



Christmas
2024

Newsletter

Community Bank · Balnarring & District



From our Branch Manager



As the holiday season approaches, staff at Community Bank Balnarring & District would like to thank the wonderful customers who continue to support our amazing Community Bank.

It has been a successful year as we continued to grow our business from not only existing customers, but also many new customers seeking a new banking relationship when their local bank has either closed or reduced its services. You can be assured that we will remain open for business and continue to provide a full range of banking products and services to support your needs. Switching your banking is not as difficult as you think. Our staff can show you just how easy it is to make the switch to Bendigo Bank and the impact you have when you do.

As we celebrate the festive season, it is a time when online scams and fraud tend to increase. We encourage you to stay vigilant and keep up with the latest security advice. The Bendigo Bank website has great tips on how to identify scams and protect your personal information. Learn more at www.bendigobank.com.au/security Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Mark Butler
Branch Manager

Congratulations to our amazing branch team

At the Regional Awards Night on 31 October, Mark and his team won the Operational Excellence Award, which is a real testament to our staff and the care, professionalism and expertise with which they look after our customers and community. We are very proud of them indeed.



Education – the key to success!

Balnarring Pre-school



Balnarring Pre-school is grateful for our financial support, which saw them build a large new bush kinder storage area, and purchase new tables and chairs, along with a beautiful timber play kitchen for their veranda learning space. The banking of our customers continues to make a huge difference.

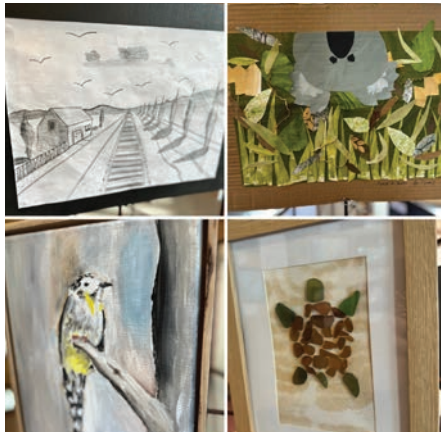
Somers Primary School

It has been a busy time at Somers, with the delivery of 36 new laptop computers for classroom use and funded by your Community Bank. These replaced six-to-eight year-old computers and will significantly improve opportunities for learning important skills.



Mark joins Principal Hugh Greer and students to try out the new laptops

November saw the annual Arts Fair, a major fun-raising event and once again we were proud Platinum sponsors, having supported this very popular Fair since 2010. We were also delighted to fund \$50 Emerging Artist awards for students across three age groups.



Western Port Secondary College

Because Community Bank Balnarring & District knows the importance of education and training as young people follow their aspirations and dreams, we support senior school students at Western Port Secondary College to reach their potential through our Scholarship Program.



Chris Quinn, Principal & Brooks Roy, Assistant Principal, signing the Scholarship Agreement

Since 2021, this program has each year assisted 4 students, nominated by staff, who enter Year 10. Each student receives \$1,500, allocated in \$500 increments across their final three years of education.

Funds are held in trust at the school and dispersed annually towards fees, subject levies, textbooks, uniforms and stationery, which can often be expensive and may exclude students from selecting certain subjects.

This now sees 12 students on scholarships at any one time and we are delighted to continue this valuable program in 2025, because we are passionate about making a difference in the lives of young people.

Flinders Pre-school

Flinders Pre-school Open Day saw director Susan having fun trying out the water play pump, installed as part of the beautiful new Weedy Sea Dragons Sustainable Garden and Little Gardeners' Program. We contributed \$1,000 to this project under our World Environment Day grants program and what a wonderful result for students and our environment.



World Teachers' Day

Our Community Bank knows what an incredible job teachers do every day, so we wanted to say thank you to those who work at our local primary schools on World Teachers' Day, by providing a surprise morning tea delivered by Mark and Mel. We can't thank our teachers enough for what they do!



Somers PS



Balnarring PS



St Joseph's PS



Better banking. Big local impact.

Saving our Koalas



Billie with young Koala patient, Buttons



Billie and Layla receiving their Young Leader Awards from Mark

Did you know that:

- Along with habitat loss, vehicle strikes and dog attacks are major threats to our local Koala population?
- Between September 2023 and September 2024, 35 Koalas across the Peninsula were killed, with casualties in Shoreham, Red Hill, Flinders, Hastings and Langwarrin.
- This does not take into account the many injured Koalas, all of which need to be treated and rehabilitated.

This is where the vital work of wildlife carers and rescuers like Jennie Bryant comes in. Jennie is known locally as the 'Koala Lady' and has devoted the last 45 years to wildlife rescue.

Jennie currently has 10 injured Koalas under her care and as a volunteer who relies on donations to fund her important work caring for and rehabilitating sick and injured wildlife, she is under constant pressure.

Belinda Eden of Mornington Peninsula Koala Conservation recently contacted us to share her concerns for Jennie's Koalas as the weather heats up, making life in the enclosures they are in until they are well enough to be released, extremely difficult indeed.

Knowing the importance of Jennie's work and being further swayed by a beautiful letter written to us by Belinda's daughter Billie and her friend Layla, about the need to keep the Koalas cool and not suffer in the heat, the Board had no hesitation in approving the funds to install overhead misting systems in the enclosures as soon as possible. We were so impressed with their initiative, that we presented the girls with Young Leader Awards at Balnarring Primary School's assembly on 29 November.

We all need to think about what we can do to ensure our Koala population thrives, not declines.

Young leaders making positive impacts



Back in 2015 we initiated the Community Bank Balnarring & District Young Leader Award, to celebrate leadership, character and true community spirit shown by young people across our district.

Our huge congratulations to Eden, Mia, Maya and Lacey, recipients of Balnarring District Netball Club's Young Leader Awards, on being such passionate and active members of their club.

Crib Point Football Netball Club kitchen upgrade

Your Community Bank was delighted to fund a kitchen upgrade for the club and work is now completed on an exciting 'all electric' refurbishment, which will make a huge difference to the efficiency and safety of the kitchen for Julie Saunders and her band of volunteers.

The kitchen not only caters for regular club events, but also community events, monthly free lunches for locals and also emergency situations such as bushfires, so is a vital resource.



Balnarring Bowls & Social Club Open Day

What a fabulous time was had by all, including staff and directors, at Balnarring Bowls and Social Club's Open day! The club has become a popular spot for recreation and socialising across our community and we are extremely proud to support their wonderful work to improve and develop recreation and social activities for all ages.



Fantastic DJ Dylan Hanson kept the music coming! If you need a DJ, let us know and we can put you in touch with Dylan.

Western Port Community Support Housing Support Program

The housing crisis continues to be at the forefront of our minds and Western Port Community Support is constantly seeing new clients who are in crisis and need to access the essential programs and support they provide.



Your Community Bank contributed \$30,000 each year in 2021, 2022 and 2023 towards the salary of the centre's Housing Support Program Caseworker and we have increased this year's contribution to \$40,000 to assist with the employment of a Complex Client Support Caseworker, as we can't begin to imagine how people like Ellen and so many others must feel when confronted with such situations not of their making.

Executive Officer, Georgia Hour, shared this overview of the vital work carried out by WPCS, assisting and advising so many.



The WPCS Christmas Giving Program provides 300 food and toy hampers to disadvantaged members across our region and we are delighted to be a collection point each year



Georgia Hour with Mark and directors Michele and Heather

A message from Western Port Community Support

As we fast approach the end of another busy year and with the festive season almost upon us, it is a time to reflect upon the past months and the period ahead for those who may be homeless or experiencing housing stress, along with those struggling with the financial burden that Christmas imposes.

At WPCS, we have once again experienced a year filled with significant demand for our services, particularly through our Housing Support Program. This year, our highly skilled and dedicated Housing Caseworker, Laura Sutton, has provided vital assistance to 62 clients who were acutely homeless and another 81 clients who were at high risk of becoming homeless, which included 89 dependent children. These individuals and families often come to us in desperation, facing situations where they may have received a Notice to Vacate due to a landlord's decision to sell or renovate. Despite their best efforts, many have found it impossible to secure an affordable rental property, through no fault of their own.

One such individual is Ellen, an 85-year-old woman who had lived in her rental home for 26 years. Ellen was asked to vacate her home as the property's owner planned to develop it. Lacking the basic tools to engage in the online rental market, without computer skills, a mobile phone, or a car needed to attend open for inspections, Ellen found herself cut off from the usual rental application process and unable to attend property inspections. Laura was able to advocate strongly for Ellen with real estate agents, complete the online rental property applications on Ellen's behalf, transport her to property inspections, as well as provide funds to pay removalist fees. Without this crucial support, Ellen would have very likely fallen through the cracks and become homeless, further burdening an already overwhelmed crisis system.

Ellen's story is just one example of the many individuals and families who have benefitted from the Housing Support Program in 2024. Thanks to the generous funding from Community Bank Balnarring & District, we are able to continue this vital work into 2025. The support Western Port Community Support provides helps to keep people in affordable and safe accommodation, offering them a chance to rebuild, address any additional complex issues and achieve their goals of stability and housing security. Let's continue to stand together, providing support, compassion and hope for those who need it most during these challenging times.

Meet Kelly, our Customer Service Officer



Hi, I'm Kelly, the new CSO at the Balnarring branch.

I'm very proud to be working for a business that invests so much in the community and supporting those in need and very grateful for the welcome and support I have received, not only from my colleagues, but the local community, since I started in August.

If I haven't met you already, please come in and say hello.

Farewell to Heidi



It is with much regret that we bid farewell to Heidi, our Customer Relationship Manager, who leaves us to take up an exciting business opportunity with her husband. Heidi has been a vital part of our branch team and we thank her for her contribution to the work and success of the branch since joining us.

In their own words... some of the many programs and events we are proud to fund because our customers choose to bank with us.

Story Dogs



St Joseph's Story Dogs Billie & Coco with volunteers & staff with Mel

St Joseph's Crib Point

"As a participating school in the Story Dogs program, I have witnessed first-hand the incredible impact Billie and Coco have on our students' reading journeys and overall wellbeing and self-confidence. From the moment Billie and Coco walk into school, you see both

staff and students beam! These two loving and gentle dogs create a warm, non-judgemental environment where children feel at ease practising their reading skills. It's truly inspiring to watch children transform through their interactions with not only the dogs, but the beautiful staff who run the program."

Kate Huon, Wellbeing Leader, St Joseph's Crib Point Primary



Story Dog, Ruby with volunteer Robyn & student Viv at Balnarring

Balnarring Primary School

I'm lucky enough to have my classroom right next to where the Story Dogs sessions happen and it's such a treat to hear students reading to Ruby, our Story Dog. You can't help but smile when you hear them getting into their books with Ruby quietly listening. One of my students is part of the program, and I've noticed how much they look forward to it each week. It's really helped boost their confidence in

reading and they come back to class excited and proud of what they've accomplished.

The program brings such a positive vibe to our school and it's amazing to see how much joy and comfort Ruby brings to the students. It's definitely one of the best parts of the week.

Jill Olle Year 2 teacher

Friends of Coolart

"Friends of Coolart greatly appreciates the wonderful support we receive each year from Community Bank Balnarring & District. Not



only are our funds looked after well (our term deposits enjoy a competitive rate), we also receive sponsorship for our annual Coolart Community Picnic and grants for initiatives such as the installation of a defibrillator near the entrance, creating a fun, family-focused community celebration each year and enhancing community safety. Our partnership with the Community Bank means we can deliver a high quality, very popular event that the community loves each year!"

St John's Flinders

"We are so grateful to Community Bank Balnarring & District for supporting our recital series for so many years. It is typical of the bank's generosity to not only the performing arts, but to a wide range of local community projects, which over the past 16 years has seen the Community Bank provide an amazing \$3.6 million worth of support. A round of applause is called for!"



John Barren

Cycling without Age

"My name is Sue Koll. I am 100 years old and have been a resident at Arcare Balnarring for over two years. About a year ago volunteers



offered residents free tricycle (rickshaw) rides on Tuesday mornings and it's now a much-anticipated weekly event. The electric tricycle takes two 'front seat' passengers for a very comfortable ride around neighbourhood streets. It's great to get out into the fresh air along with another resident. We usually go for a 20-30 minute ride, with a lovely thick blanket to keep us warm if it's cold. There is a folding roof awning, which we don't generally use, preferring to get the 'wind in our hair' (or under our helmet!). It's a great innovation much appreciated by all, especially those in wheelchairs who don't usually get out and about. A very big thank you to the volunteers - it's much appreciated."

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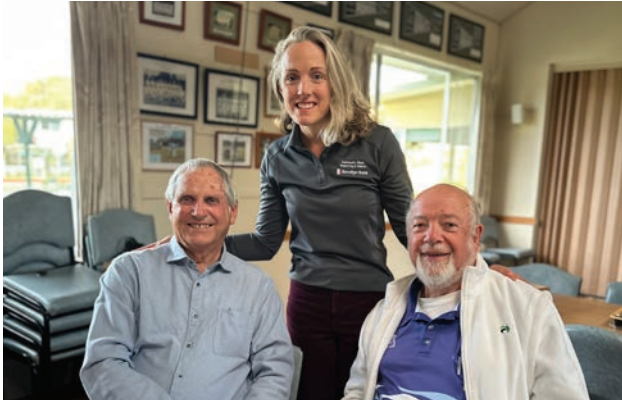


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instagram.com/communitybankbalnarring

Banking convenience for you creates community support for all. We are delighted to support these groups.



▲ Our AGM in October provided the opportunity to celebrate another successful year with shareholders and reflect on what amazing outcomes have been realised over the past sixteen years. As Harold Weber, one of those responsible for getting our Community Bank established, commented "We had no idea of the real potential of the bank - we just wanted to provide banking services!" And they did, plus lots more - the power of community banking. Mel Symes with shareholders Darryl Cowen & Harold Weber



▲ Our congratulations to Alex Wadelton, who over 18 hours on 4 October, set a world record of 5,364 runs of the cricket pitch, raising more than \$12,000 for anaphylaxis research for the National Allergy Centre for Excellence at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. \$1,500 of this was contributed by Melinda Symes through our Staff Donations Program. What an achievement!



▲ We were thrilled to again be a major sponsor of the wonderful Flinders Art Show after a four-year hiatus. Over \$40,000 was raised, which will support local programs including Western Port Community Support, Southern Peninsula Children's Research Institute, Food for All and the Flinders CFA.

Talk to us today



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We're open:

9.30am - 4.00pm Monday to Thursday
9.30am - 5.00pm Friday

Directors

Heather Goddard (Chair), Chris Gurney (Treasurer), Mark Laughton, Ron Kempster, Stuart Whiteley, Kym Bridgford, Sarah Moran, Susan Beanland, Andrew Thomas, Michele Sabto.
Community Engagement Officer: Melinda Symes
Company Secretary: Ken Brown

Balnarring & District Community Services Limited
ABN 84 127 842 059



▲ Commodore Rick Barker enjoying the Season Opening BBQ at the Flinders Yacht Club. We will again assist with funding for the club's always popular Sailing School this summer.



▲ Chris joined Commodore Simon Cordon and members of the Merricks Yacht Club for the official opening of their wonderful new storage shed.



◀ The new wash-down system at Flinders Golf Club, to which we contributed significant funds. This ensures no environmental risks from equipment washdowns and the production of recycled water for course use from all washdown activity.

Scam alerts

Identify and protect yourself from common scams. View the latest scam alerts on the Bendigo Bank website at

www.bendigobank.com.au/security/scams/alerts/