in Sydney, provided valuable insight into human behaviour and mental health.

A Diploma in Clinical Training at Sydney University honed his practical skills.

Later, study at the Nuffield Centre, Leeds University, and a part-time Masters of Business Administration at the University of Western Australia equipped him with expertise in health services administration and organisational management.

Beyond his professional life, Richard embraced a wide range of interests.

He enjoyed European, Italian, and French cuisine and he travelled extensively across Europe and Asia.

Richard pursued a graduate diploma in Asian Studies at Murdoch University and practised mindfulness, informed by his

longstanding interest in Buddhism.

Richard's path to Toodyay was unexpected.

A chance visit to town, where an old house with splendid views but in need of work, captured his imagination and led him to relocate in 2021.

His decision brought him into the heart of the community where he quickly became known not just as a practitioner but as a

neighbour, friend, and active participant in local life.

After moving to Toodyay in 2021, he found great pleasure in gardening on his hillside property and becoming part of the local community.

Richard's life was deeply shared with his wife, Robyn.

Their story began in New South Wales

where their fathers bonded over fishing.

After they married, Robyn worked alongside Richard as his part-time practice manager, forming a partnership built on shared values and service.

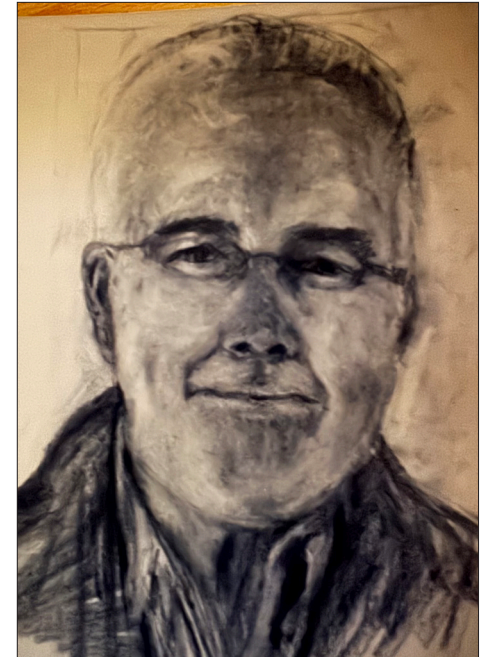
Locally, he found joy in landscaping his hillside garden and in earlier days was an active member of the Toodyay Friends of the River.

Richard's kindness, intellect and compassion will be deeply missed.

He will be remembered for his enduring contribution to the wellbeing of others.



Robyn and Richard Taylor.



An artistic rendering of Richard.

# The Toodyay Herald

The Toodyay Herald is a free monthly newspaper published and owned by a not-for-profit incorporated association - The Toodyay Herald Inc. Contributions via email or on flash drive are preferred. There is no charge for articles that appear in the paper. Deadlines for the next edition are listed below with the paper on the streets in the first week of each month except in January when there is no edition. All advertising should be emailed to [advertising@toodyayherald.com.au](mailto:advertising@toodyayherald.com.au). Editorial contributions and photographs should be emailed to [news@toodyayherald.com.au](mailto:news@toodyayherald.com.au). Photographs for publication should be at least 500kb in file size to ensure quality reproduction in the newspaper.

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The Toodyay Herald has a distribution of 5000 copies, with copies delivered to letter boxes in Toodyay, and Morangup. Copies are also available at roadhouses and businesses in Toodyay, Northam, Bolgart, Bakers Hill, Calingiri, Clackline, Gidgegannup, Goomalling, Wooroloo and Wundowie.

### THANK YOU

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped produce this edition of *The Toodyay Herald*: Joseph Fernandez (Legal), Peter Ruthven, Beth Ruthven, Richard Grant, Judy Morrissey, Jenny Hildred and Michael Black.

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### NEXT TOODYAY HERALD EDITION

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

**Noon Thursday  
February 26**

STORY DEADLINE

**Noon Friday  
March 2**

DISTRIBUTED

**Thursday  
March 12**

# Shire audit exposes \$242K double payment blunder and other failures



Rashelle Predovnik

A DAMNING shire audit has uncovered a \$242,521 duplicate payment, missing financial records, weak cyber security, years of unresolved control failures and serious fraud risks at the Shire of Toodyay, the current administration says it's taking steps to fix.

The 2024-25 audit's financial management report was formally sent to Local Government Minister Hannah Beasley and it identified some significant governance failures, that auditors say have been recurring since 2021.

One serious finding revealed the shire paid the same suppliers twice in July 2025.

The second payment was not even recorded in its accounting system and not yet fully recovered at the time of the auditor's report.

The report said the combination of a high-value duplicate payment, the absence of system records for the second payment, and lack of detection or reporting represented a serious deficiency in the shire's internal controls over expenditure, financial reporting, and fraud prevention.

Shire chief executive officer Aaron Bowman told *The Herald* the overpayment comprised of multiple payments and a report to council this month, confirmed 95 percent of the funds had been repaid.

The remaining five per cent wasn't refunded in cash but was credited to accounts

and taken off future payments.

Another finding that concerned auditors was the fact the shire still could not verify its opening balances or historical financial figures - a problem that has now persisted across four audits.

Auditors also found no monthly bank reconciliations were performed for almost the entire financial year (for July 2024 to May 2025) with errors discovered.

Including the shire's bank reconciliation as at 30 June 2025 included an unreconciled balance of \$22,991.

The Shire's asset register system was also outdated and the lack of a formal grants register was also flagged by the auditor.

The report warned the failures significantly increased the risk of fraud, financial misstatement, cyber breaches and governance breakdowns, undermining public confidence in the shire's operations.

The shire's response to a number of issues raised in the audit was outlined in a letter to the Local Government Minister.

"The shire is working towards addressing all the issues by either completing the actions required, preparing the necessary registers and by council adopting the appropriate policies."

"These will be completed by the timeframes specified in the completion dates detailed against each action in the management report."

## Western Power sparks up fire prevention

WESTERN Power is continuing work across the Wheatbelt, including around Toodyay, to reduce the risk of pole-top fires and improve power reliability during extreme weather.

Pole-top fires can happen when dust or other pollutants build up on insulators.

This is a common issue after harvest or during humid conditions when then the pole can ignite.

When planning these programs, Western Power focuses on areas at higher bushfire risk taking into account the terrain and climate, and regions like Toodyay are a key priority.

The program involves treating or replacing insulators on power poles.

A Western Power spokesperson said their pole-top fire mitigation program was on track to treat or replace insulators in more than 100,000 locations by mid-2027.

"We're currently treating around 19,000 poles across the Midwest and Wheatbelt, due to be complete by mid-year."

"Once complete, more than 60,000 poles will have been treated since September 2023.

"In regional areas we've found an innovative way to apply silicone to insulators using helicopters.

"Additionally, we're proactively installing silicone insulators which are less prone to dust and pollution build up.

"Since July 2022, we've replaced more than 11,500 insulators across the network."

The spokesperson said Western Power was always exploring new technologies and techniques to help reduce the risk of pole-top fires



## Maddox's Supreme Court showdown

RASHELLE PREDOVNIK

FARMER Tony Maddox is bracing for another round in his ongoing legal fight against what he says is a dangerous new law buried in the Aboriginal Heritage Act that needs to be changed.

He's taking his fight all the way to the Supreme Court after being found guilty last year for breaching the Act when he built a concrete creek crossing on his property.

The work was deemed to have altered a registered Aboriginal site without approval, breaching a recently added amendment to Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972.

That amendment was added in November 2023 and Mr Maddox said it was a change no one could reasonably know about - because the department didn't tell anyone about it.

Mr Maddox sought refuge under Section 62 of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage's own legislation that protects people if they can clearly prove they had no knowledge of the amendment to the Act.

Yet despite this being a defence, it was not applied to Mr Maddox's case and he is now appealing the magistrates ruling in the Supreme Court.

The appeal is an expensive road to take after being granted a spent conviction and fined \$2,000, plus \$5,000 in costs, back in February 2025.

But Mr Maddox said it was a matter of principle.

He said the department won the case in the Magistrates Court but if he rolled over and let them have that win it would allow a precedent to be set.

"It means, they can walk onto anyone's farm and now say 'you're guilty too,'" he said.

The Supreme Court case will be heard later this month, on February 20, and Mr Maddox's hopes are heavily pinned onto the expertise of his newly appointed King's Counsel Mark Trowell.

But Mr Maddox told the *Herald* it was hard to predict what the verdict will be.

"If I lose this case, my faith in the West Australian justice system is gone - there is no justice," he said.

"You can't be found guilty of something you have no knowledge of - that's just crazy stuff."

If Mr Maddox wins his appeal he will turn his attention to fighting to have the law changed and he has his supporters.

The WA Farmers Federation and Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA are vocal supporters of his appeal, saying his case sets a dangerous legal precedent for every land owner in WA.

Farmers and other supporters have stumped up over \$50,000 to help with his legal fees.

Tony said he appreciated the number of Toodyay locals following his case, with some even attending court to show their support.

"They've been terrific - they really have."

Supporters can also donate to Mr Maddox's 'fight for common sense' online at: <https://tonymaddox.info>

## Just hang in there

TOODYAY residents are being advised that some mobile phones are currently experiencing delays when calling triple zero.

The Western Australian Police Force has been made aware that some mobiles are not correctly connecting to the emergency number.

It has been identified some phone users may experience a 20 to 30 second delay when dialling 000.

In a statement, WA Police said Telstra's advice to any users experiencing this issue is to remain on the line, understand there will be a short delay, but you will eventually be put through to an operator.

# The Toodyay Herald

## From the editors desk

Pulling up a chair at the editor's desk, one thing quickly becomes clear: this isn't just a newspaper - it's your newspaper.

And that sense of ownership has been more than a century in the making.

From its first run off the presses in 1902 as the *Newcastle Herald and Toodyay District Chronicle*, through its reinvention as the *Avon Valley Toodyay Herald* - at one point publishing weekly and later emerging in the 1990s as the *Toodyay Herald* we know today - this paper has never stood still.

Like the town it serves, it has adapted, modernised, and occasionally reinvented itself - but through all those changes, one thing has remained a constant: this is a paper from the community, and for the community.

I've felt this first-hand, with long-time contributors continuing the proud tradition of sending in stories, photos and updates - the lifeblood of any truly local paper.

That generosity of spirit is something no editor takes lightly, and I'm grateful for the warm welcome.

Of course, another long-standing newspaper tradition is reporting in the public interest - even when the news isn't comfortable reading.

It's hard to ignore the findings of the shire's latest audit, which lays bare historic financial and governance failings that have continued under the current administration.

While the shire has been quick to outline the steps it says it's taking to address these issues, the proof will be in the next audit.

If problems such as missing financial records, weak cyber security, long-standing control failures and serious fraud risks are fixed, those improvements will be clearly reflected in the auditor's report.

We'll also report in the next edition on almost \$195,000 in unclaimed GST that the administration recently sought council approval to write off.

It's a costly oversight and one with history, given previous administrations also failed to claim the owed GST.

But it's a loss that could have been avoided if the current administration had acted before the four-year claim period expired and we'll unpack what that means for ratepayers in the March edition.

Our Facebook page will go live again before the March edition, with a few small editorial tweaks - change, after all, has always been part of the *Herald's* story.

But rest assured: the things you've always valued - local voices, community stories, - and a paper that isn't afraid to ask questions will remain firmly in print

Some traditions are worth keeping.

Rashelle Predovnik  
Editor



The way we were: Starters in the Toodyay Cycle Club's first post-World War 1 race in 1919 outside the old Post Office in Stirling Terrace, from left: Norm Garvey (in Union Jack vest) L. Whitfield, F. Anderson, T. Lloyd, B. Geary, F. Geary, R. Anderson, E. Paterson, Valston Hancock, Frank 'Hookie' Doust, Harold Donegan, O. Leeder and F. Lloyd. According to Wally Chitty's book *Toodyay, The Good Old Days* Doust was first to complete the eight-mile (13km) West Toodyay circuit, and second was Hancock, a boarder at Toodyay Convent and later Air Marshall Sir Valston Hancock DFC, Australia's Chief of the Air Staff (1961-65). The 1920-30s were golden years of cycle racing in Toodyay with the local club affiliated with the WA League of Wheelmen, enabling local riders to compete with professionals. Picture from Toodyay's Newcastle Gaol Museum collection.

## LETTERS

### The more things change, the more they stay the same

THE auditors report for the Shire of Toodyay financial year 2025 reported a number of significant findings.

The annual report and auditor report were items in the special council meeting on January 15.

This was closed to the public. Comparative information and verification of opening balances was a significant finding.

This information as a significant finding was also reported in the auditor reports 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024.

The documents and management letters to the local government minister are available online on the shire's website, from the February meeting's attachments.

This appears to be a recurring finding that the shire has not rectified, despite management comments that processes have been put in place.

The following is taken from the auditor report.

"The auditor's basis for the qualified audit opinion for 2025 was that again comparative information was not supported with accurate underlying records," the report said.

"The auditor was unable to obtain sufficient and appropriate audit evidence."

The auditor concluded that there was a material misstatement and he had not received other information before the date of the report.

The report advised that when he received the material misstatement the chief executive officer and council are required to correct the misstatement information.

If this does not occur the auditor may need to retract the report and amend.

As a ratepayer, it is disappointing that the shire received the qualified opinion.

Particularly as some councillors campaigned that finances would be "fixed".

It would be interesting to know if the misstatement information has been sent to the auditor and if the shire corrected the misstatement information.

If this has not occurred, has the auditor amended the report and will the community be informed?

The community deserves transparency and accountability.

I leave the reader to decide if this is happening with this council.

Susan Pearce  
Toodyay

### Let's do better

AUSTRALIA Day is the most important day of the year for welcoming new citizens and celebrating who we are and it's great to see the shire put on a fabulous breakfast event every year.

The breakfast was fabulous.

The ice cream was brilliant.

But the day deserves a setup that brings everyone together and unfortunately the rec centre is too small to comfortably host an event of this size.

The table set up outside was perfect but not everyone could get inside to see the ceremony.

Some people had to stand out in the corridors to try and listen.

Some poked their heads in and then stepped out again because there was no room inside.

Nobody outside could hear the person on the microphone speaking as part of the official proceedings.

The breakfast is always great but if we're going to invite the community, let's make sure everyone can actually enjoy it.

Apparently two years ago the shire's Australia Day event was held on the grass next to the building.

I'm told it worked beautifully.

Marquees on the grass, tables and chairs, everyone seated comfortably, able to hear, see participate and easily see the proceedings.

They also had speakers that helped everyone to hear it.

I like to see the right thing done by people and I know we can do better.

Rosalie Phillips  
Toodyay

### Come on Aussie

HOW disappointing on Australia Day in Toodyay, to go down-town to discover the majority of stores and cafes were closed.

I noticed only two stores open on Stirling Terrace.

No bakery or cafes open for a casual cuppa and snack.

Tourists looked stunned.

An Avon Valley tourist town shut down on a public holiday.

No additional Aussie flags flapping in the breeze or displayed around town.

What a shame.

Come on Aussie, come on.

Cheryl-Jean  
Toodyay

### How hard is it to get a question answered?

WHEN Rosemary Madacsi was the shire president she took questions from the floor during council meetings.

Some were referred to the then chief executive officer Suzie Haslehurst but most were answered on the spot.

A few questions were taken on notice but, if they were, they were answered fully.

But last year, our current shire president Mick McKeown made up a new rule that he would not answer any questions from the gallery during public question time unless those questions have been emailed to records (the CEO) by midday on the day of the meeting.

The administration then prepares a response which is read out during the meeting.

Often, the response does not answer the question, either fully or at all.

For example, one of my pre-submitted questions for the December council meeting was regarding the CEO's desire to write off \$194,353 of GST credits from the Australian Tax Office.

The main part of my question asked how could the shire guarantee that the amount they wanted to write off was correct?

That part was not answered in the response I was given.

So, I repeated the question again. Cr McKeown's reply was "you've had the answer."

When the meeting reached the write-off item on the agenda, Cr McKeown completely ignored the officer's recommendation, which was the purpose of the agenda item.

Whether this was by accident or design, I don't know.

From 1 January 2026 council can no longer approve write-offs requested by the administration.

They must be approved by the Local Government Inspector in what I understand is an anti-fraud measure.

This \$194,353 could have been recovered under the current administration but wasn't.

Beth Ruthven  
Toodyay

Continued on Page 6

Toodyay Rainfall													
Recordings and average commenced on 1 January 1907													
YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
2019	1.8	0	5.8	15.4	8.7	125.7	128.4	66.3	13.4	15.2	6.0	0	386.7
2020	0	31.6	9.8	6.4	38.2	48.9	43.7	61.8	30.2	5.9	48.8	3.5	328.8
2021	0.03	17.3	137.3	11.1	121.7	30.4	154.2	70.3	39	61.6	2.2	0	645.13
2022	31.7	4.5	14	30.9	36.8	43	42.7	151.1	44	15.6	12	5.1	431.4
2023	0.1	0	54.9	29	21.8	74.3	42.4	19.8	32.3	2.9	7.4	2.0	286.9
2024	9.8	4.5	0	7.8	43.5	53.2	77	85.3	18.7	21.6	22	1.9	345.3
2025	3.7	0	27	47.6	15.2	23.8	65.7	118.9	28.3	43.4	2.5		183
Average	17.20	17.30	15.50	26.10	54.80	57.04	70.16	81.93	20.41	23.74	14.41	2.08	418.68

The Toodyay Herald invites you to have your say in our letters page. Please email news@toodyayherald.com.au with your full name, address and phone number. Letters less than 300 words about topical local issues are preferred. The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length, grammar, punctuation and legal reasons. Publication of letters is at The Herald's discretion.

# Three generations of editors shape the story

THE story of the *Toodyay Herald* is one of dedication, community and continuity.

Every chapter of its history has been shaped by editors who listened to their readers, scrutinised those in positions of power, and ensured the *Herald* remained a trusted source of news and community connection.

This year, a new chapter unfolds with Rashelle Predovnik stepping into the editor's role.

She brings a wealth of experience, yet the foundations laid by past editors continue to guide the paper.

As we reflect on their achievements, we begin with Michael Sinclair Jones, whose leadership strengthened the *Herald* and set standards that would shape its direction for years to come.

## Michael Sinclair Jones Feb 2014 – Dec 2023

Michael arrived in Toodyay in late 2013 after 50 years in professional media.

This was mostly as a reporter and sub-editor at *The West Australian* newspaper and in senior roles at the National Native Title Tribunal, University of Western Australia, Curtin University and the WA media union.

The *Herald* editor's job was offered as a volunteer role with a monthly honorarium to replace retired classical musician and Julimar volunteer firefighter Grant Scobie.

Grant stayed on for a few weeks to teach Michael InDesign production software and, with former assistant *Herald* editor Meredith Neilsen, Michael worked – sometimes until 2am – to create brighter newspapers with stronger news stories and headlines, better action photographs and more lively layouts.

The new-look *Herald* soon resulted in a monthly print production boost from 3400 to 5000 copies – a 70 per cent increase in circulation – to meet increased reader demand and attract more advertising revenue.

The *Herald* broke important news stories such as a WA Government inquiry into the Shire of Toodyay that produced 25 adverse findings in State Parliament.

A legal clash over an allegedly unauthorised creek crossing on private land in Nunile that continues to make national headlines over state indigenous heritage laws.

The paper also weathered WA's month-long 2020 Covid 19 lockdown when local shops and cafes were ordered to close.

Masks became mandatory, vaccination proof was required for certain occupations and Toodyay became an eerie ghost town.

*Herald* staff were authorised to pass through police roadblocks on Toodyay Rd to continue producing the latest news, information and photographs about pandemic developments, medical updates and Central Wheatbelt health services to help keep the local community informed.

Another *Herald* milestone was the 2017 introduction of an upgraded website to enable anyone with a computer, tablet or



Passing the baton: former *Toodyay Herald* editors Michael Sinclair Jones and Sean Hefferon with incoming editor Rashelle Predovnik.

smart phone to share individual online stories, photographs and advertising.

The newspaper, which operates as an independent not-for-profit association run by local volunteers, completed its transition to a more modern entity in 2023 with a shift to new premises behind the Christmas shop.

## Sean Hefferon Feb 2024 – Dec 2025

Outgoing editor Sean Hefferon – a human resources consultant and former local men's mental health "Mr Perfect" BBQ host – took over in February 2024 to ensure the paper's survival.

The talented photographer has done an outstanding job keeping the paper afloat for the past two years, despite not being a journalist by profession.

He came to the role with a broad mix of qualifications and experience including a Master of Business Administration, working as a rehabilitation counsellor in

remote Indigenous communities and global experience as a business executive.

Sean's insight and strong advocacy skills were put to good use as he upheld the *Herald's* tradition of strong news stories and holding decision makers to account.

His 'can do' attitude underpins his latest passion project The Toodyay Community Fund: a locally governed philanthropic venture created to grow long-term wellbeing in our region.

By pooling donations from residents, businesses and supporters, the fund will invest in projects that reduce social isolation, help children and youth flourish, and strengthen our natural environment.

## Rashelle Predovnik: Feb 2026 -

The *Herald's* new editor is a journalist who built a career speaking up for those who were ignored, overlooked or felt powerless.

She was a finalist in the WA Media Awards

in 2013 and 2015.

She was also a finalist in the Consumer Protection Media Awards in 2014, the same year she won the Deborah Kirwan Media Award for a series of stories she wrote that supported seniors.

Rashelle spent six years as a senior journalist at the *Echo Newspaper* in Midland.

She was a freelancer for the *Science Network WA*, a journalist at *WA Business News*, has tutored journalism units at Murdoch University, including media law and ethics units, and spent a year in State Parliament as executive officer to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Her passion for advocacy led her to run for council and Rashelle was successfully elected to the City of Swan council in 2019.

As a councillor she championed reforms to better support those in financial hardship struggling to pay their rates.

Rashelle is a Toodyay ratepayer and host of a weekly community radio chat show.



President of the Toodyay RSL Geoff Browne at the wall of remembrance

## Honouring service one plaque at a time

RESIDENTS now have the opportunity to commemorate family members and loved ones who served in the armed forces with the Toodyay RSL sub-branch inviting orders for memorial plaques to be installed on the wall of remembrance at the war memorial.

The special wall on Anzac Terrace was built several years ago using a grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

It was designed to hold small plaques recognising those who served either overseas or within Australia.

These plaques have traditionally been offered to RSL members, and the sub-branch is now extending the invitation to the wider Toodyay community.

There is a criteria for eligibility, including service with a western nation's military.

Plaques must also follow an approved wording format, and they will require approval from Australian or overseas government authorities.

For more information, please contact Toodyay RSL secretary Max Howard by via email: [toodyayrsl@gmail.com](mailto:toodyayrsl@gmail.com) or call him on 0475 724 233.

LETTERS ...

Local laws

‘outdated, absurd and gibberish’

COUNCIL resolved to undertake a review of its local laws and the community was invited to make submissions in February 2023.

Council received a number of submissions and one of those submissions raised about 140 points.

That submission highlighted that parts of the local laws are outdated, irrelevant, unenforceable, absurd and gibberish.

Councillors held a workshop in February 2024 and resolved in March 2024 to defer consideration of the cat local law and the dog local law.

No other local laws were considered by councillors in March 2024 and council has done nothing since about its local laws.

It is now February 2026, three years on.

Council is aware, or ought to be aware, of the sorry state of its local laws, but has failed to do anything about them.

Clearly, it has pleased council to treat the community with contempt.

*Phil Hart, Morangup*

Bridge shutdowns now a safety issue

I AM concerned that the engineer has apparently condemned a lot of the bridges around Toodyay, including the Slaughterhouse and Dumbarton bridges.

They are now closed, as reported in *The Herald, (Bridges over troubled waters, December 2025).*

Get a second opinion and another engineer to go and assess all of the bridges to look for solutions, instead of shutting it all down.

The closure of Slaughterhouse bridge has now caused a safety issue for residents.

If we have a fire that comes from a south, south-west direction the elderly residents on Toodyay West Rd have nowhere to go.

We have three ambos and some firefighters – volunteers – who need to move quickly when there’s an emergency and the bridge closure is delaying them getting to whatever emergency they’re going to.

Why don’t we get a second opinion and look for solutions?

*Mick Bell West Toodyay*

Toodyay puts its stamp on an Australia Post first

Rashelle Predovnk

MORANGUP residents will no longer need to trek to Gidgegannup or Mundaring to pick up their parcels, thanks to a campaign by the community association that has scored a win for the region.

Morangup Progress Association (MPA) member and Toodyay shire councillor Ray Mills said he was told by his contact at Australia Post this was the first parcel locker in Western Australia in a regional location.

“There’s not even one in Northam,” he said.

The parcel locker on 46 Wallaby Way in Morangup has been a long time coming after months of emails and lobbying by the MPA.

Mr Mills said the Toodyay Shire and Wheatbelt MLA Lachlan Hunter helped their bid with letters of support.

Mr Hunter, who worked for Australia Post before he got elected to Parliament last year, welcomed the win.

He said the parcel lockers were always a great way for people to have access to online shopping.

“Whether its ordering dog food or getting the latest greatest thing online, it’s the most convenient way.”

But despite the obvious benefits, Australia Post still needed a lot of convincing.

Mr Mills said Morangup got over 1,000 parcels monthly.

“We gave Australia Post all those statistics and it still wasn’t enough,” he said.

“It has been a push and that’s why I approached Lachlan.

“He assisted and then the shire came in and helped as well and it was good.”

The MPA announced on their Facebook page in December that the new post boxes were installed and ready to use.

“Now, this is where the fun starts,” the Facebook post enthused.

“When you buy your item online and when it asks for an address, you can use the address and locker number and the parcel will be delivered straight to the locker.”

“Bonus”

“No more driving to Gidgie or Mundaring.”

Those who want to use the new post boxes are advised to create a MyPost account on this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/59wdac7>

Parcels need to be able to fit in the lockers and not be over 16kgs.



Morangup Progress Association member Ray Mills and Wheatbelt MLA Lachlan Hunter.

Old garage gets a new makeover

THERE’S exciting plans afoot for an iconic building on Stirling Terrace in Toodyay, with council approving plans to transform the former garage into a community-focused pop-up market.

The site at 97 Stirling Terrace got approval to build a retaining wall and a new toilet block next to the historic building.

The retaining wall will be put at the back of the property and will not be visible from Charcol Lane.

The garage is listed as a heritage building on the Shire Municipal Inventory and it sits within a special control area in the Toodyay town centre precinct.

The revamp will not alter the building’s outside facade.

Instead, it will be designed to keep the site’s heritage character and include retail and café-style spaces for locals and visitors.

The historic garage was built in 1925 and it has been a key part of Toodyay’s commercial and automotive history in the heart of town.

It was one of the first garages in the area, marking the rise of motorised transport in the 1920s and 1930s.

Today, it’s prominent façade, timber trusses, gable roof, and original shop windows remain

largely intact.

The garage is considered a valuable example of a post-World War II development influenced by an Art Deco design.

Its preservation is guided by local heritage policies that encourage adaptive reuse while keeping key historic elements.

The proposed redevelopment aims to introduce minor, reversible changes to the building.

Plans include installing a prefabricated ablution block on the western side, adding access steps to the rear parking area, and improving safety with fire exit doors and extinguishers.

Some remedial work is planned for the western workshop floor, which has deteriorated over time.

Temporary stalls and café-style seating will be put inside to support a community-focused marketplace without compromising the building’s historic fabric.

Offsite parking has also been identified to fulfil parking requirements for the new land uses being proposed.

Council approved the application at its December meeting and development must substantially start within two years.



There are exciting plans in the pipeline for this iconic site on 97 Stirling Terrace.

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## EMERGENCY SERVICES

# Welcoming a new year and new faces

**St John Ambulance Toodyay**  
Monika Williams

HAPPY New Year to all our wonderful Toodyay community members.

As we step into 2026, the team at St John would like to extend warm greetings and our best wishes for a safe and healthy year ahead.

We are pleased to report that the Christmas and New Year period was, thankfully, a relatively quiet one for our ambulance service.

It seems Santa wasn't the only one checking his list twice, the townsfolk must have been on their best behaviour.

If this is what a wellbehaved community looks like, we'll happily take more of it.

A special 'thank you' goes to volunteer ambulance officer Janelle, whose creativity and humour kept our spirits high over the holiday break.

She produced a fantastic series of lighthearted videos featuring our local volunteers, which were shared across our social media pages.

These clips showcased not only the fun side of our team but also the dedication and teamwork behind the scenes.

Thank you, Janelle, for bringing smiles to so many faces.

As we move further into the year, we are excited to invite the community to our upcoming open night on Thursday, 19 February, from 6pm to 8pm.

If you have ever considered volunteering with St John, whether as an ambulance officer or a community transport driver, this is the perfect opportunity to come along and learn more.

The evening will include presentations, a hands on demonstration, and plenty of chances to chat with current volunteers about their experiences.

We will also provide refreshments to keep everyone energised while they explore what volunteering involves.

There is no need to book: contact our office if you'd like more information or just turn up on the night.

You might be surprised by how rewarding, flexible and communityfocused our roles can be.

We are also delighted to welcome new volunteers Sarah and Laura to our Toodyay team.

Sarah and Laura recently completed a comprehensive weekend of training and are now qualified emergency medical responders.

Sarah is studying nursing and brings clinical knowledge and experience to the team.

She looks forward to learning more about pre-hospital care.

Laura will be volunteering alongside her mum, Kerrie, who serves both as an emergency medical technician and as our committee treasurer.

Although Laura is based in Perth, she travels to Toodyay regularly and jumps straight into the ambulance roster while in town.

We are also pleased to introduce our two new community transport service (CTS) volunteers, Louise and Julie.

They will help clients by providing transport to medical appointments throughout the Wheatbelt and to Perth.

CTS drivers support those who are unable to drive themselves.

Bookings for this valuable service can be made through the office at a very reasonable and affordable price.

As always, we thank the Toodyay community for your continued support.

Here's to a safe, connected, and caring year ahead.



Kerrie and Laura Carter.

# Community collaboration in times of crisis

**VBFB Julimar**  
Gayle Nelson

THE JULIMAR Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade (JVFBFB) has had an exceptionally active start to the 25-26 high-threat season.

With conditions intensifying, December saw the JVFBFB participate with other shire brigades and State services to suppress the Moondyne Fire in Julimar – a significant blaze that tested resources to the limit.

On that day, every available unit was deployed to multiple incidents in the area.

This left no reserves and highlighted the critical role of the community and volunteer support in protecting lives and property.

As the season continues, the brigade is taking time to recognise those who have gone above and beyond to assist in these efforts.

Earlier this year our brigade captain presented a certificate of appreciation to Genesis Mining Services.

This gesture acknowledges the company's outstanding support in allowing staff members additional time off to contribute

to fire suppression activities during peak demand.

Such partnerships between local businesses and emergency services are vital.

They not only strengthen the brigade's capacity to respond swiftly but also demonstrate the power of community collaboration in times of crisis.

On behalf of the community, the JVFBFB extends heartfelt thanks to Genesis Mining and all the volunteers who have dedicated countless hours to safeguarding our region.

JVFBFB captain, Dale Canning, said when resources are stretched to the limit, every extra set of hands makes a difference.

"Genesis Mining's support has been invaluable, and we're proud to recognise their contribution to keeping our community safe," he said.

Residents are reminded that the fire season is far from over.

Vigilance remains essential and the brigade encourages everyone to stay informed, adhere to fire safety guidelines, and support local firefighting efforts wherever possible.

Don't forget to check the DFES website for information on preparing an emergency plan.

If you'd like to make a real difference in your community and be part of a dedicated team, please call 0439 030 920 or email: secretary@julimarbfb.org.au



JVFBFB Captain Dale Canning presents the certification of appreciation to Genesis Mining Services' General Manager Operations, Ben Cooper, following the Moondyne Fire.



Connor – Australia Day.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

# Coondle–Nunile bushfire crews ready to respond

**VBFB Coondle Nunile**  
Aurelie Zimmermann

THE PERIOD following Christmas through most of January was relatively quiet for the Coondle–Nunile bushfire brigade.

While this was a welcome break during what is traditionally a busy time of the year, late January saw an increase in activity with several incidents occurring over a few days.

Although not a surge as such, these incidents served as a reminder that conditions can change quickly during the fire season and that crews must remain ready to respond.

During this period, the brigade was called to incidents at both ends of the shire with both Coondle appliances deployed.

Crews provided an initial response as well as coverage for follow-up shifts, demonstrating the importance of flexibility

and teamwork.

Training remains well on track and was well attended with all members gaining valuable refreshers and practical experience.

January's session began with a short presentation covering key theory and important concepts such as pump mechanics and the correct use of foam.

This was followed by hands-on practical training where members took turns working with hoses, operating discharge valves and activating the foam system.

These exercises not only build confidence with equipment but also strengthen coordination and communication between crew members, which is essential during incidents.

Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) training programs are now appearing on the volunteer portal giving

members the opportunity to enrol in a wide range of off-season courses.

This allows volunteers to further develop their skills at their own pace, with courses covering practical firefighting techniques as well as theoretical knowledge.

Examples of topics are fire behaviour and weather interpretation, all of which contribute to safer and more effective operations on the fireground.

Completing these courses gives members a deeper understanding of the principles behind firefighting techniques and supporting better decision-making during incidents.

The brigade would like to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of volunteers, not only from Coondle but across all brigades within the shire and those providing help from out of area.

These members continue to balance training, callouts, and personal commitments throughout the fire season.

The support of families also plays an important role in enabling members to respond when needed.

As the warmer months continue, residents are encouraged to remain fire aware, keep properties maintained and monitor local fire advice and warnings.

The Coondle team is always looking for new members.

Being part of the brigade offers many benefits, including learning new skills, gaining valuable knowledge and giving back to the community.

The brigade meets every Friday from 5pm at the fire station located at 775 Bindi Bindi–Toodyay Rd, near the old wheat bins.

Anyone unsure if firefighting is for them is more than welcome to come along, meet the team, or get in touch via email at coondle.nunilebfb@gmail.com.

Volunteering with the brigade is not only rewarding but also a great way to be actively involved in supporting the safety and wellbeing of the local community.



## Toodyay fireys answer the call



Toodyay Central Volunteer Bushfire brigade members. Pic courtesy of Rob Boase.

**VBFB Toodyay Central**  
Peter Brennan

SINCE our last article for the December edition of *The Herald*, we have had 24 callouts.

Thirteen have been stand downs.

In all, our Toodyay Central VBFB team alone has spent a total of 448 hours of crew time deployed on the scene.

We had several members who deployed to a major incident at Boddington and the Toodyay bulk water tanker deployed out of the shire on three occasions.

A big 'thankyou' to chief Craig Stewart, deputy one Nick Griggs, new chief emergency services manager Sam Roberts and our fire control officers for your leadership over these incidents.

An outstanding job as always, your efforts are very much appreciated.

We also thank our farmers who are very often first on the scene with fire units and machinery.

Their quick efforts often give our combined brigades a jump start on containing a fire and in a few cases they have it contained by the time we arrive.

This overall team effort is an extremely valuable capability in our community.

On Sunday November 30, we held our annual Christmas lunch with our families and partners.

We had a terrific time in a relaxed atmosphere at the station and luckily we did not get interrupted by a callout until we were packing up.

Crews departed the station at 2pm and spent 45 hours total crew time at an incident.

Thankfully, our Christmas Day plans were not interrupted and we could enjoy the day as planned.

However, we did not have the opportunity to get too comfortable as we had a callout later that evening at 11.30pm, which resulted

in eight crew hours deployed.

We thank all of our brigade members who have turned out to support these incidents and also our families whose support is always outstanding.

No matter how hard some of our shifts have been, a terrific team spirit continues to be on display. Much of this outlook is based in the knowledge that we have done something good for the community.

We would also like to thank our Toodyay community, and beyond, for following us on Facebook.

We love the support you give us with your likes and comments allowing our volunteers to know just how much they are appreciated.

The thank you, well done, and acknowledgements of our efforts are invaluable.

However, we would reiterate for those still asking on Facebook where the incident is or its status: could you please check out our post pinned to the top of our Facebook page headed 'Your safety is your responsibility'.

Download the Emergency WA app and if you don't have a smart phone you can see the same information via the Emergency WA website along with tuning into ABC radio to keep yourself informed.

Facebook pages are only updated when someone is available to undertake the task, so please don't use these pages solely for your information.

Emergency WA is where the incident information comes from, so please teach your self how to get alerts, set up watch zones etc..

Lastly, please slow down and pull to the side of the road when you see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching from behind you, flashing red and blue lights and siren.

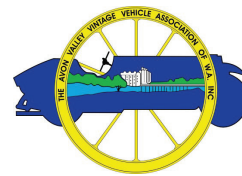
These vehicles will not pass you unless it is absolutely safe to do so.

Stay aware on the road when driving please.



Crews race fight a fire in the Toodyay Shire in December. Pic Aurelie Zimmermann.

Avon Valley Vintage Vehicle Association of WA Inc



# SWAP MEET



Sunday 15th March 2026

**Toodyay Oval (Showground) TOODYAY**

Selling: Cars, Trucks, Tractors, Motorcycles, Machinery, Engines, Used Spare Parts, Collectables, Household Items, etc .

**Sellers Sites : \$20:00 each (Admits Driver and 1 other person)**  
Vehicles For Sale ONE ONLY per 4m x 6 m standard site

**GATES OPEN : Sellers : 6.00am**

Public Entry : 7:00am FINISH : 1:00pm

Public Entry : \$5:00 per person (Kids Free) EFTPOS Available

**Classic Car Display Vehicles 7am – 1pm on site**

Food and Drink available, no alcohol

Organiser Approved food-drink vendors only on site

**ENQUIRIES:**

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**Facebook Message :** <https://www.facebook.com/avonvintagecars>

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# Citizenship and community service celebrated



TOODYAY'S Australia Day celebrations brought together residents from across the shire to welcome new citizens and recognise community champions.

Six new Australians took their citizenship pledges during the ceremony: Leah Cochran, Erlinda Harrison, Ericha McGlurg, Brian Millington, Magdalena Niedzielska and Fleur Remus.

Auspire ambassador and guest speaker Lueth Garang delivered a powerful address reflecting on her journey from South Sudan to becoming a primary school teacher and community advocate in Western Australia.

After fleeing civil war and spending 11 years in a refugee camp in Kenya, Ms Garang arrived in Australia as a child.

She has built a career helping others through her Lueth Learning Centre.

The event also featured the presentation of the 2026 Community Citizen of the Year Awards.

Stephen and Liz Ferguson were named Community Citizens of the Year for their

tireless leadership at the Toodyay Race Club, helping grow major events, attract visitors and strengthen community spirit.

Young Community Citizens of the Year were awarded jointly to brothers Thomas and Nicholas Thornton for their extensive volunteering with Toodyay Locals Care, Midland Meals and junior sporting clubs.

Senior Community Citizen of the Year went to Barry Keens for his long-standing work in sustainability, the Men's Shed, mini rail and heritage projects.

The Active Citizenship Award for a group or event was presented to the Toodyay Cricket Club, recognised for its decades of volunteer support across community events, including fundraising and clean-ups.

The well-attended ceremony was hosted by the Shire of Toodyay and guests enjoyed breakfast cooked by the Toodyay Cricket Club, music by Paul Davies, flowers from Botanica Australis, coffee from Cup of Eden and ice cream from Amore Mio Soft Serve.



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Toodyay CRC each month

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L-R: Toodyay Historical Society members Desrae, Beth, Milton, Brian, Robyn, Linda, Carolyn, Eva, Margie, Faye, Don, Wayne.

## Heritage hits the road: members head to Albany

**Toodyay Historical Society**  
Dr Robyn Taylor, Patron

ANOTHER year passes.

A new one begins.  
What will it bring?  
Hopefully many enjoyable things to see and do for our members.

Our planning meeting was held in January where we mapped out suggestions for this year's events, excursions, meetings with speakers, and always interesting 'show and tells'.

Tradition has our first gathering as a dinner in town.

March will be very special with a visit to Albany to enjoy a weekend on March 26-29 at its bicentenary celebrations.

These celebrations will be spread throughout the year and they commemorate the founding of Western Australia's first European settlement in 1826, when the British and Aboriginal people started living together on the western side of Australia.

Publicity for the event reveals its key aim and as Western Australia's first bicentenary, Albany 2026 will set the benchmark for reconciliation, and it is critical to the success of Perth 2029.

Key locations across Albany will form the setting for these stories of our place and people to be told, upheld and celebrated.

Most of the members who attended the planning meeting indicated they would like to go and bookings for accommodation are being made.

A highlight will be 'Lighting the Sound'. That promises 'to be one of the largest outdoor light installations ever staged on Earth'.

Wow. It will be a collaboration with Finnish light artist Kari Kola and will take place over three weekends.

In May, we will participate in the Australian Heritage Festival.

The theme is 'change' so put your thinking

caps on for activities we can offer.

In September the 61st State History Conference of the Affiliated Historical Societies will be held in the State Library in Perth.

This is always an enjoyable weekend of talks and excursions, and it's close to home.

The theme is *A century of change, 1926-2026: where to next?*

It will be the Royal WA Historical Society's 100th anniversary so it promises to be an extra-special occasion.

A highlight of the recent Australia Day celebrations was member Barry Keens winning the Senior Community Citizen of the Year Award.

This was a timely recognition for Barry's many years of dedicated service to the community, especially his volunteering and fund-raising efforts for the Newcastle Gaol Museum.

See page nine in *The Herald* for details. For details about us: *See Where and When.*

## Granny flats get more room to move

THE COMMUNITY can now have a say on proposed changes to the shire's planning rules, aimed at giving more flexibility to granny flats, also known as ancillary dwellings.

A public comment period is now open because the current policy is set to get an overhaul.

Proposed changes include how granny flat applications are assessed – clearer rules and more flexibility.

The new policy also aims to better reflect how our community lives now and the growing demand for diverse housing options.

Traditionally, granny flats were approved to allow elderly family members to live close to relatives and because of this strict limits were placed on their size, number of bedrooms, distance from the main house and who could live in them.

But state planning rules have now changed. Granny flats can now be lived in by non-

family members and, in some cases, used for short-term rental accommodation.

As housing pressure continues to grow, these dwellings are playing a much bigger role in meeting local housing demand.

And in response, the shire is reviewing its policy.

The current maximum size of 70 square metres is now considered too restrictive, particularly for rural properties.

The draft policy proposes greater flexibility around the size of granny flats, the number of bedrooms allowed and how far they can be located from the main dwelling.

Incentives for granny flats on large rural lots are also being considered.

Public comment is open until Monday 2 March 2026.

To have your say, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mwmyx6x4>



## Craft and connect with Ragbags

Ragbags Quilting Group  
Kerry Gregory

HAPPY New Year to all our crafters and readers.

I trust your festive season gatherings were enjoyable and you have coped with the torrid heat we've experienced during the break.

Such hot weather generally means we retreat inside and it gives us time to pursue our quilting and crafting activities, at the very least maybe you've done some planning for future creative projects.

Myself, I have not done the quilting of a small quilt as intended over the break, but I have been happy to sit in the air conditioning and hand-stitch scrap strips of my stash fabrics over cotton rope to make small baskets.

I have also been reading a number of the old New Zealand quilter magazines given to me a few months ago and I've been inspired by a few articles.

I have particularly enjoyed a number of articles relating to recycling and preservation of old eiderdowns and quilts, full of family memories and skills.

An article related to the passion of a lady collecting and restoring quite a number of old eiderdown bed covers took me back to memories of two beautiful eiderdown bed covers made by my grandmother.

A bridal dressmaker by trade, nan had beautifully pieced and crafted two bedcovers from scraps of exquisite bridal fabrics, many being fine silks and elaborate laces, in soft tones of white, cream, ivory, dove grey and occasional pastel shades from bridesmaids' dresses.

Those eiderdowns were so beautiful, soft and tactile and they held wonderful childhood memories for me.

Regrettably after my grandparents passed away these treasures were given away as they were in need of some repair and I was not living in Western Australia at that time to salvage them.

I sincerely hope they are still intact and loved by someone who has restored them – they would be one hundred years old now.

Another topic which took my interest related to making quilts from wool fabrics, including dyeing, a notion I have toyed with for some time.

The woman featured in that article also collected woollen clothes, men's and women's coats, dresses and skirts from friends, family and op-shops enabling her to have a selection of wool textures and colours for her creative projects.

The Ragbags group meet at the St Stephens Anglican church hall, Stirling Terrace Toodyay (next door to the Cola Cafe), on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 10am to 2pm.

It's cool inside and you can bring your lunch – we use the back door.

Join us for a cuppa and a chat; bring along your beautiful holiday handiwork; quilting, knitting, crochet or craft projects for a little 'show and tell' session.

Bring your quilting blocks and sewing machine if you wish.

We love to see all the creative and fabulous projects and share your enthusiasm.



A selection of colourful little baskets.

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✉ [lachlan.hunter@mp.wa.gov.au](mailto:lachlan.hunter@mp.wa.gov.au)

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LACHLAN HUNTER MP

MEMBER FOR CENTRAL WHEATBELT

Authorised by L. Hunter, Northam Boulevard, Fitzgerald St, Northam WA 6401

# Godspell goes down under

Daryl Cooper

DIRECTOR Sara Whincup has assembled a talented cast for the Toodyay Theatre Group's production of the musical *Godspell*.

Rehearsals are now under way and Sara has introduced a number of innovations to add a local flavour to the story.

She has set the play in a fictional Australian regional city, instead of New York.

The characters, with the exception of the leading roles, have names different to those in the original script.

Another innovation is that each of the cast has been asked to create an Australian 'backstory' for the character they will be playing.

The backstory is not part of the play, but it is intended to explain how the character came to be involved in the story being told.

Knowing this helps each player better understand their character and it adds to the authenticity they bring to the part.

For example, the actor playing the lead role of Jesus (Max Jones) created a backstory of being raised in the bush by a poor but caring family who taught him to be emotionally strong and never afraid to help others.

Moving to the city as a young man, he



The production of *Mango Fever* 2023.

wants to help the less fortunate residents he meets through sharing the lessons he learned in the bush.

Sara likes her cast not to think of themselves as 'actors' but as 'players'.

This reflects back to the days when that term was used by troupes of performers who travelled through villages and towns and used it to describe themselves.

This reminds the cast of the long tradition of local theatres of which they are now a part.

Sara's enthusiasm, not just for this

production, but for theatre in general augurs well for a thoroughly enjoyable experience audiences will enjoy when public performances are held in April.

## Monday is music to our ears

Toodyay Community Singers  
Anne Millar

I HOPE you all had a great Christmas and we wish you a happy and prosperous new year.

This year, we are changing rehearsal times to Monday from 4.30pm to 5.30pm and we are hoping to get some new voices into our group.

The first event of the year is our attendance at the ANZAC Day service at the cenotaph.

We also have a performance booked for the Moondyne Festival on Sunday May 3.

If you are new to our community in Toodyay and would like to take part in community events, enjoy singing and making new friends we would like to see you at the Country Women's Association hall on Stirling Terrace.

We meet on Monday evenings from 4.30pm to 5.30pm.

No experience required just enjoy singing.

## Carols, crooners and Xmas cheer

Toodyay Music Club  
Jenny Edgecombe

TOODYAY Music Club's December meeting was a cheerful affair.

The afternoon started with an enthusiastic singalong to warm up our voices.

It was delightful to have several visitors, who joined in with gusto. The singalong was followed by members' individual songs.

As this was the last meeting before Christmas, many people chose songs with a Yuletide flavour.

Anne led off with the moving song, *Little Drummer Boy*.

Joe sang a lovely version of *Bread and Fishes*, in addition to the moving Bernard Carney song, *Christmas with you*.

Not everyone chooses to sing Christmas Carols and songs at the December gathering.

Phil added some variety with *Hotel California*.

We have come to expect songs with a difference from Maurice, who did not disappoint. This time he included two rather different songs: *Frosty the Yobbo* and the *Boars' Head*.

Later in the programme, Anne joined Collette in a lovely rendition of *Galway Bay*.

Jenny's father was a lay preacher, so she absorbed a great many Christmas songs and hymns during her childhood.

Her selection included *Oh Little Town of Bethlehem*, and a more light-hearted song, *Robert, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.

Apparently, Robert was Rudolph's cousin twice removed.

All in all, it was a most enjoyable afternoon.

We are now looking forward to the February meeting, after the usual January break.

Songs for the February meeting will be based around the theme of 'boots and shoes.'

Anne has also challenged club members to try and learn a new song 'by heart' for each meeting but this is not compulsory.

Our first meeting this year will be at the CWA Hall on February 14, starting at 1pm.

For more information, please call Joe on 0400 86 2694.

## Spotlight shines on Arts Toodyay Exhibition

Arts Toodyay  
Chelle Ellery

IT'S HONESTLY hard to believe how quickly the last year has flown.

*Art in the Garage* still feels like yesterday and we're still a bit blown away by how Toodyay showed up for it.

Local artists, their families, volunteers, local art lovers and our wonderful sponsors all played a part in making it an amazing event.

We were also incredibly grateful to local business owners Wizz and Stirling whose generosity provided a space where local art could truly shine.

This year, we're coming in with that same heart but with a bit more momentum behind us.

We've listened, we've planned and we're ready to build on what worked and level-up what's next.

The Arts Toodyay Exhibition, with the Shire of Toodyay sponsored Toodyay Art Prize, will be on full display during Moondyne Festival weekend.

Opening on Friday and running through to Sunday May 3, it's an opportunity for visitors to come to Friday night's opening.

It celebrates the artists with Saturday shining a spotlight on our young creatives, with youth artist presentations that never fail to surprise and delight.

On Sunday, May 3 as Moondyne fills the streets with colour and excitement, the exhibition remains a calm and welcoming creative retreat just steps away from the action.

Beyond the gallery walls, Arts Toodyay will collaborate with Midland Brick with a sponsored clay activity taking place at Duidgee Park, guided by local artists and centred on connection, conversation and country.

More details will be shared.

Behind this much-loved event is a year of planning, care and collaboration.

A recent planning day brought together Arts Toodyay's volunteers and committee members, shaping a strong start to the year and a program full of creative opportunity.

Each Monday afternoon at the CRC, Sketchbook Club with Jessica Edwards-Parker is returning for another year with

groups for younger and older students.

It's a relaxed after-school space where creativity is encouraged, friendships form, and artistic confidence grows.

To show their thanks for the ongoing support, the Sketchbook Club created a fabulous artwork for the Toodyay Bendigo bank.

Arts Toodyay is also delighted to welcome Jessica Edwards-Parker for a five-week abstract botanical watercolour program.

This fully immersive experience includes all high-quality materials and invites participants to explore colour, movement and botanical forms in a supportive and inspiring environment.

Another highlight for 2026 will be the launch of Arts Toodyay's inaugural Youth Art Lab.

Running over nine weeks for children aged six and up, the program brings together experienced art educators and dedicated volunteers to explore mixed media, sculpture and printmaking.

Works created in the program can be proudly exhibited as part of the annual exhibition.

This gives young people a genuine taste of what it means to be a practising artist.

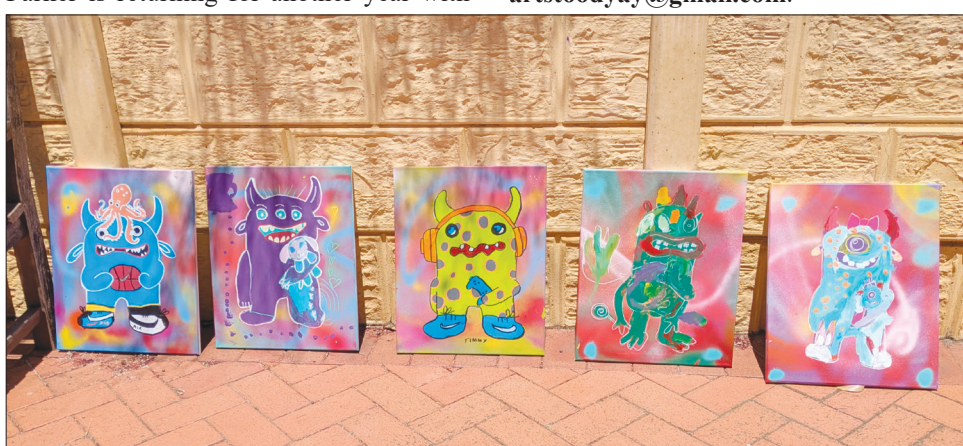
Looking further ahead, we're excited (and honestly, a little proud) to share that Bendigo Bank has confirmed support for the first year of a three-year Arts Trail initiative linking Northam and Toodyay on the long weekend 30 May 2026.

The Bendigo Bank Northam & Toodyay Arts Trail will launch as a regional open-studios event with artists opening their studios and welcoming visitors across the Avon Valley.

More information will be shared very soon, including Expressions of Interest for paid coordination and administration roles, followed by a call-out for artists interested in taking part.

If you'd like to be involved as an artist, member, sponsor, volunteer or enthusiastic supporter, Arts Toodyay would love to hear from you.

You can contact us via the **Arts Toodyay Facebook page** or by emailing **president.artstodyay@gmail.com**.



Artworks on display at the exhibition.



**The Chieftain Music Club** – Toodyay's best kept secret, hosts' monthly sell-out events on the last Saturday of each month.

The Club is adored by artists and guests alike.

With its charming and intimate prohibition era atmosphere, The Chieftain offers a time-warp experience – *escapism at its finest*. 2026 offers a range of music genres from Blues, Celtic, Gypsy Jazz and Soft Rock via an array of very talented, well-known and mesmerising musicians such as: *Sassafras, Rupert Guenther, Lez Karski Band, Jarrah Celts, Ray Jones, Maggie's Delight, Elias Bartholomeo, Kerry B Ryan & Band, David Rivett & Band and Richie Pavledis*.

Tickets are available on-line via \*Humanitix (*tickets for good, not for greed*) approx. 6 weeks before each event.

The charm of The Chieftain Music Club is mostly spread by word-of-mouth through Toodyay, Perth, Eastern States and overseas however, we do have a FaceBook page (*which also acts as contact for the very special Café Clair's*) and are happy for you to contact us if you would like to be added to the contact list for event launches. Message or phone

**The Chieftain Music Club and Café Clair's T: 0433 203 659.**

**Step into another era and Join us @ The Chieftain Music Club for live music every last Saturday of the month.**

\*Humanitix – 100% of Booking ticket profit goes to charity  
For tickets to events: Search "The Chieftain Music Club Toodyay" on-line. Click on the "Humanitix" link.

# All aboard for John: community turns out to honour 50 years

Rashelle Predovnik

JOHN Lucas drove buses for more than 50 years before he hung up his keys.

Retirement is simply a change of gears – not pace for the 75-year-old.

John is well-known by generations of families as the man behind the wheel of the local school buses to Toodyay and Northam.

His journey began in 1974, at age 23, when he started driving for a local bus operator.

Two years later, the owner sold him the business so he could buy a house and John became the sole operator of his own bus run.

By age 25, he held a government contract for the morning school run, balancing early starts behind the wheel with day jobs at Mitre 10 and Retrovision in town.

In 1986, he left his day jobs to focus on his business.

The business has grown over the decades to include seven buses, 12 part-time drivers, and countless schoolchildren.

John said he loved carting kids whose parents he used to take to school.

“I had what I call ‘grandchildren’ on the bus,” he said.

“The oldest kids I carted are now adults, and I’m driving the third generation.”

His final run on December 18 was quietly scheduled – or so he thought.

His daughter Melinda, who is about to turn 32 and has never known life without her dad driving buses, decided his final run deserved to be something special.

When John arrived at the Toodyay Racecourse he was met by a guard of honour: buses lined up in tribute.

He was met by fellow drivers and families whose children he had carried for years.

But John’s connection to the community goes beyond the bus.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, he re-formed the Toodyay Cricket Club in 1974 and has been its president for around 40 years, coaching juniors and seniors alike.

He’s also served on the Northam Cricket Association and Wheatbelt Regional Cricket boards and has been a life member of multiple cricket clubs.

Over the years, John has seen the town change.

Catholic schools have grown in numbers, parenting styles have evolved, and he notes that discipline isn’t what it used to be.

Yet his philosophy remains simple.

Work hard and stay involved in your community.

As John retires from driving, the business is set to continue in family hands.

His daughter, Melinda, manages the paperwork and smaller buses.

His son-in-law, Joe, handles the mechanical side and full-time driving.

John may be retiring from the route, but not the community.

He will remain an active volunteer, mentor, and a well-known figure in Toodyay.



Fond farewells and thank you's.



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# Bailee's design helps garden bloom

**Toodyay Community Garden**  
**Rosemary Madacsi**

DECEMBER 2025 closed on a high note with the award to a very surprised Bailee Murray for her entry in the community garden logo competition.

The prize and certificate were presented to Bailee by Kim Noonan, our very accomplished deputy chair at the Toodyay Districts High School.

We commend Bailee for her creative work and enthusiasm.

To say Bailee was surprised is an understatement which just added to the pleasure of providing the award for her clever artwork.

We thank the staff at the school for collaborating in the presentation and for promoting our competition in the school newsletter. We are grateful for all the wonderful entries received.

On other matters, the community garden

group is still trying to find a suitable location for the creation of a community garden dedicated to the residents of Toodyay.

On January 15, the committee met with councillors and staff at a council workshop to discuss the key essential attributes for a successful site.

The information, provided as a scaled matrix, will hopefully simplify the task and help councillors to choose some suitable sites for our consideration.

The committee felt the workshop was productive and we look forward to a positive outcome and the start of this initiative, although a timeframe for an answer would have been a welcomed new year gift.

The Christmas break saw the committee less active, focused on family, their own gardens and taking a welcome break.

The milder summer has been a blessing on our properties and hopefully rain is not far away to boost tanks and soak the earth.

May 2026 be a good year for you all.



Christmas Lunch.

# Spinning into the new year

**Toodyay Spinner and Weavers**  
**Chris Stokie**

HAPPY New Year to you all.

Toodyay Spinners and Weavers has had a break from meetings over the festive period and we have indulged in some rest and relaxation.

In early December we held our annual Christmas lunch, which is one of the calendar highlights of the year.

It was great to see so many members able to attend.

During this fun event we all ate some delicious meals and exchanged gorgeous gifts.

It was thoroughly enjoyed.

Tracey has spun a beautiful skein of silk in gorgeous, variegated colours.

We are looking forward to seeing the final project when she completes it.

We are now back to our normal routine of meetings.

Everyone is hard at work spinning, weaving, felting, knitting and creating wonderful projects.

Toodyay Spinners and Weavers meet at Parkers Cottage at the Toodyay Oval every Wednesday from 9am to noon and on the first and third Saturday of every month from 9am to noon.

Whether you wish to learn new skills or just enjoy your current wool crafts in a friendly group environment, new members are always welcome.

So please feel free to drop in and meet the group for a coffee and a chat.



Logo winner Bailee Murray.

# Garden club digs into a new year

**Toodyay Garden Club**  
**Judy Rowston, newsletter/reporter**

HAPPY New Year to our dear members.

A recap on our 2025 season – it was a wonderful year for the garden club.

We celebrated 20 very successful years with a boutique high tea, visited some amazing gardens in and around Toodyay, welcomed the Gingin Garden Club, took a bus trip to York, enjoyed a guest speaker, and ended the year with 98 members from Toodyay and surrounding districts with a very delicious Christmas luncheon.

On to 2026.

Stephanie, our events coordinator, has had a very full year, finding gardens suited for a visit that will also cater for our very high membership numbers, with consideration for parking.

It's a huge task and we thank Stephanie for the hard work behind the scenes to ensure we are ready for the year ahead.

We do have two bus trips planned this year to very nice gardens.

Don't miss out on these.

The committee will reconvene this month

to ensure we are ready to welcome you all.

The sundowner which will start the season will be held once again at Clive Hesse's property on 19 February 2026.

Thank you, Clive.

You will receive the first newsletter with all details mid-February.

This will of course be followed up on Thursday March 5 with our annual general meeting at 10am at St Stephen's Hall.

As some of our committee members will be retiring, we will look at our membership base to fill those gaps.

Please consider joining the committee by volunteering your time to the club.

We all look forward to visiting new and re-visiting some lovely gardens this year.

We sincerely thank those that have happily opened their homes to the Toodyay Garden Club.

If you know of a nice garden worthy of a visit, we have to start planning now.

Please contact Stephanie on 0429 888 314.

She will follow this up with contact and a visit, or email the club at toodyaygardenclub@gmail.com



A local cottage garden



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Government of Western Australia  
WA Country Health Service

# Patient Assisted Travel Scheme

The Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) provides financial subsidies for eligible WA country residents to reduce the cost of accessing the closest specialist health services where not locally available.

In 2025, we helped more than 35,000 rural and remote residents to access PATS. It's just one of the ways we're helping to make it easier for country patients travelling for specialist health services.

PATS is a subsidy program funded by the Government of Western Australia administered through WA Country Health Service.



Scan the QR code to learn more or search online for the latest information

 patient assisted travel scheme



# Almost a century of CWA in Toodyay

## CWA

Elizabeth Mansom, Secretary

FOR OUR first issue in 2026 we wish peace and good health to all and we welcome, Rashelle, the new editor of *The Herald* and wish her joy in her new endeavour.

Since the last meeting of the branch, office holders have been busy with end of year requirements for state office.

Margaret, and 120 other treasurers across the state, have balanced the books and got them into the state treasurer who has until June to produce audited accounts for state conference.

When balances upwards of 12 million dollars appear in the publicly available accounts it is clear the Country Women's Association (CWA) is definitely more than tea and scones.

In addition, state office requires end of year reports from the secretary and president of each branch, which go into the archives.

In this time of 100th anniversaries, branches have seen the benefit of this practice.

Archive volunteers produce long unseen written and photographic branch records. Evidence also of child health clinics and debutante balls and other functions no longer associated with the CWA.

The awful example of one branch, which held on to all its records and lost everything in a fire doesn't bear thinking about.

Toodyay's annual general meeting was held in January and all office bearer positions automatically fell vacant. Elizabeth and Val agreed to continue as president and vice-president for another year. Margaret made the move to electronic accounting at the beginning of last year. Until then our accounts had been paper-based and it may be longer than the three year limit for office holders before anyone is brave enough to relieve her.

Since we lost Vivien last October, the work of the secretary has been shared and there were no nominations or volunteers to fill the vacancy.

This situation led to a shuffle of the just elected president and vice-president with Elizabeth moving to secretary and Val

agreeing to become the president.

Kathy volunteered to fill the vacant vice-president position.

Following the AGM we had an informal planning meeting to try and ensure functions are spread comfortably across the year. Of course, we do this not knowing what invitations may arrive from other branches.

Others obviously face the same challenge and to this end we have the Gathering of the Birds in early March when surrounding branches come together (this year at Gidgegannup) and swap information on planned dates.

Toodyay will celebrate 99 years in June and we are well aware the branch has reached this outstanding milestone through

the unfaltering dedication and hard work of many staunch local women.

We can but aspire to be thought of in the same terms by future members.

We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 1pm for a general meeting and on the second Thursday of the month at 10am for a relaxed coffee morning.

Our hall is air-conditioned and accessible for walkers and gophers via Charcoal Lane.

We do ask if you come on a gopher that you leave it on the veranda as they can become a hazard inside the hall.

Margot takes the hall bookings and can be reached on 0405 067 591

We look forward to welcoming you.

# School smarts for healthy hearts

The Heart Foundation has launched a new online lunchbox tool to empower parents to pack heart-healthy meals and snack options as families prepare ahead of the 2026 school year.

The Heart Foundation is providing the guidance on heart-healthy options in response to concerns that the diets of primary and secondary students do not meet dietary guidelines, particularly when it comes to discretionary food intake.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that children are the leading consumers of unhealthy food, with 37 per cent of the average daily energy intake of five to 11 year-olds coming from discretionary foods.

Twelve to 17-year-olds are close behind, at 34 percent.

The term 'discretionary foods' refers to foods which are high in kilojoules but have little nutritional value. These foods include chips, biscuits, pastries, processed meats, take-away style foods, confectionary and sugary drinks.

As these foods are typically high in saturated fats, added sugars and salt, they are not part of a heart-healthy eating pattern and are best kept as occasional treats.

Options that could help build a heart-healthy lunchbox include a healthy carrot cake muffin, fresh berries, yoghurt, chicken, avocado and salad wholegrain sandwiches.

Heart Foundation dietitian Maria Packard said replacing unhealthy foods in school lunchboxes is easier than many people think.

"It's all about balance," she said.

"Include something from each food group, add colour, and keep it practical with simple staples and leftovers.

"Healthy eating is about patterns.

"If you can add one extra serve of veggies, swap in wholegrains and let kids choose some fruit they love, you're one step closer towards a healthier lunchbox."

Ms Packard said good nutrition would help school-aged children to grow, stay healthy, and focus on learning.

To access the Heart Foundation's new online tool, visit: <https://heart.org.au/heart-healthy-lunchbox>



Pic L-R sitting Val Byron (Pres) and Elaine Hall (Chair, AGM)  
L-R standing Margaret O'Sullivan (Treas) Kathy Haynes (V-P) Elizabeth Mansom (Sec)

# Toodyay – What's on?

## Community Investment Program – Sunday February 1

Supporting local communities and initiatives to deliver meaningful outcomes across our focus areas, Education, Environment and Community.

Applications open February 1 – March 31.

To apply, visit: [www.gonnevilleproject.com.au](http://www.gonnevilleproject.com.au)



Contact us  
0489 371 961  
5 Charcoal Lane, Toodyay  
[community@chalicemining.com](mailto:community@chalicemining.com)

## Toodyay Triathlon – Sunday March 8

Pick your race distance and decide if you will go it solo or form a team.

Chalice is a proud sponsor of this inaugural event.

To register, visit: [Toodyay Triathlon Club Facebook page.](#)





# SHIRE NEWS

## INVITATION FOR PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS: LOCAL PLANNING POLICY 2 - ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION 2025

The Shire of Toodyay is seeking public comment on changes to *Local Planning Policy 2 – Ancillary Accommodation 2025*. More information on the proposal may be found on the Latest News and Public Notice sections of the Shire’s website [toodyay.wa.gov.au](http://toodyay.wa.gov.au).

Submissions must be in writing with “*Local Planning Policy 2 – ancillary accommodation 2025*” in the headline, and addressed to CEO Aaron Bowman. Submissions may be lodged in the following ways:

- Email: [submissions@toodyay.wa.gov.au](mailto:submissions@toodyay.wa.gov.au) with “*Local Planning Policy 2 – ancillary accommodation 2025*” in the email header.
- Post: Shire of Toodyay, PO Box 96, Toodyay, WA 6566.
- In-Person: Shire Administration Office, 15 Fiennes St, Toodyay.

**Submissions close 4pm, Monday 2 March 2026.**

Please direct any queries about the proposal to Paul Nuttall, Executive Manager Planning & Regulation on 9574 9300.

All submissions will be considered by Council as part of the decision-making process. Unless requested otherwise, submissions may be made publicly available and personal information will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy legislation.



## A BUSY MONTH OF BOOKS, CELEBRATIONS AND NEW BEGINNINGS AT THE LIBRARY

The Toodyay Public Library enjoyed a busy and successful month, with a range of events and new initiatives for the community.

Library staff and volunteers were delighted to take part in the Christmas Street Party, hosting a popular library book sale stall. All proceeds from the sale will go towards purchasing craft supplies for the Library’s Rhyme Time program. The Library extends a heartfelt thankyou to everyone who supported the stall.



The festive season continued with a special Rhyme Time Christmas Party featuring Christmas stories, music, crafts and a delicious buffet. Each child also received a book to take home, celebrating the joy of reading and the pleasure of giving and receiving books.

The Library has also introduced a new Educational Resources section, offering a wide range of textbooks, reference materials and exam preparation guides. This new collection aims to support students and lifelong learners alike, reflecting the library’s ongoing commitment to education and community development.

Looking ahead, the library will host a special Valentine’s-themed event, “*Booked for Love,*” on Friday 13 February at 10am. Guests are invited to enjoy coffee, cake and a relaxing atmosphere – the perfect pause between pages.

## NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR THE 2026 WA VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Do you know someone who is an outstanding volunteer in the Shire of Toodyay? Why not nominate them for the **2026 WA Volunteer Service Awards**?

These State Government awards recognise and celebrate the significant efforts of Western Australia’s volunteers. Volunteers with five years or more voluntary service can be nominated (or self-nominate).

For more information on the awards, eligibility criteria, and how to nominate, visit: [wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/wa-volunteer-service-awards](http://wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/wa-volunteer-service-awards)

Key dates:

- Nominations close: 5pm, Friday 27 February 2026.
- Nominations reviewed: March to April 2026.
- Awards and recognition: National Volunteer Week, 18 – 24 May 2026.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR AUSTRALIA DAY CCOTY AWARD WINNERS & NEWEST AUSSIES!

The Shire of Toodyay would like to thank everyone who attended the **Australia Day BBQ Breakfast** on Monday 26 January where we celebrated the pledging of our newest Australian

citizens and presented the **Community Citizen of the Year Awards 2026**.

The full story and photos from the event can be found on page 9 in this edition of the Toodyay Herald.

**Toodyay Sketchbook CLUB**

Sketchbook Club is a supportive community for young artists to connect, collaborate, and create. Whether you use a traditional book, loose sheets, or digital tools, it’s your space to experiment and share peer learning.

Bring any project you like, provided it isn’t too noisy. Paints, pastels, pens, and collage materials are all welcome!

Mondays during the school term at the CRC

\$5 per session

Kindy - Year 6 | 3pm - 4.15pm    Year 7+ | 4.30pm - 5.30pm

To register your child or for more information, please contact the CRC on (08) 9574 9399 or [email\\_crc@toodyay.wa.gov.au](mailto:email_crc@toodyay.wa.gov.au)

**MEGA SPLASH TOODYAY**

**14 FEB SATURDAY 4PM - 7PM**

**FREE SAUSAGE SIZZLE**    **FREE ICE CREAM**

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WHAT’S INCLUDED? WITH EVERY POOL ENTRY

**LARGE INFLATABLES**

Thanks to **SHIRE OF TOODYAY**

Are you feeling isolated due to your hearing impairment or know someone who is?

Come along to our **Fun Social group**

**THURSDAY Weekly**  
From 9:30 – 11.00am  
At the Toodyay library  
Call in and say hello All welcome.

We tell stories, socialise and have a lot of laughs. If sign language is not your thing, come along for the laughs – we are a happy bunch.

Optional extra!  
Learn a little Auslan  
It is great fun to know Australian sign language.

For more information please contact  
Liz: 95742020  
Sandy: 0427 744 721  
Sylvia: 0400 476 527