

Buchan Phoenix

Rising from the ashes...

Communication for the community by the community

August 2026 Issue 113

Produced by Buchan District Outreach Inc. trading as Buchan Neighbourhood House A14882S

A world formed in darkness reveals its secrets

By Rochelle Hotchkin

"There is no greater feeling in the world than finding passage that no-one ever in the history of the world has seen before."

This sentiment by the late cave explorer Agnes Milowka is what drives adventurers to push the boundaries of human capacity in pursuit of new worlds.

But with very little of the Earth's surface left uncharted, the last frontier of true exploration has been forming in total darkness for hundreds of millions of years. Going there comes with significant risk. And we're taking you with us.

Four hours from Melbourne, a small band of hard-hatted explorers makes its way towards a hidden portal to a subterranean world few humans have ever seen. They leave the regularity of their day jobs behind to spend their weekends discovering new cave networks.

I'm in the small town of Buchan, in Victoria's East Gippsland, to experience firsthand the hidden world of a cave that has captivated explorers for the past two decades — Elk River.

Concealed beneath the undulating green hills of this bucolic landscape in Gunaikurnai Country, underground waterways have been carving out Elk River's limestone caverns for more than 350 million years.

It was only by chance that this labyrinthine system of dry and submerged chambers was discovered in 2006.

Some of Elk River's caverns soar like cathedral vaults; others can only be traversed with scuba diving equipment.

So far, 3.13 kilometres of Elk River have been explored, making it one of the longest caves in Victoria.

At a depth of 135 metres, it is also one of the deepest, and among the state's most important, as its discovery resolved century-old mysteries about the hydrology and geology of the region.



Next **Buchan Phoenix**
contributions in by:

**Monday,
7 September 2026**

The **Buchan Phoenix**
acknowledges Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander people as
the Traditional
Custodians of the land and
acknowledges and pays respect
to their Elders, past and present.



The
Buchan Phoenix
is distributed to
the localities of

Black Mountain,
Buchan,
Buchan South,
Buchan East,
Butchers Ridge,
Canni Creek,
Gelantipy,
Gillingall,
Glenmore,
Murrindal,
Suggan Buggan,
Timbarra,
W Tree and
Wulgulmerang.



Today, experienced cavers are taking me into Elk River via its original entrance — a concealed tunnel in a paddock that no-one has used for nearly 20 years.

Stephen Fordyce, one of the trip leaders, says the part of the cave they are taking me to is, in terms of human visitation, “probably still in the category of less people than have walked on the moon”. That’s 12 humans to date.

Stephen became the key exploration diver in what became known as the Elk River project, and is the only person to have reached the furthest known point of this cave — an extraordinary feat we will come to later.



Source:
Peter Freeman

He lives for the thrill of pushing the limits of human exploration to leave a legacy of discovery.

On each trip, despite meticulous planning, Stephen accepts there is a chance he may not return.

Before setting out, he “makes peace” with his loved ones and leaves an emergency plan with his support team.

The deaths of five Italian divers in a Maldives ocean cave system in May, and the loss of two cavers in Laos in June, are tragic reminders of the risks speleological explorers face.

When incidents like these, and the 2018 rescue of a junior soccer team from a flooded cave in Thailand, hit the news, the world sees a glimpse of this mysterious underground realm.

But beyond the headlines, cave exploration continues in quiet darkness, more frequently than you might think.

Stephen Fordyce
enters Elk River
cave in Buchan,
Victoria.

(ABC News:
Rhiannon Stevens)



Stephen and two of the other cavers accompanying me, Josh Van Dyk and Tom Elms, are among the team of Victorian speleological experts who would be called to assist in a cave rescue.

Still, I can’t help but feel nervous looking at the cave entrance — a narrow, 2-metre deep, vertical construction pipe inserted 20 years ago to prevent the entrance from caving in and filling with dirt.

I slide in off the edge feet first, swing my arms to prop me up as my feet dangle, and look for a way to safely shimmy to a point where I can rest my feet on the muddy rocks below.

The air gets damper, but it is a stable 17 degrees Celsius, on average, inside the caves at Buchan.

The next sections we navigate are tighter, and I can feel the limestone catching against my body as my feet drop into a small vertical hole amid a jumble of ancient boulders. With careful movements, I figure out which angles will work best as we venture further into the darkness.

Suddenly, there’s space.

Not much, but enough for me to crouch next to Tom and look up at the breathtaking array of thousands of colourful stalactites above us.

They form an extraordinary ceiling of calcite shards reaching down to us through millions of years.

I feel goosebumps at the thought that I am one of the few people on Earth who has ever seen their beauty.

I turn off my head torch and sit in the silent darkness.

It’s difficult to imagine how it must have felt to be the very first person to see this cave. And then I meet her.

Kim Van Dyk sits beside her walker on the verandah of Homeleigh, an 11-bedroom cottage bought by a group of cavers in the 1970s for use when exploring nearby.

We’re on the edge of the Buchan township in Victoria’s “home turf” of caving, and 9 kilometres south of Potholes Cave Reserve, a 48-hectare expanse riddled with more than 100 known caves, including Elk River.



Kim Van Dyk recounts her
exploring days while
looking at old caving
photos.

(ABC News:
Rhiannon Stevens)

Kim warns me she will likely cry as we chat. Her eyes well up as she speaks of how illness has prematurely ended her dream of being able to go caving on her 80th birthday.

Now 68, Kim longs to go underground again, and recalls a distant conversation with her eldest son, who once told her she loved caves more than her children.

“I love my two boys. But I really did love my caves and my bats more,” she admits.

Kim takes me back to 2006 and reveals how a slight movement in her peripheral vision led to the chance discovery of Elk River.

While walking through the Potholes reserve with her husband John, she noticed a patch of grass waving in a doline, a sunken section of ground.

As there was no wind and the surrounding grass was stationary, they knew it could mean a draft coming from underground.

It could mean a new cave.

“Our thing was finding new caves. Why go somewhere where 100 other people have gone before?” Kim says.

Since quitting their city jobs and moving to Buchan in 1990, Kim and John have discovered 66 new caves and have assisted in more than a dozen cave rescues.

But their discovery of Elk River was something special.

When digging beneath the waving grass revealed rock, they knew their suspicion was correct.*

After returning with caving equipment and friends Eric Munro and Laurie Brown, Kim was the first to enter their new find.

It was a tight shimmy down, crawling and squeezing her way through rocks, and using wire ladders to descend vertical pitches.

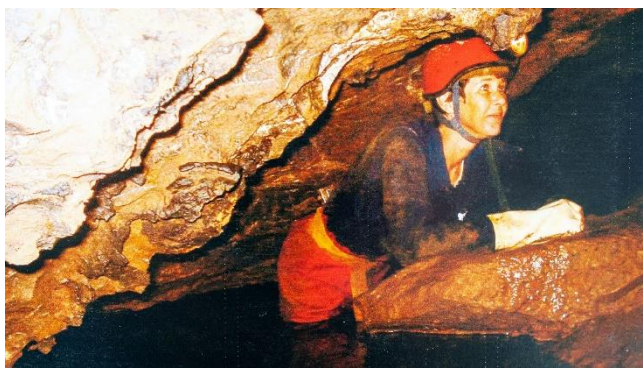
The night before, Kim had listened to an interview with pioneer caver Frank Moon, who was active in the early 1900s. If Kim is the mother of Buchan caving, Frank is the grandfather.

In the interview, Frank was discussing his belief that a river must flow beneath this part of East Gippsland.

Cavers obsessed about that theory for the next 100 years, believing, like Frank, that there had to be a river and a “master cave system” into which all the water in the area drained.

Could this finally be it?

"Being the skinniest, I always copped the squeezes," Kim says. "I am going through ... then I saw what I thought was just a puddle, but I kept on going, and it's a flowing river. "I sat down and cried. I was crying my eyes out thinking, 'Frank, you were right.'"



The inspiration for the name Elk River came from an unusual speleothem formation they thought resembled an elk's horn, and a combination of the first letters of their names: Eric, Laurie and Kim. Kim says finding the streamway flowing through the cave was one of the proudest moments of her life.



Another caving highlight was her and John's discovery of the best-preserved skull of Ice Age marsupial *Palorchestes azael* in a Buchan cave in 2000, which is now in the Melbourne Museum.



The *Palorchestes azael* skull fossil found in a Buchan cave in 2000.



(Supplied: Museums Victoria/Benjamin Healley)

Exploration of the Buchan caves has led to other important fossil finds that have helped to paint a picture of how life evolved in Australia over hundreds of millions of years.

In 2011, the Van Dyks' son Josh found a 50,000-year-old short-faced kangaroo fossil in a newly discovered cave, Nightshade, while exploring with Eric Munro.



The short-faced kangaroo fossil found in Buchan is 71 per cent complete.



(Supplied: Museums Victoria/Tim Carrafa)

When Museums Victoria palaeontologists returned and completed the full extraction more than 10 years later, it was revealed that Josh and Eric had discovered one of the most complete fossils of *Simosthenurus occidentalis* ever found.

It is extraordinary discoveries such as these that fuel the passion of weekend cave explorers.

Josh Van Dyk lives in Buchan with his own children now. He works at the local quarry and runs a fireworks business, but still spends most of his spare time caving.

After we reach the cave floor, Josh sits beside the Elk River streamway that brought his mother to tears 20 years ago. To get here, we abseiled on a rope down a 30-metre vertical pitch, using gear that we had lugged through tight gaps in heavy bags, before squeezing under more tightly packed rocks. Seeing the streamway emerge from a low-lying rock shelf takes my breath away.

This stream, constantly flowing for millions of years, is the mysterious lifeblood of Elk River.

"From an exploration-discovery point of view, understanding how the water flows underground, which does not in any way reflect the surface geography, is really critical to being able to make new discoveries in the area, and expand what is one of the longest systems in Victoria," Tom Elms tells me.

It was Josh who discovered a new way into Elk River while he was tackling a "sketchy" climb that led him to a well-frequented nearby cave called Baby Berger.

That route became the way in for the next 20 years of exploration in Elk River and the hole in the paddock with access to the stalactite chamber was sealed with a metal lid.

After months of exploration in 2006, Kim, John, Josh, Eric and Laurie had hit a rock wall, literally.

They had walked and swum through the water as far as they could, tackling roof sniffs (breathing through a small gap between the water and rock above) and duck-under (holding their breath to swim under rock shelves), but the passageways were submerged upstream and down.

To continue exploring beyond the sumps (underwater sections), they knew they had to let more people in on their discovery.

Towards the end of 2006, they approached Victorian Speleological Society (VSA) member Peter Freeman.

"I knew what the answer was; the answer was going to be to find some divers," Peter says.

Soon after, Peter met Jim Arundale at a VSA meeting, the first diver to join the club in many years.

Jim, supported by Peter, made the first exploration dives in the cave, and young Australian cave diver Agnes Milowka, who had returned from making major cave discoveries in Florida, later joined to form a diving team of two.

Elk River would become all-consuming for Peter over the next nine years, as he took on roles organising, documenting and supporting divers underground, and then calculating survey data, drawing maps and writing reports when he returned home.

In August 2009, during a nearly 13-hour-long trip, Jim and Agnes discovered more than a kilometre of cave passages and dived through four sumps.

"As the cave unfolded before us, it was hard to believe what we were seeing," Agnes and Jim wrote on Agnes's blog.

"There is still more diving to be done on both ends of the Elk River system and much more to find and explore in the dry sections of the cave.

"For the moment, we have more questions than answers."

Tragically, that excitement did not last long.

Agnes died in Tank Cave in South Australia in February 2011, aged 29, when she ran out of air while attempting to return from exploring a previously unvisited section of the cave.

Agnes's death was a shock to everyone who knew the experienced diver, and her contribution to underwater cave exploration and photography, in Australia and overseas, is still acknowledged today.

In 2012, a new group of cave divers attended a VSA meeting, and Peter jumped at his chance to restart exploration of Elk River.

The new team's inaugural trip in January 2013 would become the first of 26 trips into Elk River over the next four-and-a-half years. Stephen Fordyce joined the new crew as a key diver.

To be CONTINUED in NEXT EDITION – Buchan Phoenix Newsletter

OR continue reading - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-08/elk-river-cave-explorers-buchan-victoria-odyssey/>



The explorers walking through Potholes Cave Reserve at Buchan. (ABC News: Rhiannon Stevens)



Josh Van Dyk, Stephen Fordyce and Tom Elms planning a caving trip at Homeleigh in Buchan. (ABC News: Rhiannon Stevens)



**WE ARE
HIRING**



ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT OFFICER (PART TIME) 15 HOURS/WEEK

The GDBNC is seeking a motivated and skilled individual to provide administrative support to our team. This role will assist the Administration Team in day-to-day tasks, including providing coverage in Admin Officer absences.

THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT WILL NEED:

- Proven experience in providing administrative support in an office environment.
- Demonstrated proficiency in office management skills, including record-keeping, attention to detail, organisation and prioritisation.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to interact professionally with diverse individuals.
- Strong computer and keyboard skills, including proficiency in relevant software applications.
- Knowledge of budget processes, financial recording, and reporting methods and principles.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- A positive attitude and strong work ethic.
- Understanding of and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality.
- Current Driver's Licence.
- Ability to obtain a satisfactory Police Check and Working With Children Check (WWC).

Applications are to be submitted in writing to:

Administration Officer

Gelantipy District Bush Nursing Centre Inc.

1 Saleyard Road, Gelantipy, Vic, 3885

CLOSING DATE: 11TH SEPTEMBER 2026

We have moved the monthly **Gelantipy Community Dinner** to the second Tuesday of the month – (11th August, 8th September, 13th October etc.)

Still 6pm at the Gelantipy Hall, bring a plate to share.

Last month's now regular **Christmas in July** was well attended and fun, as we shared our tables with Tristan's over the top decorations and some very good food.

And The Suggan Buggan School House Committee is working towards a Working Bee/BBQ/Social Day.



Gordon and Peter Moon have cut a timber to replace a decayed bottom plate of one of the main walls. For authenticity they would like to rough it up with a broad axe, which none of us have.

If any reader has one they trust these boys to borrow please contact one of them.

Deborah Woodburn

Baby & Child First Aid + CPR

BUCHAN

Course

Duration 3 hours

CPR baby & child

Burns

Head injuries

Choking

Poisoning & ingestion

Childhood illness

Seizures



**TUESDAY 8TH
SEPTEMBER 2026
10 AM TO 1 PM AT
THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD
HOUSE**

The
Latrobe Health Services
Foundation



Tickets:

<https://www.intix.com.au/event/baby-child-first-aid-buchan/information>

Baby & Child First Aid Buchan

Buchan Neighbourhood House

8 September 2026

@ 10:00 AM to 1.00 PM

In this session participants will gain knowledge and skills in how to manage common childhood accidents, injuries and illnesses common in children from birth to teens

Following completion of the workshop you will be able to;

- Perform CPR on a baby or child
- Apply and use an AED (Automatic External Defibrillator)
- Identify and distinguish the difference between choking, gagging and coughing
- Perform choking first aid (5 back blows and 5 chest thrusts)
- Identify the red flags for children following head injuries
- Perform burn first aid
- Perform the PIT (Pressure Immobilisation Technique) for snake bites and funnel webs
- Perform first aid for bug bites and stings
- Manage life threatening and non-life threatening bleeding
- Identify the red flags of common childhood illnesses
- Describe common symptoms following childhood vaccinations and identify when to seek help
- Identify signs and symptoms of allergies and anaphylaxis
- Perform administration of an EPI-PEN autoinjector

In addition to the above we cover accident prevention strategies for drowning, choking, burns, head injuries, car accidents farm safety and when to go the GP, versus the hospital or when you can watch and wait at home.

This education is provided free to parents and carers of children in Gippsland by the Sisterhood Project due to the generosity of a grant from the Latrobe Foundation.

www.thesisterhoodproject.com

**Extended
Baby & Child
First Aid**



Buchan Neighbourhood House

**8 September 2026
10:00AM - 1.00PM**

The
Latrobe Health Services
Foundation

MORE FROM
NANCY
LOUSADA'S
SCRAPBOOK

1951

**ROAD
DEVELOPMENT**

AND TRANSPORT



**Renactment in 2010 Of the centenary of the first vehicle to cross the Buchan River
at The Ford that was part of the original road to the Monaro.**

Earliest settlement (*in the area by white people*) came from the north and the bare necessities of existence were transported by pack horse. Roads, there were none and even the defined bridle paths must have been precipitous in the extreme. Few are recorded having even attempted to bring drays of any sort over those ranges.

Presently the main carriage of goods is from the south.

Long before there was a road link with Melbourne, bullock drays were bringing in supplies from the main Gippsland Port of Albert.

Today people marvel at the feats these bullock teams and their drivers performed and the abnormally high prices they charged for carriage is understandable when we recall the tracks they must have had to force through dense bush and over broken ground where level tracks were almost impossible and gully sides were steep and crumbling.

There were even tales of whole houses brought by bullock dray. The bullocks were generally shod and even then the blacksmith who could shoe a bullock was truly a master of his trade.

When road travel became more general, the traveller to Buchan usually followed the old Monaro Road. This road, today (1951) a bush track, followed the general trend of the present Bruthen -Buchan Road but was about three miles to the north. Horse drawn coaches brought the mails, at first monthly, later weekly. Later the mail service was a motor one and passengers who travelled by it still recall vividly, (sometimes colourfully), the exciting ride over the unmade roads between Nowa Nowa and Buchan. It seems to have been a hit or miss affair as the bouncing bounding model T Ford followed a serpentine course among the trees. Luckily it was generally a case of more misses than hits, though often it was a very near thing.

The roads almost imperceptibly improved and, though they are still mainly unsealed and often narrow with bends that still follow the first windings of the early bullock drays. Today they are the responsibility of the Country Roads Board and are constantly becoming better and better.

The approaches to the Caves Reservation has recently been sealed and, as multi-coloured marble pebbles taken from a roadside cutting nearby have been used, the surface presents a fascinating terrace-like surface.

Local residents look forward to the time when all their roads are as perfect as these few chains.

NOTES BY Rhonda Coates

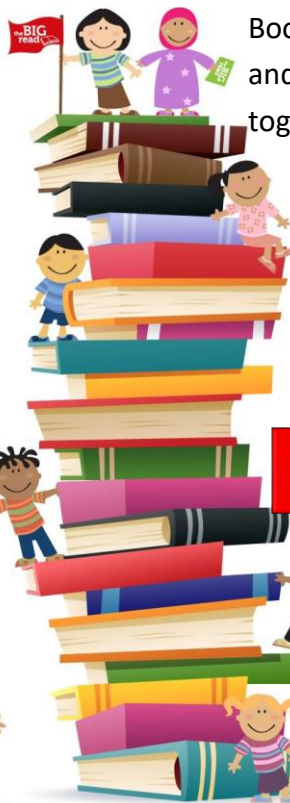
The very first mail in the district was carried by horse via Buchan to the Monaro.

The Old Monaro Road went through Buchan South via Yellow Water Holes then Frog Hollow Road coming out the other side of Boggy Creek then onto Nowa Nowa and Lakes Entrance or to Bruthen.

There was no bridge across Boggy Creek early on. However, there was a hotel on the Bruthen side of Boggy Creek as a place for coaches and travellers to rest, feed and water their horses. It was first known as the Brother Jonathon Hotel and was there as early as 1858. It underwent a number of owners and name changes eventually being called the Tara Hotel and moved up the hill to where the present helipad is located, due to often being flooded. North of Buchan it followed the road through Sunnyside and up the Slippery Pinch on to Murrindal across the Murrindal River and up a bridle track on the opposite side to the present road up Murrindal Mountain.

It came out just above the W tree Falls on the left side of the road onto the present road and appears to now roughly follow the present road through Gelantipy, Wulgulmerang and Black Mountain.

The old Monaro Road branched off at Wulgulmerang through to Suggan Buggan on through Willis to The Monaro. The road down to Mackillop's Bridge was originally a bridle track straight down from Wheelers Hill from Turnback. It was improved a little when gold mining was happening down on the Snowy.

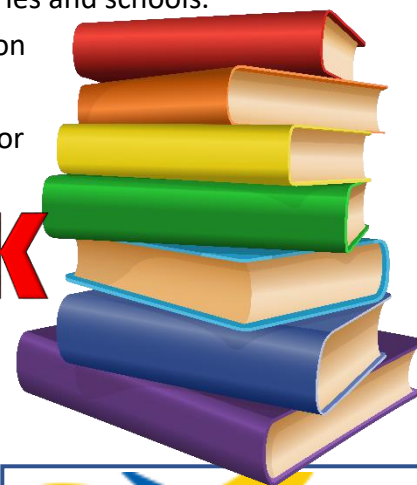


Book Week strengthens the community by celebrating a shared love of stories and learning. It brings children, families, teachers, and local organisations together, creating moments where imagination becomes a collective experience. Events like costume parades, and library activities encourage reading, boost literacy, and support local libraries and schools. Most importantly, Book Week builds connection — it gives people a reason to gather, talk, and participate in something joyful and enriching for everyone.

BOOK WEEK

On

Thursday, September 10th,
Buchan Primary School and
Buchan Early Years Learning
Centre



The libraries are celebrating the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) 2026 Book Week.

WEEK from 22-28 August

Join for a week of free activities, including special storytime sessions, character hunts, competitions and the Book Week Costume Parade at Bairnsdale Library on **Saturday 29 August**, commencing at 10:00am.

The fun has already begun, with Major Cr Jodie Ashworth getting into the Book Week Spirit dressed as Wendy from 'Where's Wally?' alongside two much-loved story book and screen favourites, Peppa Pig and Bluey.



Dress up as your favourite book character and celebrate the magic of reading with your family and friends.

will be celebrating BOOK WEEK together. The theme for Children's Book Week 2026 is '**SYMPHONY OF STORIES**', as announced by Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA).

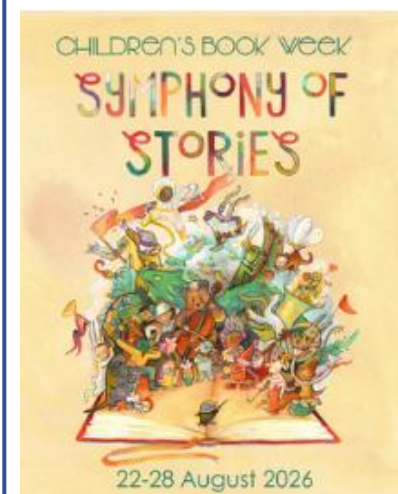
Based on artwork by award-winning author and illustrator Briany Stewart, this inspiring theme celebrates the magic of stories and the colourful characters, ideas and adventures they bring to life.

Students are invited to dress up as their favourite book character and take part in their much-loved Book Week Parade.

Parents and carers are warmly invited to attend the dress-up parade, which will commence at 9:30am. Following the parade, students will participate in a themed activity to further develop their appreciation of literature and storytelling.



Special Storytime – Book Week



Tuesday
25 August,
11:00am – 12:00pm

Join us for a special
storytime in
celebration of CBCA
Book Week!



Libraries
Change Lives



BUCHAN YOUTH GROUP Tuesdays • 5:00PM - 6:00PM

Buchan Neighbourhood House
Ages 12-16

Games • Music • Friends Epic Fun!
No Boredom Allowed!

CALL NOW! 0493 070 332 or 0448 064 760

BUCHAN BUSH NURSING ASSOCIATION

Bairnsdale Library Book Week Activity & Dress Up Competition

Celebrate CBCA Book Week at the library!

Come celebrate with us at the library and get dressed up as your favourite book character to enter our dress up competition!

We will also be awarding the winners of our Write a Story/Draw a Picture competition

DATE

Saturday 29 August 2026 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

LOCATION

Bairnsdale Library

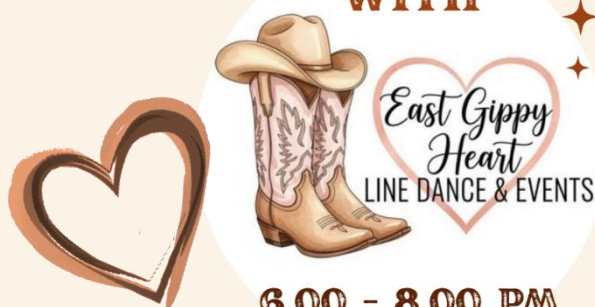
22 Service Street, Bairnsdale Victoria 3875

Phone for more information - 5152 4225



Venue Buchan Hall LINE DANCING

WITH

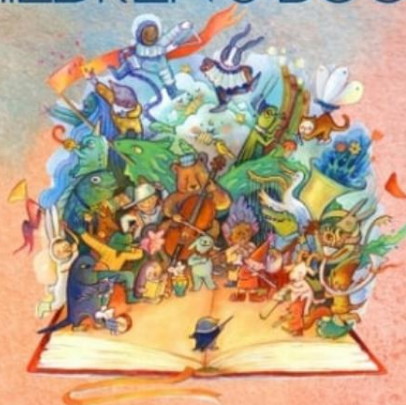


6.00 - 8.00 PM

★ **Cost \$20 per session**
★ **FOR FURTHER**
INFORMATION CALL
Neighbourhood House on
0493 070 332

2026 CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK

**SYMPHONY OF
STORIES**



22-28 August 2026



EGMI PARTNERS ATTEND FOR FREE
Email: info@egmi.com.au for your discount code



wilderness
COLLECTIVE

egmi.

0730 - 0900 AM
THURSDAY 13 AUGUST 2026
EAGLE POINT FORESHORE HUB
12 Eagle Bay Drive, Eagle Point

Business Networking Speaker Event



Paris shares the inspiring
blueprint
for regional rejuvenation,
remote innovation &
community resilience.

Paris Brooke, EO - The Wilderness Collective, Mallacoota

- 👤 Network with local businesses
- 💡 Hear an inspiring regional success story
- 👥 Build valuable connections across our business community

➡ Secure your tickets here: <https://bit.ly/4wiLiGU>

EGMi partners attend for free. Please email: info@egmi.com.au for your discount code.

egmi.

14 Thursday, 13 August 2026
🕒 7:30am – 9:00am
📍 Eagle Point Foreshore Hub

wilderness
COLLECTIVE




TopSoils
Monday
17th August
9am to 3pm
Gippsland Agriculture Centre
(Bairnsdale Airport)

UNLOCKING SOIL POTENTIAL

Finding the hidden fertility in your paddocks with Graeme Sait

Across East Gippsland, many soils contain significant nutrient reserves, yet a large proportion remains unavailable to crops and pastures due to limitations in soil chemistry, biology and mineral balance. Join leading soil nutrition specialist Graeme Sait for a practical, no-nonsense day focused on unlocking existing nutrients, improving fertiliser efficiency, lifting productivity and making more profitable soil amendment decisions.

.....
**Across East Gippsland, many soils hold significant nutrients that crops and pastures can't access.
That means wasted spend, underperforming paddocks, and missed production.**

**Join leading soil nutrition specialist Graeme Sait for a practical, no-nonsense day focused on
improving nutrient efficiency, lifting productivity, and making better fertiliser decisions.**

What you'll take home:

- 🌱 Know the difference between what's in your soil and what plants can actually use
- 🌱 Identify nutrient imbalances that are costing you yield
- 🌱 Unlock tied-up nutrients already in your paddock
- 🌱 Improve fertiliser efficiency and reduce waste
- 🌱 Understand key mineral ratios that drive plant performance
- 🌱 Make more informed, profitable soil amendment decisions

REGISTER

Click link : <https://bit.ly/4uBB4Ak>
More info: Call Natalie 0436 462 559

Scan QR



Graeme will be in Orbost on Tues 18 Aug in the morning talking on Nutrient Cycling, Bairnsdale that evening talking on Nutritious Food and Maffra on Thurs 20 Aug - Click the link above for details and registration.



The Top Soils Project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program. This Producer Demonstration Site is funded by Meat & Livestock Australia and Gippsland Agricultural Group.

You are invited to the Eagle Point Foreshore Hub to hear Parise Brooke from 'The Wilderness Collective' who will share the inspiring blueprint for regional rejuvenation, remote innovation, and community resilience.

Based in Mallacoota, this dedicated social enterprise is transforming local challenges into opportunities by establishing a thriving, self-sufficient co-working hub and study space.

Discussions will include micro-business capability programs, and practical digital mentoring designed to unlock sustainable employment and career pathways. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how community-led initiatives can empower regional entrepreneurs and foster lasting economic and social vitality across East Gippsland.

VSA Introduction Cave Trip

10th – 11th OCTOBER 2026
BUCHAN

This trip is aimed at new and recently joined VSA members, as well as anyone who is new to caving and would like an opportunity to get underground, gain some experience and learn more about the club.

All experience levels are welcome, from complete beginners who have never been underground before through to those with previous caving experience who are looking to get back into it.

The weekend will provide an opportunity to visit some of the caves around the Buchan area, meet other VSA members and develop familiarity with basic caving techniques and equipment in a supportive environment.

The only requirement to attend is that you are a current VSA member.



Contact Tom Elms at
president@caving.org.au to
register your interest.

More information will follow closer to the trip

COUNCIL BACKS FUTURE

of

LIVESTOCK EXCHANGE

after review



Date of issue: 22 July 2026

East Gippsland Shire Council has confirmed the East Gippsland Livestock Exchange will continue operating under its current Council-managed model following a comprehensive independent review that found the existing model remains the best option for the region's premier saleyard.

Councillors noted the final Commercial Review report at the 21 July Council Meeting, marking the conclusion of a process that began in March 2024 to examine the long-term operation, performance and financial sustainability of the facility.

The review found the existing Council-managed model continues to provide the strongest foundation for the Livestock Exchange, which plays a critical role in supporting East Gippsland's livestock industry and farming communities.

Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth said the review confirmed Council was well placed to continue operating one of regional Victoria's most important livestock selling centres.

"This review was about making sure the Livestock Exchange keeps meeting the needs of our farming community, now and into the future. What we heard was clear – people value a facility that is locally owned, reliable and accountable, and that's exactly what the current model delivers."

Independent consultants assessed five potential operating models, ranging from continuing current Council operations through to external management agreements, a hybrid Council-contractor model, leasing the facility, or establishing a solely Council-owned subsidiary. The review also included extensive engagement with livestock agents, buyers, sellers and the wider farming community to understand industry priorities and test the findings.

That engagement revealed strong support for keeping the facility locally owned and accountable, while maintaining a stable and reliable operating model that can respond to changes in the livestock industry, including evolving sales methods and market conditions. Although alternative models were explored, the review found they would introduce greater cost and complexity while delivering little additional benefit in the current operating environment.

The review did identify opportunities to strengthen the existing model through practical operational improvements, improved systems and processes, and the development of a long-term business plan to guide future investment and asset planning.

"Our focus now is on practical improvements that build on what's already working well, so the Livestock Exchange continues to serve producers and the broader livestock industry for many years to come," Cr Ashworth said.

Bairnsdale Stock Agents Association (BSSA) representative Brad Obst welcomed the outcome.

"The Livestock Exchange is a vital piece of infrastructure for farmers right across the region, and it was important that this review took the time to properly test what was working and what wasn't," Mr Obst said.

"We're pleased Council has listened to the industry and is backing continued local management. The BSAA looks forward to working with Council on further improvements and efficiencies going forward at the Livestock Exchange."

The review did not consider selling or closing the Livestock Exchange.

More information, including the final Commercial Review report and supporting documents released throughout the process, is available on Council's YourSay East Gippsland website.

AUSTRALIAN TARMAC RALLY

SNOWY RIVER

SPRINT

LAKE ENTRANCE →
BUCHAN →
ORBOST →



SEPTEMBER
12-13
2026

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SNOWY RIVER SPRINT

AUSTRALIAN TARMAC RALLY & THE SNOWY RIVER SPRINT WILL BE RETURNING TO THE AREA 12 - 13 SEPTEMBER.

ROAD CLOSURES WILL BE IN PLACE ALONG BUCHAN-ORBOST ROAD, FROM OLD CFA TO OSTLER'S GAP ROAD FROM 7AM TO 5.30PM BOTH DAYS.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT US ON 03 9111 9929

WWW.AUSTRALIANARMACRALLY.COM

INFO@TARMACRALLY.COM



Buchan Photography Competition 2026

Do you have a favourite photograph sitting on your phone or tucked away in your camera folder? Why not enter it in this year's **Buchan Photography Competition & Display** as part of the Buchan Flower & Arts 'n Crafts Show?

There are plenty of categories to inspire photographers of all ages, from **Autumn, Trees, Sky & Clouds, Wildlife, Birds, Sunrise & Sunset, Water and Landscapes**, through to more creative categories such as **Textures in Nature, Forces of Nature, Food, Macro and Captioned Photos**. There are also special categories for children, including **My Friend, A Funny Photo and A Red Flower**.

The inaugural **Leona Lavell Photography Aggregate Perpetual Trophy**, will be awarded to an Open section entrant. Aggregate prizes are also available in both the Open and Under 12 sections, along with a **Best in Show prize**. The Buchan and District Resident category also offers \$10 prize money.

You don't need to be a professional photographer – the competition is a great opportunity to share your creativity and showcase the beauty, people, wildlife and everyday moments of our community.

Entries are 50 cents per photo for adults and 20 cents for children under 12. Entrants can enter up to two photographs in each category.

The Photography Competition & Display will be held at the **Buchan Anglican Church**, alongside the Buchan Flower & Arts 'n Crafts Show. Photos will be on display for visitors to enjoy, so even if you don't enter the competition, come along and see the wonderful collection of local photography.

Entries: Thursday 29 October, 10am–5pm

Entry location: Anglican Church, Main Road, Buchan

Photography Display: Saturday 31 October – Monday 2 November

Chief Steward: Leanne Rawlings – 0432 279 007

Start looking through those photos, get creative and **capture your chance to be part of the 2026 Buchan Photography Competition!**

Full entry rules and category details are available on the Photography Competition program available soon.



Hi, I'm Jack your local Agri Finance Relationship Manager.



SCAN ME

Jack Peterson

m: 0499 339 221

e: jack.peterson@elders.com.au



Let's chat about:

- ▶ Business / Term Loans
- ▶ Seasonal Finance Overdraft



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visit eldersfinance.com.au to learn more



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Tuesday 18th August

5.30pm to 9pm

Gippsland Ag Centre

345 Bengworden Rd

(White & Green Shed at the Bairnsdale Airport)

Cost \$25 a head

Local produce dinner catered by

THE LONG PADDOCK

Lindenow

Join the conversation with Graham Sait, one of Australia's leading soil educators, as we explore the powerful connection between soil health, food quality, farm productivity and human well-being. Sit with local farmers who are passionate about producing quality food and learn how the soils of our region underpin everything we eat. Just 10 cm of topsoil stands between humanity and starvation. It is one of our most valuable natural assets, yet few people truly understand its importance.

Come along as we celebrate the connection between healthy soils, healthy farms and Nutritious food

DIRT TO DINNER - The Soil Food Connection

If you grow food, this matters. If you eat food, it matters even more.

REGISTER

Click Link <https://bit.ly/4xONLdD> or Scan QR

More info: Contact Emma on 0400 467 921 or emma.orgill@fevL.org.au



This event is supported by a Look Over the Farm Gate grant provided by Agriculture Victoria under the Victorian Government's 2025 Drought Support Package. #LookOverTheFarmGate



The Top Soils Project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.

Buchan CRICKET Club

Buchan



BIG NEWS FOR BUCHAN!

We have a new secretary...

JESS MAUNDER!

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

★ **CHARGING INTO THE 2026 SEASON!**

NEW LEADERSHIP • NEW MOMENTUM • SAME BUCHAN SPIRIT!

MATCHES & BBQs!

TRAINING FOR ALL AGES!

SOCIAL EVENTS!

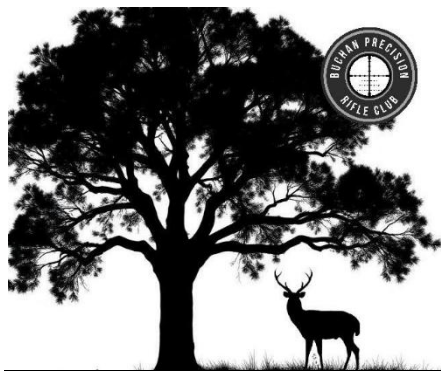
COMMUNITY PRIDE!

LET'S MAKE THIS OUR BEST SEASON YET!

♥ Buchan spirit • Buchan pride • Buchan cricket! ♥

Buchan





BUCHAN BUSH BASH
9-11th OCT | 22lr
SSAA BUCHAN RIFLE RANGE
MATT C & STU G - MATCH DIRECTORS
MORE TO COME

B.P.R.C **NRL22** COF
 SSAA East Gippsland - Buchan Rifle Range



SATURDAY 12th SEPTEMBER



Sign in & Registration – 8:30am
 Safety Brief – 8:50am
 Sighting In (50 & 100 yards) – 9:00am
 Match Starts – 9:30am
 Wrap up – 12:30 to 1:00pm
Everyone and anyone is welcome

MATCH FEES:

- General / Non-members = \$40.00
- B.P.R.C Members = \$20.00
- First Time Shooters & Young Guns (12-18) = FREE

⚠ **CASH or EFTPOS AVAILABLE** ⚠ (.2x 22LR rifles available for hire)
IMPORTANT – Bring your firearm licence, and keep rifles in your vehicle until directed. Juniors must be supervised at all times and wear eye/ear protection.



EAST GIPPSLAND LIVESTOCK EXCHANGE

UPCOMING SALES

AUGUST 2026

*Dates are subject to change by Stock Agents

Prime Cattle Sale, 8.30 am

Wednesday 5 August
 Wednesday 12 August
 Wednesday 19 August
 Wednesday 26 August

Spring Store Cattle Sale, 9.00 am

Friday 21 August

Store Cattle Sale, 9.00 am

Friday 14 August
 Friday 28 August

Sheep Sale, 10.00 am

Monday 3 August
 Monday 17 August
 Monday 31 August



2026 Gippsland Red Meat Conference

'EVERY DECISION COUNTS'

Hear from leading industry experts and producers as they share practical insights on:

- 🌾 Markets and industry outlooks
- 🌾 Feed and fertiliser investment
- 🌾 Drought preparedness and containment feeding
- 🌾 Weighty weaners
- 🌾 Virtual fencing
- 🌾 Business management and succession planning

Explore the decisions producers make every day that influence the productivity, profitability and future sustainability of their farming businesses. From market outlooks and business management to drought preparedness, feed and fertiliser investment, weighty weaners and emerging technologies, the conference will deliver practical insights and real-world experiences that can be applied on-farm.

Attendees will also enjoy a virtual farm tour, trade displays, networking opportunities and access to the latest industry innovations.

Whether you're a beef, sheep or mixed farming producer, this conference will provide practical take-home messages to help you make informed decisions and build a more resilient and profitable farming business.

Tues 25 August, 2026

Sale Baptist Church
283 Princes Highway,
SALE VIC



Book you

QR Code



Q: Can the metal fastener around champagne and sparkling wine corks go in the recycling bin? Answer on page 17

Hello,
I hope this finds you well and that 2026 has so far been a rewarding year for your community!

My name is Meg West, Waste and Recycling Education Officer at East Gippsland Shire Council, and I'm delighted to be back in your inbox as we head into the second half of the year.



CELEBRATING 2026 SO FAR

What a year it has been! We have been lucky enough to visit nine different groups and businesses in East Gippsland for **waste education sessions**. We ran sessions for groups such as East Gippsland Landcare, Inner Wheel Bairnsdale, Bairnsdale Probus Club, O'Brien Real Estate, Buchan Neighbourhood House and community sessions at Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Orbost and Lakes Entrance Libraries and service centres.

The feedback has been wonderful with comments such as:
"A subject that is mind boggling and complicated - especially for us 'oldies' - somehow you demonstrated and explained it all well to help us do better with the task of recycling."

"I thought I knew how to recycle properly, but I learnt so much. The local examples made it really relevant to East Gippsland, and I left feeling much more confident about what goes in each bin."

We have also attended various events in the community which brought in great discussion and answered plenty of questions with locals and tourists alike.

This year so far, we have attended the
Paynesville Classic Boat Rally,
Hooked on Lakes,
Orbost Show,
East Gippsland Field Days,
Howitt Park Market

and we have six more events upcoming for the remainder of the year.

Thank you to all the community groups and businesses who have welcomed us this year so far — your enthusiasm for sustainability makes this work so rewarding.



As advertised in Bairnsdale Advertiser 28th July 2026

State Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull, recently raised concerns in Parliament over what he says is a lack of State Government support for bush nursing centres, warning that remote communities are increasingly being forced to fundraise to keep essential health services operating.

Remote health services under threat
Nationals' Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull, says **Bush Nursing Centres** should not have to rely on community fundraising to make up for inadequate State Government funding.



COUNCIL OFFERS FOR 2026

East Gippsland Shire Council continue to offer education sessions for community groups, and businesses as well as schools in East Gippsland.



Community Education Sessions

At our education sessions where we discuss how to correctly sort your waste at home, how to recycle tricky items like medication blister packs and aluminium foil, and gaining understanding about what happens to our waste in East Gippsland and the cost to the community involved. We are also open to meeting with businesses to discuss internal waste management, train staff in correct disposal methods and find ways to save costs and reduce waste to landfill.



Register interest: [Community Waste Education – Fill out form](https://forms.office.com/r/J2qgbNhAQw)
<https://forms.office.com/r/J2qgbNhAQw>



Waste Facility Excursions

Come along for a guided tour of Tambo Waste Materials Recovery Facility — a hands-on, real-world learning experience. We can also facilitate tours of Bairnsdale Landfill and Tip Shop, however bus transport is required onsite.



Register interest: [Community Waste Education – Fill out form](https://forms.office.com/r/J2qgbNhAQw)
<https://forms.office.com/r/J2qgbNhAQw>



Container Deposit Scheme – Become a donation partner

Community groups can raise money while reducing waste by becoming a donation partner through CDS Victoria.



[Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme | Fundraising For Charities And Community Groups](https://cdsvic.org.au/fundraising)

<https://cdsvic.org.au/fundraising>

To support collection of CDS, East Gippsland Shire Council are installing 100 CDS collection baskets to public bins located around East Gippsland. So far these have been installed in Buchan, Nowa Nowa, Lake Tyers, Lakes Entrance and Metung, with another 85 baskets yet to be installed across the shire.

Any individual as well as community groups are invited to empty baskets and receive the 10 cent refund from CDS collection points. If your group would like to get involved, contact wasteeducation@egipps.vic.gov.au and we can supply your group or club with a container collection bag.



LET'S CONNECT

If you'd like to:

- Book a waste education session
- Organise a fee free waste facility excursion
- Request some CDS collection bags
- Be added to the mailing list for community sustainability opportunities

Please follow the form links above, respond to this email contact:



wasteeducation@egipps.vic.gov.au

I look forward to connecting with and supporting sustainability learning across East Gippsland.

Fun fact! The metal fastener around champagne and sparkling wine corks is called a **muselet**.

A: You can collect a few muselets and squash them together to form a dense metal ball (around the size of a tennis ball), that can go into your recycling bin.



Mobile Library Dates 2026

TUESDAY: Aug 25, Sep 8, Sep 22

9:00-10:00 - Buchan Main Street
10:30-11:30 - Buchan Neighbourhood House
1:30-2:30 - W Tree—SIBA

TUESDAY: Aug 18, Sep 1, Sep 15

9:00-9:45 - Gelantipy Bush Nurse
10:30-11:30 - Buchan Neighbourhood House
12:45-1:30 - Buchan Primary School



What can you do at this mobile service centre?

- Borrow books, CD's, DVD's audio books and more
- Pick up a Council newsletter and subscribe
- Lodge a report or request
- Pay an account / make electronic payments
- Make enquiries, collect and lodge application forms
- Register your dog and cats
- Access and complete surveys
- Learn about and provide feedback on projects
- Use a computer with free internet access
- Have a chat and much more

WASTE SERVICES & CHARGES UPDATE

BAIRNSDALE LANDFILL

NEW HOURS FROM 1 AUGUST 2026



OPERATING HOURS

Mon - Fri : 8:15am - 4:30pm

Sat - Sun : 9:15am - 4:30pm



Fees & Charges:

[eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/
council/council-budget](http://eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/council/council-budget)



Sort & Save:

Recyclables Accepted **FREE**
Wbrę conn Inreprat



More Info: eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

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at the Buchan Neighbourhood House including:

Naturopathy, Herbal and Homeopathic remedies, Relaxation, Aromatherapy, Sports Therapies, Remedial Massage Therapy, Pre and Post Natal and baby massage.

Available for adults and children of all ages.

\$70 one-hour session * Gift vouchers available *

For further information and bookings please contact the Buchan Neighbourhood House or Sharon Dent
silvaust@gmail.com or call 0468 387 524



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- › Business / Term Loans
- › Seasonal Finance Overdraft
- › Line of credit
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Darren Chester

Putting Locals First

#lovegippsland



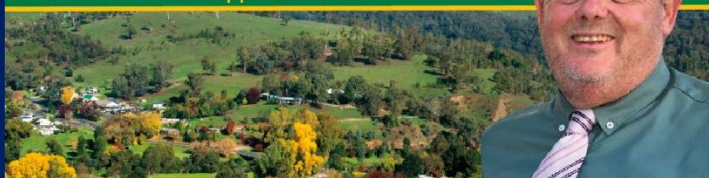
NATIONALS for Gippsland

www.darrenchester.com.au

Authorised by Darren Chester, The National Party of Australia, Level 1, 89 Raymond Street, Sale, VIC, 3950.

Tim BULL

State Member for Gippsland East



Buchan Caves Reserve Image courtesy of Visit Victoria Content Hub

143 Main Street, Bairnsdale VIC 3875

03 5152 3491

tim.bull@parliament.vic.gov.au

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w: buchanstays.com
e: hello@buchanstays.com



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Email: avscanning.info@gmail.com



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www.blackforrestfireworks.com.au



Rohan Rogers

0430 003 544

info@blowflyhillphotography.com

www.blowflyhillphotography.com

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Neighbourhood House
The heart of our community

Contact Buchan Neighbourhood House
to advertise your
business in this newsletter!

\$55 FOR 12 EDITIONS
OR \$5.50 PER EDITION
INCL GST

This newsletter is delivered to every household in the district (on or around the 15th day of the month) and is also available online at buchan.vic.au or via Facebook at Buchan Neighbourhood House. All editions are available electronically at the State Library online site (Trove). If you are not receiving the newsletter please contact us and we will ensure that a copy is mailed to your address.

Newsletters can be posted for an annual fee of \$18.00 incl. GST to anyone outside the district, or contact us with your email address and we can send an electronic version for free. Dates for submissions will be advertised in each edition and we welcome your contributions. Submissions closing date for the next edition is **Monday 7th September 2026**. We welcome articles and contributions from everyone and encourage our local clubs, groups, agencies, organisations and businesses to send us their information. Submissions can be sent to info.buchan@gmail.com or drop them into the Neighbourhood House. The Buchan Neighbourhood House takes no responsibility for opinions expressed by contributors to the *Buchan Phoenix*.

The Editors reserve the right to reject articles and advertisements and to edit submissions if necessary.

All submissions should include the author's full name, address and phone number, but may be anonymous if preferred. Buchan Neighbourhood House is open Monday to Thursday from 10.00am—4.30pm. Advertisements are \$55 for 12 editions or \$5.50 per edition including GST.

Buchan Neighbourhood House contact details:

Buchan Neighbourhood House is dedicated to supporting carers in Victoria and offers a warm, secure, and welcoming environment.

Monday – Thursday 10:00am-4:30pm

6 Centre Road, Buchan

0493 070 332

03 5155 9216

Our organisation is Carer Friendly and helps connect carers to necessary services. We have strong ties with

Carers Victoria and participate in their events, workshops, and informational opportunities for both carers and staff.



East Gippsland Shire Outreach Services

The mobile bus service provides an opportunity to use the library service and engage with their staff on Council matters. All community members are welcome. Please see the schedule below for when the bus is visiting your community.

What you can do at the mobile service:

- Borrow books
- Pick up a Council newsletter
- Lodge a report or request
- Pay an account / make electronic payments
- Make enquiries, collect and lodge application forms
- Register your dogs and cats
- Access and complete surveys
- Learn about and provide feedback on projects
- Use a computer
- Have a chat and much more



The next services will be:

Buchan Neighbourhood House

Every Tuesday from 10:30am—11:30am

Buchan Primary School

Tuesday 18th August 12:45pm—1:30pm

Tuesday 1st September 12:45pm—1:30pm

Tuesday 15th September 12:45pm—1:30pm

Buchan Main Street

Tuesday 25th August 9:00am—10:00am

Tuesday 8th September 9:00am—10:00am

Tuesday 22nd September 9:00am—10:00am

Gelantipy (Bush Nurse Centre)

Tuesday 18th August 9:00am—9:45am

Tuesday 1st September 9:00am—9:45am

Tuesday 15th September 9:00am—9:45am

W Tree (SIBA)

Tuesday 25th August 1:30pm—2:30pm

Tuesday 8th September 1:30pm—2:30pm

Tuesday 22nd September 1:30pm—2:30pm

Catholic Church

St Dymphna's,
Woodgates Road, Buchan.

Meets 3rd Saturday of the month at 9am until further notice.

For service details contact
Mary Wheeler 5155 9330

Anglican Church

St Mary's,
Main Street, Buchan.
Café Church

NEXT MEET

**Sunday 6th September
at 9:30am.**

For details contact

Rhonda Coates 5155 9373