



Noojee News

Edition 10

Your Community Newsletter

Summer 2025

A day in the life of a fire spotter...



By Colin Booth

On the peak of Mount Toorongo stands an 18-metre tall observation tower. The tower is part of a network of towers across the state located on prominent peaks and high points as part of a state-wide early detection network, operated by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Their purpose is to observe the surrounding landscape for the first hint of smoke.

Built in 1969 to replace a two story hut, the Mount Toorongo tower is one of two managed and operated from DEECA's Noojee depot. This summer, the responsibility for the tower falls to Martin Pumpa, now in his fourth year of keeping watch over the district's forests.

A typical day for Martin usually begins in a fairly routine way. After arriving, the first task is to get the binoculars out and scan the area for any signs of smoke. If all is clear, he completes a weather report and checks that the radios and other equipment are functioning properly. On a quiet day, a few coffees may be needed throughout the shift to help him stay alert. Most of the day is spent scanning the bush for smoke, keeping in touch with neighbouring towers and completing another weather report later in the day. Monitoring the weather is also a big part of the job. Lightning is a major cause of bushfires, so knowing where storms are likely to occur and keeping a close eye on those areas is very important.

When smoke is first sighted, the immediate task is to take a bearing from the tower's location. Neighbouring towers are then contacted and made aware of the sighting. Those towers, if they can also see the smoke, take their own bearings and together they use the two or three reference points to triangulate and pinpoint the fire's exact location.

The more towers that can see the smoke, the easier the task is to identify its precise position. But sometimes other towers have cloud cover or the smoke is too faint. This can make pinpointing a location quite challenging. When that happens, Martin relies on his maps, binoculars and his observations of the surrounding terrain — roads, farms, ridgelines, hills and mountain peaks to estimate a location. This method often gives an approximate position rather than a precise one.

In these circumstances, a DEECA ground crew or spotting aircraft is deployed to confirm the exact location. Once the location is confirmed a plan can be developed for the best way to manage the fire. The tower continues to monitor the smoke closely, tracking its movement, size and behaviour throughout the day.

Some stretches can remain completely quiet with weeks passing without a single sighting. Other days are far busier. When lightning has occurred in the area over the previous few days, it can be particularly challenging as several small fires may be smouldering undetected and only become visible as the day warms up.

Despite the challenges, Martin finds the role rewarding, "Playing an important role in protecting the bush and surrounding communities is very rewarding. Working in the bush and having a great view is also rewarding. It's a decent office being on top of a mountain," he said.



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 Monday – Friday

To Warragul

Noojee Primary School	7.45	3.15
Noojee Post Office	7.50	3.20
Neerim Junction General Store	8.00	3.30
Neerim South bus shelter opposite Post Office	8.10	3.40
Rokeby	8.20	3.50
Buln Buln opposite primary school	8.25	3.55
Warragul Cnr Stoddards Road	8.30	4.00
Warragul Barkley Street	8.35	4.05
Warragul Railway Station	8.38*	4.08*

*Connects with 8.54 am V/Line train to Melbourne

*Connects with 4.57 pm V/Line train to Melbourne

To Noojee

Warragul Railway Station	10.20	5.10
Warragul up from McDonalds	10.25	5.15
Warragul Cnr Stoddards Road	10.30	5.18
Buln Buln Primary School	10.35	5.23
Rokeby	10.40	5.28
Neerim South Post Office	10.50	5.35
Neerim Junction General Store	11.00	5.45
Noojee Post Office	11.10	5.55
Noojee Primary School	11.15*	6.00*

*Connects with 9.59 am V/Line train from Melbourne

*Connects with 4.58 pm V/Line train from Melbourne

Noojee – Warragul Bus Service doesn't operate on weekends or public holidays
For more information: contact Warragul Bus Lines 56235377

Noojee Inter-Working Groups

By Lana Horn

NOOJEE ECO-COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

Initial concept design options were presented to the community on Sunday 16th November for feedback. Guided by the feedback, the architects will work closely with the Historical Society and the IWG to create a more refined, detailed design. Future community consultation will be available once the project reaches this point.

The first sub-committee meeting with the Upper Yarra Local Development Strategy took place early in November to discuss the future tracks and trail opportunities for the Noojee area, including linking with the Warburton to Walhalla trail.

POWER AND CONNECTIVITY RELIABILITY WORKING GROUP

The group continue to explore alternative back up power supply options for the community in situations where the main power supply is impacted.

SPECIALISED AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The group is currently exploring potential circular economy initiatives for local businesses and the wider community.

For more information regarding the working groups you can contact Lana, the Noojee Forestry Transition Project Manager on 0499 775 705.

Be nice to snakes

Snakes are protected so it's illegal to kill them. It can attract a fine of more than \$9000, so call a snake catcher to have it removed and taken to a safer environment. Trying to remove or kill a snake is often when people are bitten. It also happens if you engage with a snake or step on it, but if you wear boots, long pants and watch where you walk, you'll never be bitten. If you are walking through long grass, grab a long stick and use it to part the grass before you put your foot down to give the snake a chance to move along.

Cutting off the snakes head is dangerous and really cruel because it remains alive for about 15 minutes and can still bite you.

Snakes don't have ears, they are deaf so making a lot of noise and stomping on the ground won't make any difference but they can detect movement. If you keep perfectly still, they will have trouble focusing on you.

Snakes don't chase humans or dogs. A snake that feels threatened will have a couple of lunges at you to get you moving and while you are getting away, it will turn around and make its retreat.

Although there are very few snake fatalities, often they are caused by people not looking where they are walking and not knowing the first aid needed if they are bitten. Running around and screaming works the venom through the body so remain still. Don't wash or clean the bite, apply a compression bandage, which if applied properly will give you approximately eight hours, and call an ambulance.

Snakes are beautiful, but they are deadly so never interact with them. If you do see one just take a few steps back. If a snake sees you stepping back, he's not going to come forward. For more information call Barry Goldsmith on: 0408 067 062 or visit <http://snakecatchervictoria.com.au/>

Noojee CFA News

By Colin Booth



This year, Fire Restrictions have started earlier than we've seen in a long time. This is because much of Gippsland is unusually dry and we've already seen several grass fires to the east grow rapidly and take significant effort to contain.

Because the Fire Danger Period began so early, a number of residents were taken by surprise and didn't realise that burning off is no longer allowed. Others have simply run out of time and will need to wait until autumn for their next chance.

All signs point towards a busier than average fire season. That's why it's important for everyone in our community to stay alert, stay informed and keep the VicEmergency app handy on your phone. A small step like this can make a big difference when conditions change quickly.

Our brigade, like every CFA brigade, is made up entirely of volunteers. Our members don't just fight fires; they can also take on a huge variety of roles, from helping with brigade administration and logistics to specialised roles outside of the brigade.

Recently, brigade member Vicky completed her Air Observer course. This means that when she is not on Noojee's fire truck, she will be in planes and helicopters as the 'eyes in the sky' over fires across Gippsland providing intelligence and data on the size and spread of fires to firefighters on the ground.

We're always keen to hear from people who might be interested in joining us. There's a place for everyone, both on and off the fire ground. If you're curious about what we do or how you might help, we'd love to hear from you.

Telstra Tower update

By Colin Booth

From Telstra Regional General Manager Jenny Gray:

"We're making good progress in delivering improved Telstra coverage to Noojee.

Most of the tower is now built and we're working through the final approvals to get it finished and switched on.

We know the community's keen for better mobile coverage and we're looking forward delivering it to them soon."



Community members oppose proposed development

By Wendy Morriss

A well-attended meeting held in the Noojee Community Hall on Sunday, November 16th, to present future development plans for the Heritage Precinct, was met with various objections from community members living in the School Road area. They claim the development would attract more tourists and increase congestion, which would directly impact emergency evacuation and bushfire safety. They also believe it prioritises weekend tourism over the wellbeing and peace of local residents including wildlife. A suggested alternative from the eight households was to maintain the grass area next to School Road as open natural space, no paving, no digging, no destruction – just simple low-cost care. While it sounds ideal, it does leave the problem of managing the tourists coming into the town still without a solution.

Four different plans for the area were presented. One was put together by the Noojee Historical Society and the rest by an architect engaged by one of the Noojee Inter Working Groups at a cost of \$28,000.

The Historical Society was naturally enthusiastic about their plan, while other community members had more questions. One asked why the development was all on one side of the town and suggested the area around DEECA be developed to manage tourists. A comment from someone living on the fringes of town, was that Noojee was once known by most as Noojee and surrounds incorporating Piedmont, Vesper, Icy Creek and Tanjil Bren, but now seems to be just Noojee and would be reduced even more to one part of the town, although the project management team have generally referred to it as Noojee and District.

The project plans were well-presented by Lana Horn, the Noojee Forestry Transition Project Manager. Delicious light snacks were provided by the Little Red Duck Café after which questions were taken and feedback listened to. Feedback forms were handed out and then collected from a box at the Noojee post office. Forms were also posted online.

The team thanked the community for their feedback after 64 responses were received.

Noojee and District Historical Society

By Janiene Ayre

RECOGNISING THE 'ANGEL OF NOOJEE' GLADYS SANDERSON EXHIBITION

We are excited to celebrate the incredible contributions and the many lives touched by Gladys Sanderson's selflessness and courage, which has left a lasting mark on the history of Noojee.

Her extraordinary bravery was widely recognised from Warragul to London. In June 1940, she was awarded the Order of the British Empire for 'gallantry and devotion to duty'. The Order of the British Empire is a British order of chivalry founded in 1917 to recognise individuals for significant service to their country.

The Noojee and District Historical Society Inc. are proud to present a permanent photographic display in the 1960 Louvre Van Carriage at the Noojee Heritage Railway Station Precinct. This display coincides with the dedication of the Noojee Reserve, which will be named after a local hero: The Gladys Sanderson Park, on November 30th 2025.

N-GAUGE TRAIN DISPLAY IN THE LOURVE VAN

The captivating N-Gauge train model collection is dedicated to the memory of Barry Nugent, a cherished member of the N&DHS and the late husband of Janiene Ayre.

Barry was an enthusiastic collector, and showcasing some of his treasures is a wonderful way to honour his legacy. This display encourages all of us to embrace our interests and share the joy they bring, inspiring connections and celebrations within our community.

THE NEERIM-NOOJEE FOREST INTEREST GROUP

On Saturday, October 4th, at 1 pm, members of the Neerim-Noojee Forest Interest Group gathered for their very first meeting at the picturesque Noojee Heritage Railway Station Precinct.

The primary aim of this newly formed group is to collaboratively delve into the rich, diverse aspects of the surrounding forest, focusing on its sustainable use and effective management. Participants can look forward to engaging discussions and informative sessions that foster a deeper understanding of the natural environment. Meetings are scheduled to occur every two months on Saturday afternoons, encouraging participants to immerse themselves in nature.

Each gathering will primarily be held outdoors in various scenic and easily accessible areas of the local forests, offering participants the opportunity to connect with the environment firsthand.

For more information contact Wally Notman via email: wally.notman@gmail.com or phone 0409146576.

Photo supplied by Neerim District History and Heritage Group



Gladys Sanderson display

Bus shelter damage

By Sarah Bell

The bus shelter at the commencement of Neerim North-Noojee Road has been destroyed. The evidence appears to suggest that someone hooning in a 4WD has lost control and crashed into it, which is disappointing. It's not known yet who is responsible or when it will be replaced.



Noojee Truffle Festival

Baw Baw Shire Council received a \$173,000 Victorian Government grant to help deliver an annual Truffle Festival in Noojee to be launched in 2026. It will run over three weeks during truffle harvest season (July–August) to celebrate our region's locally grown black truffle.

The project is supported through the Forestry Transition Program's Community Development Fund to help regional towns like Noojee create new, sustainable economic opportunities. The Noojee Truffle Growers Group will also contribute \$75,000 in-kind support to bring the festival to life.

For more information email:

Abby Graham of Noojee and Surrounds Truffle Growers Group:

agraham2140@gmail.com



Do you have a fire plan?

By Colin Booth

The bushfire risk in Noojee is amongst the highest in the state. This is due to a combination of factors, including the surrounding terrain, vegetation and limited road access, which can make leaving the area safely more difficult. Because of this, it is essential to have an up-to-date fire plan. A good fire plan should be written down, discussed with all family members and reviewed each year.

Having a clear written plan means that you won't be forced to make big decisions under pressure and should include:

- ⇒ How will you prepare for a high-risk day?
- ⇒ Where will you get your information?
- ⇒ What will be the trigger that tells you it's time to leave?
- ⇒ What belongings will you take?
- ⇒ Where will you go?

Taking these steps now helps protect not only you or your family, but also the broader Noojee community — every prepared household strengthens our resilience.

You can find more information by scanning the QR Code or by contacting your local fire brigade.



*Merry Christmas
Noojee and surrounds
and a happy and safe
New Year!*



Members Glenn, Heather, Sharnee and Ken

The Noojee and District Governance Group

By Glenn Fenton

The NDGG was established recently, formed under the Forestry Transition Project (Shaping the Future of Noojee) to provide coordination and support for the community and local industry working groups. The focus is on progressing projects and seeking grants or other assistance, as local and state governments prefer to engage with a recognised community-based body. Our team brings together passionate locals alongside representatives from Baw Baw Shire Council, DEECA and Regional Development Victoria.

They are:

Glenn Fenton, Resident (Chair)

Heather Gillespie, Resident (Vice Chair)

Ken Hitchcock, Resident and Noojee CFA member

Sharnee Moore, Resident

Krystal Barr, Baw Baw Shire Council

Emma Birchall, DEECA

Daryl Brooke, Regional Development Victoria

Many of you may already know us and for those who don't, we will introduce ourselves at community gatherings so you can talk with us about what's working well and where we can improve. Often, we don't hear about issues or great ideas until you raise them, so please reach out. We're here as your representatives, committed to being transparent and accessible.

In time, the governance group will adopt a new name that better reflects our core values, and work on behalf of the community. Until then, you can contact us via the Baw Baw Council email: shapingthefutureofnoojee@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au, and your message will be passed to the committee. We only ask that all communication remains constructive and respectful.

We are currently working on developing a page on the Shaping the Future of Noojee website dedicated to the governance group, which will be updated regularly to inform the community about what the group are working on, where you can find us and how to get in contact.

You may have recently read about the Victorian government's announcement on the Healthy Forest Plan (<https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/futureforests/future-forests>) a new collaborative approach to managing state forests following the end of native timber harvesting. Noojee and Orbost have been chosen as pilot locations, thanks to strong advocacy from the governance group and the work of our industry partners. Whilst we wait to hear more about what this means for the town, we'll continue to push for the best outcomes for our community and keep you informed as the project progresses.

Here's a list of other projects that are underway:

Investigating ways to reduce the speed of drivers through the town centre.

Looking at possible community capacity building opportunities.

Forming a Strategic Plan for Noojee and District.

Investigating options to develop a community entity/association.

I hope this update encourages ongoing conversations. We look forward to catching up with you soon.

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Please get in touch with any questions
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Noojee Views

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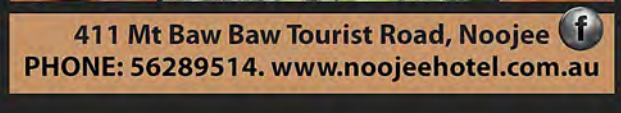


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