

Noojee News

Edition 12

Your Community Newsletter

Winter 2026

One of our wonderful volunteers

By Wendy Morriss



Noojee Heritage Centre would not be Noojee Heritage Centre without the Historical Society's volunteers. Over the years, many community members have worked tirelessly to build the centre and preserve the town's history. Today volunteers still work hard to keep the centre maintained and operating.

One long serving volunteer, who may soon have another role cataloguing, is Janet Cowden.

President Janiene Ayres said Janet is a vital part of their volunteer team.

"Her skills, her attention to detail and her knowledge of the region is so valuable. She's also done some amazing work with maps." Janet works most Saturdays for about eight hours doing grounds work and research and has been with the society since 2012.

"I got involved when they were meeting at the CFA building," Janet said. "At that stage, they just had a tent pitched on the site.

"I kind of fell into volunteering because I'm not a Noojee person, I'm a third generation Neerim South resident. I was in the Warragul Historical Society and attended a meeting there where the shire had done a heritage study and there were a few citations about properties in Noojee. I had the disc with their draft report that wasn't wanted anymore, so I took it to the Noojee Historical Society.

"When I first joined, there was another couple there who were very friendly and invited me back to their place. That was the Harvey's, Peter and Emma, which was very nice of them."

Janet said she volunteers because she likes history. She's also a member of the Neerim District History & Heritage Group. "My father spent 85 years here and he used to talk about the older people and what they did. I do enjoy doing the grounds work too, so I have a love for it. I leave the big heavy work to the men to do. If I see something they are not tackling that I think I can do, then I tackle it. I'm not really into the flower garden that's Valda's work, and I think she's done a very pretty job of it. Valda isn't a society member, she just volunteers."

Janet never married or had children. She regularly attends Church in Rokeby and occasionally sends letters into the Warragul Gazette as part of her civic duty she said smiling.

She was a trained teacher and worked in Merbein near Mildura and Tallangatta.

"Neerim South was my home and I came back for holidays."

She later worked as a librarian in Darwin where she stayed for 25 years, still coming home to Neerim South at intervals.

Noojee Truffle Festival

By Colin Booth

The Noojee Truffle Festival will be held from July 10 to August 2nd. The program features 19 separate events, with seven taking place in Noojee and the remaining 12 held in Neerim and Neerim South. The festival will run during the truffle harvesting season.

The festival is expected to boost tourism across the district while also supporting local businesses.

The event has been made possible through a Victorian Government grant as part of the Forestry Transition Program's Community Development Fund.

Baw Baw Shire Mayor, Councillor Kate Wilson said this festival will showcase the locally grown black truffle with food and produce workshops taking place as well as farm gate tours, truffle hunts with dogs, cooking demonstrations and artisan market stalls

During the festival, the Noojee Heritage Centre will be transformed into a Truffle Station each Sunday, with additional events taking place at the Toolshed, Ridge Road Blooms, and Toorong Valley Estate. Ashridge Truffles and Neeri Nuff Wine Bar and Kitchen will host events outside of Noojee

Festival organisers are encouraging visitors to 'follow their nose' to Noojee this winter and discover why black truffles are often called the 'diamonds of the kitchen'.



The Noojee News acknowledges the original inhabitants and traditional custodians of Noojee and surrounds and pays respect to Elders past, present and First Peoples of Australia who live in this district.

From the editor...

The Noojee News is an independent publication produced by local media group under the auspices of the Noojee Community Hall Committee, to provide information for the town.

If you would like an article, letter or business card ad in the Noojee News email: noojeenews@gmail.com

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Noojee - Warragul Bus Service		
Inbound - To Warragul (Monday - Friday)		
Noojee Primary School	7:32	15:16
Noojee Post Office	7:36	15:20
Neerim Junction General Store	7:45	15:29
Settlement Rd/Main Neerim Rd (Neerim)	7:48	15:32
St John's Neerim South	7:56	15:40
Addison St/Main Neerim Rd (Neerim South)	7:57	15:41
Jindivick-Neerim South Rd/Main Neerim Rd (Neerim South)	7:58	15:42
Rokeby Hall	8:05	15:49
Buln Buln Primary School	8:10	15:54
Stoddarts Rd/Brandy Creek Rd (Warragul)	8:16	16:00
Brandy Creek Service Station	8:17	16:01
Clifford St/Smith St (Warragul)	8:19	16:03
Warragul Arts Centre	8:20	16:04
Barkly St	8:21	16:05
Queen St	8:23	16:07
Warragul Station Bus Terminal	8:25	16:09
Outbound - To Noojee (Monday - Friday)		
Warragul Station Bus Terminal	10:10	16:55
Warragul Club/Victoria St (Warragul)	10:15	17:00
Cemetery/Brandy Creek Rd (Warragul)	10:16	17:01
Lincoln St/Brandy Creek Rd (Warragul)	10:17	17:02
Brandy Creek Service Station	10:18	17:03
Buln Buln Primary School	10:23	17:08
Rokeby Hall	10:29	17:14
Addison St/Main Neerim Rd (Neerim South)	10:37	17:22
Neerim South Post Office	10:39	17:24
Settlement Rd/Main Neerim Rd (Neerim)	10:45	17:30
Neerim Junction General Store	10:49	17:34
Loch Valley Rd/Bennett St (Noojee)	10:59	17:44
Noojee Primary School	11:03	17:48

*Noojee - Warragul Service doesn't operate on weekends or public holidays
For more information: Contact Warragul Bus Lines (03) 56235377*

Noojee Innovation Working Groups

By Lana Horn

SPECIALISED AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT (SAID)

The group have decided to scale their meeting frequency back to every second month to continue to maintain their relationships, connections and resource sharing. Truffle farm members are busy preparing for the upcoming Noojee Truffle Festival to be held in late July/ August. More information on the Truffle Festival can be found via the website <https://noojetrufflefestival.com.au/>

POWER & CONNECTIVITY RELIABILITY

As a result of the community survey conducted by the Power IWG members earlier in the year (with over 40 responses received), the group are looking to partner with Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN) to hold a 'Energy Evening' to align with the Community Event on the 13th September. The aim of the evening is to help demystify the complexities around renewable energy options and demonstrate how the community can make their home more energy efficient. Understanding the issues the community face regarding reliable power connection, the group is working with Federation University to look into a backup system that can keep electricity running when the main supply goes out. The group are looking to prepare a funding application to carry out a feasibility study to explore different factors that affect the area's day-to-day power supply. *More information on how the community can assist with the feasibility study will be provided soon.*

NOOJEE ECO-COMMUNITY

The final draft of the Heritage Precinct masterplan was available for community viewing at the March community event. Following the completion of this initial concept design, the group are currently working with Baw Baw Shire councils' major projects team to prepare a funding application to support the first stage of development works for the site. In the meantime, council were recently successful in obtaining funding through the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) to the amount of \$250,000, which will go towards further design work and permit requirements needed before any development work can commence. The funds will also go towards the erection of the Neerim to Noojee rail trail head.

NNEST SUB-COMMITTEE

The group has recently become incorporated and, as a result, has transitioned away from its role as a project sub-committee. Ongoing support continues to be provided as the group progresses its initiatives, explores potential venue opportunities and seeks funding to support future outcomes.

TRACKS AND TRAILS

The group are investigating the potential to establish an all accessible river walk connecting the two ends of town (Heritage Precinct and Gladys Sanderson Park) whilst exploring tracks and trails currently mapped by local community member, David Edney <https://www.komoot.com/user/noojee-track-trails> to establish more formal trails, including a potential Boys Camp Road loop, tracking along Mt Baw Baw Tourist Road and connecting with the current Trestle Bridge walk.

To support this work, the group is preparing a funding application to enable detailed and functional design development for these routes, along with associated wayfinding signage.

Noojee and District Historical Society

By Janiene Ayre

We are excited to share the wonderful news that our nomination for the Noojee & District Historical Society has been honoured with an award!

This prestigious recognition comes from the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA) and celebrates the unwavering commitment and hard work of the volunteers who tirelessly support our society's mission.

To commemorate this significant achievement, DEECA hosted a special celebration during Volunteer Week.

The event took place on Wednesday, May 27, at 11am, at the Noojee Heritage Centre, where we gathered to acknowledge and appreciate the invaluable contributions of our dedicated volunteers.

It was a heart-warming occasion filled with gratitude and camaraderie, reflecting the spirit of our thriving community.



Volunteers that attended in the photo are:

L to R: Percy Camilleri, Gary Ryan, Gary Bell, Janiene Ayre, John Olsen, Melina Camilleri, Will Langoor, Angie Langoor

Volunteers unable to attend were: Janet Cowden, Graham Linker, Miles Spencer and Sarah Hobgen

Storytelling in Noojee

The Working Group has installed new interpretive signs, thanks to the invaluable support of Simon from Homegrown. Each sign is designed to enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation of Noojee's history from 1900 onward, and to highlight attractions in the surrounding areas making this cultural hub even more informative and engaging for all who visit.

The 2026 Ada River Rally

The Rally is set to take place on August 22, 2026, in Noojee. This event, rescheduled from May, is part of the NSW Rally Championship as Round 4 and also serves as Round 5 of the East Coast Classic Rally Series (for both 2WD and 4WD vehicles).

For official updates, entry information, and to view the full calendar of events, please visit the Rally NSW website or the WDCC website.



N&DHS Uniforms

The Noojee & District Historical Society has introduced uniforms, including vests and hats, for our dedicated volunteers who support us on weekends and in various working groups. These uniforms, featuring the J550 logo from Heritage Gifts and Coffee, serve multiple purposes. Firstly, they enhance safety and professionalism, which are crucial to creating a reliable environment for both our volunteers and the community. The uniforms foster a sense of belonging, transforming our volunteers into a cohesive team that is easily recognisable during events and activities. Additionally, we provide new lanyards that display each volunteer's name and status, which helps to establish a welcoming atmosphere for visitors and allows for clearer communication among team members. By supplying branded, functional gear, the Noojee & District Historical Society not only boosts visibility in busy environments but also demonstrates our appreciation for the invaluable contributions of our volunteers. Ultimately, these uniforms help build community trust and improve internal morale, ensuring that our volunteers feel valued and engaged in their efforts to promote and preserve our local history.

From the Mountain

By Colin Booth



June's King's Birthday long weekend marks the official start of the snow season at Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort. This year, the resort's lifts will operate every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from June 6–27, lifts will then run daily from the start of the school holidays until the end of the season. Mount Baw Baw is the closest downhill snow resort to Melbourne. The resort expects that, at the peak of the snow season, up to 800 cars and buses will pass through its gates each day for skiing, tobogganing or simply experiencing Australian snow. An additional 70 people are employed directly by the resort during the winter months.

Recently, a meeting was held between local businesses, a representative of the alpine resort and Baw Baw Shire Council to enhance collaboration between the Noojee community and the mountain. Ninety percent of visitors travel to the alpine resort via the Mount Baw Baw Tourist Road, which passes through Noojee. This provides a significant boost to Noojee businesses during the winter months.

It is hoped that greater collaboration will help promote the area as a single destination rather than two separate locations. This could encourage visitors to extend their stay, boosting the local economy, employment opportunities and investment in infrastructure.

NOOJEE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY EVENT:

Sunday 14 June 2026

- Free dinner and dessert
- Official launch of the Noojee & District Community Development Association (NDCDA)
- Innovation Working Group updates
- Live music
- We've got heaters to keep you warm!

TIME: 5pm – 7pm
ADDRESS: Noojee Community Hall

Noojee Native Title claims

By Colin Booth

Noojee has been included in a Native Title claim lodged in the Federal Court by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People. Filed in October 2025, the claim spans a large area of Victoria, covering most of metropolitan Melbourne from the Werribee River in the west to Mount Baw Baw in the east, the Great Dividing Range in the north and Mordialloc Creek in the south.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are one of five language groups that form the Kulin Nation and have cared for and lived on these lands for tens of thousands of years. Archaeological evidence indicates human presence in the region dating back as far as 40,000 years and possibly longer.

There are currently six active Native Title applications before the Federal Court in Victoria, highlighting the growing recognition of Traditional Owners and their enduring connection to Country. If the claim is successful, it would not transfer ownership of land to the Traditional Owners. Instead, it would provide rights relating to the management and use of Crown land, including the protection of culturally significant areas and the right to be consulted on decisions affecting those sites. The claim does not apply to privately owned land, homes, businesses or public infrastructure.

The application is currently being considered by the National Native Title Tribunal with no fixed timeframe for a final decision to be made. It has long been believed that Noojee is an indigenous word meaning either place of rest or valley of contentment.

Noojee’s indigenous history

By Wendy Morriss

The name Noojee is derived from the local Aboriginal Woiwurrung word noojeeb, meaning ‘place of rest or contentment’. Before European settlement, the valleys surrounding the town served as a natural border and meeting place for two distinct Indigenous language groups – the Wurundjeri people (of the Kulin Nation) to the west and the Brayakaulung people (of the Gunaikurnai Nation) to the east.

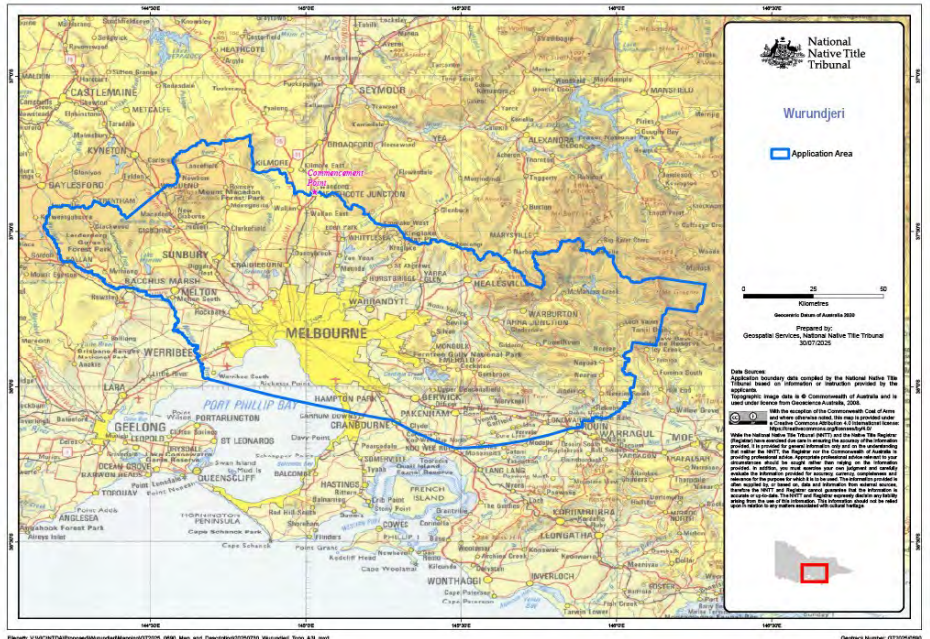
The Wurundjeri People take their name from the Woiwurrung language word ‘wurun’ meaning the Manna Gum, which is commonly found in the region.

Traditional owners lived on the land for thousands of years, moving with the seasons to hunt, gather and manage the forests and river systems.

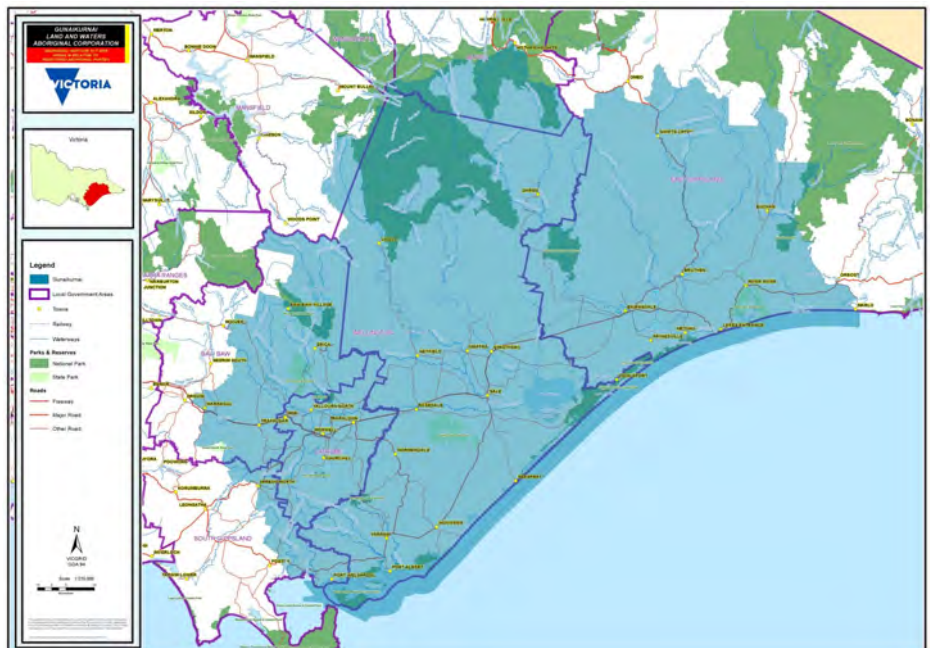
Evidence of deep ancestral occupation can still be found in the Noojee and Toorong Falls area, including recorded cultural heritage sites.

Baw Baw Shire lands belong to the Brayakaulung Kurnai people from Providence Ponds, Avon and Latrobe rivers west of Lake Wellington to Mounts Baw Baw and Howitt. Baw Baw is the Kurnai language word meaning southern boobook owl.

Today, the land is represented by the [Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation](https://wurundjeri.org.au/) and the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC). <https://gunaikurnai.org/>



The Wurundjeri native title claim encompasses much of Melbourne while the Gunaikurnai native title covers most of Gippsland



On 22 October, 2010, the Gunaikurnai people were recognised by the Federal Court and the State of Victoria as the Traditional Owners with native title over of a large area of Gippsland spanning from Warragul in the west to the Snowy River in the east and from the Great Divide in the north to the coast in the south.

The Noojee and District Governance Group



Emma Birchall DEECA, Heather Gillespie Resident (Vice Chair), Ken Hitchcock Resident and Noojee CFA member, Glenn Fenton Resident (Chair), Krystal Barr Baw Baw Shire Council, Daryl Brooke Regional Development Victoria, Sharnee Moore Resident

By Glenn Fenton

Since the last Noojee News, the Governance Group has been working on two distinct areas. The first area is to progress the Forestry Transition Project into tangible outcomes for the community.

Whilst a lot of effort has been expended by the Innovation Working Groups (IWG) in identifying investment opportunities, this work largely goes unseen by the community. In football jargon, these are called the hard yards – countless hours of volunteer work for the community's benefit. Not every identified opportunity is ready for investment, but I'm pleased to report we are starting to see the fruits of all that hard work. One is the recent announcement by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal that they will support Stage 1 of the Heritage Precinct upgrade with a \$250k grant. It will include funding for the new trail-head signage for the Rokeby to Noojee rail trail, electric vehicle (EV) chargers and design and permit requirements. Well done to the volunteers in the IWG, the Historical Society and the Project Team.

The second area of work is to establish the Noojee and District Community Development Association, which will replace the Governance Group when the Forestry Transition project finishes in December. Why do we need it? The goal is to bring together ideas, resources and voices from across the community and the strengths and relationships that already exist throughout the different groups so that we work as a collective to achieve positive change for our district. By working together on a shared agenda, without disturbing the underlying community infrastructure where it works well, we can be a cohesive and powerful lever for community sustainability, growth and connection. Between now and December, there will be a few important meetings, including an inaugural AGM. An update on this project will be held at the Community Meeting from 5-7 pm on June 14th at the Noojee Hall. Come along and have some dinner with us!



Noojee CFA News

By Colin Booth

As winter arrives, many people assume it must be a quieter time for the brigade. Unfortunately, that's far from the truth. Around 40% of the brigade's call-outs are to motor vehicle accidents, with most occurring during the colder months when rain, ice, and snow can make roads more dangerous.

In winter a big focus of the brigade becomes home fire safety. In the autumn issue of Noojee News, we highlighted the importance of keeping chimneys clean, but just as important is making sure your home has working smoke alarms. In Victoria, 75% of fatal house fires occur while people are asleep. It's a reminder that smoke alarms can truly save lives.

If you live in the Noojee area and don't have working smoke alarms in your home, we can help. We have a supply of free smoke alarms for those that need them and Brigade members will install them for you. To find out more, get in touch via our Facebook page or email us at NoojeeCFA@gmail.com.

Finally, at the end of June, David Blacker will step down as Brigade Captain. Since taking on the role in 2022, David has provided steady leadership and dedication to the brigade and community. We sincerely thank him for his commitment and service over the past four years.



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