

Noojee News

Edition 9

Your Community Newsletter

Spring 2025

The Angel of Noojee

A Noojee reserve will be formally named 'Gladys Sanderson Park' after local hero Gladys Sanderson, whose selflessness and courage left a lasting mark on the town's history.

Baw Baw Shire Council invited the community to have their say on naming Noojee Streamside Reserve. During the community consultation period, 37 responses were received, with 33 in support of the naming proposal.

On 13 January 1939, Noojee and much of Victoria were ravaged by one of the worst bushfires in the state's history – the devastating Black Friday bushfires. Amidst the chaos, Gladys Sanderson, who was the town's assistant postmistress remained at her post as the last person capable of operating Noojee's telephone switchboard – its only communication link.

She worked tirelessly, relaying urgent messages to isolated families and emergency responders until the post office itself was engulfed in flames and she was forced to flee for shelter in the La Trobe River.

Her extraordinary bravery was widely recognised, with her story making headlines from Warragul to London. In June 1940, she was awarded the Order of the British Empire for 'gallantry and devotion to duty'. Now, in recognition of her heroic efforts and the countless lives she saved, Council will name the reserve 'Gladys Sanderson Park'.

Deputy Mayor Tricia Jones thanked the community for providing their feedback on the naming proposal. "I am pleased to see Gladys Sanderson's bravery and heroic efforts remembered in this way," she said. "We thank everyone who took the time to provide their feedback throughout the consultation process. "The naming of this currently unnamed reserve provides an opportunity to celebrate Gladys' courage and contribution to this community and will help preserve this important story of Noojee's history for future generations."



Telstra Tower



According to a company spokesperson, Telstra is committed to delivering the new 4G/5G mobile site in Noojee, which is co-funded under the Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Program. The tower has been built but they are still working through final approvals to meet all land and legislative requirements that apply to new mobile infrastructure sites in Victoria before the site can be connected. No other details were provided. Unfortunately, the final approvals are taking longer than they expected but she said they are doing

everything they can to move things along quickly and will keep the community updated and share more details as soon as they have a clearer timeline.

Toorong Valley Stump Carving



The beautiful Toorong Valley Stump Carving commissioned by DEECA Noojee was a wonderful collaboration between chainsaw sculptor Paul Stafford and his close friend First Nations Elder and Kurnai woman Aunty Eileen Harrison, a world renowned artist. The stunning artwork, carved into a 7- metre manna gum stump is a profound acknowledgement to all First Nations people who have lived, visited and cared for this land. The carving beautifully represents the Toorong Valley, its rich stories and the deep connection that First Nations people have to country.

Photos supplied by VC Traders Warragul



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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Someone's Something

A student film that showcases the beauty of Noojee and its diverse community, produced by Izzy Hearsey, directed by Georgia Hitchcock, sound recording by Madeleine Frau and filmed by Kane Ellis, is due to be screened this summer across venues in Melbourne and Gippsland. You can follow the film's journey on social media @someoneessomethingdoco. Thanks to the people in the community who participated.



NOOJEE COMMUNITY EVENT.

Sunday 21 September 2025.

Come along to enjoy a **free**
hot roast dinner & dessert

- Live music
- Opportunity for community input towards the Noojee Heritage Precinct Masterplan Design

For more information on the Masterplan Design, please visit the [Shaping the Future of Noojee](https://www.bawbawconnect.com.au/hub-page/noojee) website.

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Date: Sunday 21 Sep 2025

Time: 5pm – 7pm

Address: Noojee Community Hall

Official Opening of Gladys Sanderson Park

Date: Sunday 21 Sep 2025

Time: 4.30pm – 5pm

Address: Gladys Sanderson Park,
22 Bennett St. Noojee

Church services in Noojee

Uniting Church services in the hall are held on the first Sunday of the month and Anglican services are held on the third Sunday in the month, both at 9 am and everyone is welcome.

Noojee CFA News

By Colin Booth

Every year, at around this time, we start to think of the summer that lies ahead and what that might bring. Noojee is fortunate to be currently quite green after having had reasonably good rainfall over the winter months. However, much of the State remains very dry and is experiencing ongoing drought conditions.

Experience tells us that it can only take a run of hot weather to dry out the landscape and leave it vulnerable to fire over the warmer months that are ahead of us.

It's never too early to begin preparing your property for the Fire Danger Period. Simple tasks such as clearing gutters, cutting back vegetation and removing flammable items from around the home can make a big difference in the event of a fire. The CFA website provides guidance on this. As your local fire brigade, we can also assist by our members visiting your property for advice on fire preparedness. Please get in touch with us through Facebook if you're interested in knowing more.

It is important to know what lies ahead by keeping an eye on the weather forecast and the daily Fire Danger Ratings. Downloading the VicEmergency App to your phone to keep informed of current events can also make a big difference in keeping you and your family safe.

Noojee Hotel is 100



By Wendy Morriss

The hotel was built in 1925 in the middle of the bush by owner and publican Sydney Wentworth Smith. At the time, it was an enormous building for a small town but one that catered for the growing timber industry by providing accommodation, and for the consumption of beer.

In 1926, a year after its establishment, and again in 1939, bushfires destroyed the town. The hotel was the only building that survived through both fires and served as a community meeting place during the emergencies.

After the 39 fires, the hotel took on the role of most other general businesses in the town until they were re-established and also the role of a local school where lessons were taught on the veranda.

Within a month of the bushfire, 45 men, women and children who were camped in tents by the river, were flooded out by heavy rain that burst the river banks – then it snowed. The hotel publican at the time was Bill Chamberlain and he and his wife Rita helped the stricken families with free meals and beds.

During the early 60s, while the hotel was owned and managed by William (Clem) Dunn, Jack Kelly a local Powelltown man sculpted a series of dinosaurs from bull ferns and they stood amongst the greenery behind the hotel alongside the river. Over the years, they deteriorated and are now long gone but one that remained for many years was the well-known and well-loved 12 foot T-Rex dinosaur that stood outside the front of the hotel until the late 90s.

The dinosaur was eventually placed in the hotel garden but later became seriously damaged when two mill workers put a chain around it and dragged it through the main street behind a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

From the 70s through to the 90s, while Bill Kelsall and later Alan Prendergast were the publicans, the hotel was always packed with people and according to a few local employees, it was a bit wild. Many mill workers and truck drivers



frequented the hotel and deer hunters called in on weekends. There was a bar then and a lounge for families. The hotel today is much quieter but it has always been a family pub and it still is.

Another eminent object that is located in the Latrobe River behind the hotel is a waterwheel believed to have been built by the original owner to generate electricity. According to hearsay, it was for an illicit gaming room underneath the hotel. The original waterwheel was a large floating structure with wooden paddles. Later during the floods, the water wheel was washed away and another was built of metal and anchored to the side of the river. It can still be seen there today; however, again according to hearsay the water wheels never generated electricity.

In 1998, while the hotel was owned and managed by John Williams, a fire broke out in the upstairs part of the building believed to have been started by a faulty power point or lamp, which caused significant damage. The owner decided not to rebuild the upstairs rooms but instead refurbished the downstairs area and covered it with a new roof creating the Noojee Hotel we know today. The venue and business is now owned and operated by Simon and Rosie Duck who are celebrating the hotel's 100th birthday throughout the year. It includes reinstating the first owner, builder and publican's name on the front of the building after it was taken off 88 years ago.



The Noojee Trestle Bridge has reopened to the public after recent repairs. The bridge requires periodic, ongoing maintenance works to keep it structurally sound and safe for the public. As one of Gippsland's most popular visitor experiences, DEECA is committed to keeping the historic bridge in a condition that will allow it to be enjoyed for many years to come.

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Noojee Views

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