# THE GRANITE NEWS



The Granite News - serving the communities of Caveat, Highlands, Hughes Creek, Ruffy, Tarcombe, Terip Terip & Whiteheads Creek.



#### 17th August 2025 | Volume 19 Issue 28

#### Welcome, Wumindjika & G'day

The recent announcement of the Rakali as the most underrated Australian animal (beating the Palm Cockatoo and Cuttlefish) for the accolade is a welcome development as it raises awareness of all the other wonderful and unique animals that inhabit our wide brown land.

And whilst I'm happy that this cheeky aquatic creature is briefly in the spotlight (see p.6&7 for details) it's a shame that another one of our local residents - the magnificent Southern Greater Glider isn't better known to a wider audience.

Soft, fluffy and cute with the biggest teddy bear ears its nocturnal habit probably doesn't help its case to be on our human radars, and the indiscriminate clearing of its habitat isn't helping it either, as numbers deplete and its conversation status is tagged endangered!

Over the last few months dedicated TGN readers have been out and about in the dark of night surveying our local populations of this beautiful creature in the hope of shedding light on not only the local population but also the secretive nature of this large arboreal mammal. With 80% of its habitat destroyed in the last 20 years the extinction clock is well and truly ticking for yet another unique species.

Fortunately, during the next week there is not one, but two opportunities for HCCC local residents to discover more about this magnificent creature

- Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> Aug. 5 8.30pm Caveat Forest Drone Survey
- Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2-4pm The Last Stand @ Highlands Hall

See p.3 for more details as the organisers would love to be able to share their passion and knowledge with others.



Please read on for another interesting issue, Pauline And Kenny? Was looking forward to the Ruffy Vege Growers' meet Feedback? editor@tgn.org.au or to subscribe on-line go to www.hccclandcare.net.au

The Granite News is an open but moderated community forum.
Readers are encouraged to contribute articles and we also encourage you to air your views on things that interest or concern you within our community.
We certainly welcome feedback from you, positive or otherwise on anything that is published in
The Granite News

"My ability to remember lyrics from the 60s and 70s far exceeds my ability to remember why I walked into the kitchen."

#### Anon

I painted my chicken coop. Egg production tripled in only three days. 🥹



#### **DON'T FORGET...**

You can now join the monthly meeting of the HCCC - Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative

## in **PERSON**

(meeting THIS Thursday at Highlands Hall) or via

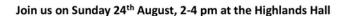
#### **ZOOM**

https://tinyurl.com/5ramfbd7

Click on this link to be there!

		What's On - August & September 2025
Details? See p.3	Tues. 19 <sup>th</sup> Aug. 5.30-8pm	CAVEAT FOREST DRONE SURVEY  Cnr Caveat-Dropemore Rd & Yurittas Rd  Come along & discover how drone &thermal imaging has assisted the Last Stand Project
Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative	Thurs. 21 <sup>st</sup> August @ 7pm	HCCC MEETING  @ Highlands Community Hall  Everyone is welcome - in person or via Zoom  See next week's TGN for Zoom details
Details? See p.10	Fri. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Aug. 12.30-6.30pm	HOME ENERGY EXPO - Meet Dr Karl and so much more!! @ Avenel Memorial Hall
Details? See p.4	Fri. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Aug. @ 6pm	JUST A FARMER - Screening of this Award-winning @ Highlands Community Hall
Details? See p.3	Sun. 24 <sup>th</sup> Aug. 2 - 4pm	THE LAST STAND - FINAL WRAP  @ Highlands Community Hall  Last year a unique project commenced with the aim to discover more about the Southern  Greater Glider in the Strathbogies. Everyone is welcome to attend this presentation.
	Thurs. 28 <sup>th</sup> Aug @ 5.30pm	SECRET MEN'S BUSINESS @ Caveat Church All people in the district are welcome, pink note (\$5) donation towards BBQ, BYO & chat.
Details? See p.5	Sat. 30 <sup>th</sup> Aug. 10-11.30am	FREE EVENT - VEGE CALENDAR LAUNCH @ TCC. Ruffy Clever ways with fruit trees with Melissa Honeydew (trees 4 sale) Cheryl 0409 019763
	Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug. @ 10am	HIGHLANDS RAMBLERS WALK meet @ Highlands Community Hall Everyone is welcome to come and explore our stunning local area. Supported by HCCC Enquiries? Andrew 0437 249038 or Robyn 0409 528235
<b>ॐ</b>	Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> Aug. @ 7pm	TERIP TERIP TENNIS CLUB AGM @ Terip Rec Reserve
	Every Second Wednesday 10-30-12.30	MURRINDINDI MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE @ Highlands Community Hall The Mobile Library visits the TGN area, based at the Highlands Hall every fortnight. Why not pop in? Forthcoming dates are 20 <sup>th</sup> August and 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 17 <sup>th</sup> September.
	Every Monday @ 6pm	MAT PILATES with ANASTASIA @ Highlands Community Hall BYO own mat and water bottle - Cost \$15 cash Enquiries? 0436 428065
	1st & 3rd Tuesdays 1-3	DIGITAL & ON-LINE LEARNING @ TCC, 27 Nolans Rd, Ruffy  Just resting until September Enquiries? Bob - 0480 348788
	2nd & 4th Sundays	ST DAVID'S UNITING CHURCH - TERIP RUFFY 2nd Sunday 11.15am Pastor Scott Leslie / 4th Sunday 11am Morning tea & Study group
Sayom radi	Mon 8.45-9.45am	CUSTOM YOGA is BACK with Ingrid at the Tablelands Community Centre \$25 per hour long class BYO mat and blanket Enquiries? Ingrid ingstar.7@gmail.com

#### The Last Stand - Final Wrap





Beginning in late 2024 Strathbogie Ranges Conservation has been probing some of the secrets of the Caveat Forest to shed light on one of its secretive and rare inhabitants – the Southern Greater Glider.

#### What have we been doing?

- · 30+ km of nocturnal wildlife surveys
- 100+ ha of drone surveys
- · Three community walks
- Built & installed 20 large, insulated nest-boxes
- ... and lots of research and pondering!

Join us to learn about the conservation status of the Southern Greater Glider in



Would-be gliders in the Caveat Forest!

the Caveat Forest, the reasons for its decline and what we can do to help

it recover. Let us share our discoveries with you over a delicious afternoon tea and a hot cuppa.

All welcome!

RSVP numbers and dietary prefs: text Bert - 0409 433 276, or Sam - 0417 576 30

#### **Caveat Forest Drone Survey - community demonstration**



Community members are welcome to attend a demonstration by Field Master Systems of how drone and thermal camera technology works and the way it's being used in The Last Stand project.

When: 5.30 to 8 pm, 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 Meet: Cnr. Caveat-Dropmore Rd and Yurittas Rd What to bring: warm and weather-appropriate clothes.

Numbers limited!

RSVP: Sam 0417 576 306, Bert 0409 433 276



Southern Greater Glider detected by thermal camera and drone, Caveat Forest

The Last Stand is project managed by <u>Strathbogie Ranges Conservation</u> and funded by the Landcare Australia Community Grants Program. This project is part of the <u>Glideways</u> in Central Victoria project led by <u>Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance</u>.















Are you interested in adding to the i Natutaliste's



environmental knowledge base of the local HCCC area?

If YES then download the App now, follow the instructions for use and start recording our unique natural wonders of both fauna and flora. It's an incredibly valuable resource.



# JUST A FARMER COMING TO HIGHLANDS

Missed the screening of 'Just a Farmer' earlier this year? Or maybe you just want to see it again?

Here's your chance! Council is hosting another showing of the award-winning film at Highlands Community Hall, 1603 Ghin Ghin Road, Highlands.

Join us on Friday 22 August from 6.00 pm for a quick nibble with the film scheduled to start at 6.30 pm.

RSVP's by Tuesday 19 August, with any special requirements, are essential for catering and safe venue capacity purposes, and without one, we may not be able to accommodate you.

#### To RSVP you can:

- visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/justafarmerhighlands
- · scan the QR code
- call Highlands Community Hall Secretary, Margaret Millburn at 0499 478 884
- · drop-in to one of our offices at Alexandra, Yea or Kinglake

Please note: This is movie is rated M, contains strong language, and is not suitable for children under 15. Please be aware, the content of this film addresses confronting issues, including mental health challenges in rural communities and may be disturbing to some viewers.

If you or anyone you know needs mental health care, please reach out to Lifeline on 13 11 14. Lifeline is a 24/7 crisis hotline service and can provide support and connect you with further help if needed.

Scan to RSVP



Murrindindi Shire Council is pleased to advise that funding for these sessions is made possible by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).









## SATURDAY 30TH AUGUST 10AM - 11:30AM

TABLELANDS COMMUNITY CENTRE 27 NOLANS ROAD RUFFY

# FREE EVENT & CALENDAR LAUNCH

# MELISSA HONEYDEW OF RIGBY COTTAGE PRESENTING CLEVER WAYS OF GROWING FRUIT WITH ESPALIERS, STEP-OVERS, TREE CLUSTERS, TUBS AND BARRELS

Melissa will also have a selection of fruit trees for sale on the day



# LAUNCHING OF THE TABLELANDS COMMUNITY GARDENS PERPETUAL CALENDAR A LOCAL MUST HAVE FOR SALE ON THE DAY AT \$10 EACH

The event is free and everyone is welcome. Please bring something to share for morning tea For further information please contact Cheryl 0409 019 763 or tccruffy@gmail.com



#### TERIP TERIP TENNIS CLUB'S AGM

Sunday 31st August @ 7pm Terip Rec Reserve



#### Rakali crowned Australia's most underrated animal

Whether it's hunting invasive pests or rolling in a river like an otter, there's a lot to love about the rakali (Hydromys chrysogaster). The nation's biggest rodent is perhaps its most resourceful having adapted to urban, mountainous and coastal habitats around the country. All these traits and more have seen the rakali crowned the nation's most underrated animal in the ABC's National Science Week poll.

Its landslide win even took some rakali researchers like Antia Brademann by surprise, as she is currently monitoring rakali at Bush Heritage Australia's Scottsdale Reserve, south of Canberra.

"As a rakali fanatic myself, I wasn't sure the Australian public would respond to the call to elect a rat as our most underrated animal," she said, "but right around the country people have spoken and the rakali is finally getting its moment in the spotlight — proof that being a furry little water ninja with webbed feet and a taste for cane toads pays off."

And rightly so, according Dr Ann Jones host of What The Duck?! on ABC Radio National, "The rakali is the quintessential underrated animal. It's widespread but secretive it's fluffy but a kick-arse fighter, it surprises and delights observers, and its very presence repels introduced black rats out of its territory, "the rakali is worthy of this crown. It's more than a rat — it is the ruler of all the rats."

#### Rakali live in many environments

While it might look like a large rat on first glance, the rakali has a white-tipped tail and, across most of its habitat range, yellow belly fluff. This is even reflected in its scientific name — chrysogaster — which means "golden belly" in ancient Greek. The rodent's diet is extremely varied. Mostly, it will eat shellfish,

fish and other aquatic animals, but it has been known to also try its hand at catching birds that get too close to the water.

It can co-exist in the same habitats as platypus. But the wily rat has better adapted to more degraded habitats, like urban waterways, than the duck-billed monotreme.

Charles Sturt University ecologist Emmalie Sanders said rakali didn't need a lot to get by.

"They're resilient, they're everywhere, they don't need a great deal, they can survive in pretty low-quality water," she said. And these wildlife warriors can kill invasive pests

In a recent study in Australian Mammalogy, researchers found the rakali may act as a natural deterrent to feral rats in some areas.

Ms Sanders also said the rakali had figured out how to devour invasive and toxic cane toads without dying. "[Rakali] can sense prey moving with their whiskers," she said. "They usually mange to flip [toads] and consume them from the belly where they don't have those poisonous glands."

Like surgeons, rakali carefully make an incision into the stomach of the toads. They then remove and eat the heart and liver.

#### They've survived the fur trade (and a re-brand)

But the native rodent wasn't always a hunter — in fact, it was previously the hunted.

During the 1900s, when a Bubonic plague broke out around the country, a bounty was put on rats to try to limit the spread of disease. We know that at least some rakali were killed.

Rakali were once known as the "beaver-rat" and their water repellent coat was collected in the 1930s when there was a ban on imported furs.

The policy change saw the price of a rakali fur jump from 4 shillings in 1931 to 10 shillings (about \$50 today, adjusted for inflation) a decade later.

But they are one of many native rodents that have undergone a PR revision to distance themselves from the associations of "rat" or "mouse".

A massive rebrand started a year before the start of the fictional TV crime show Water Rats about Sydney's water police.

Back in 1995, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (now called Parks Australia) started a campaign to change the name from the "water rat" to "rakali", the animal's Indigenous name used by the Ngarrindjeri people from the lower Murray River in South Australia.

Three decades later, the name has stuck — but it's not the only one.

Because the rakali is found throughout the country, there are many more Indigenous names for the nation's favourite underrated animal.

#### There are different types of rakali

Whether the rakali is just one animal is a divisive question.

Early colonial naturalists thought there were 16 subspecies of the creature, but research in the 1980s and 1990s disputed these descriptions and suggested there was just one Australian species. **Continued on p.7** 

#### Rakali crowned Australia's most underrated animal - continued

Genetic studies have brought a greater understanding of the history of rakali populations around Australia and their origins.

Rodents first arrived in Australia about 5 million years ago, but rakali are a more recent arrival having been here for about 1 million years.



Tasmania has the oldest lineage of rakali and may represent the earliest spread of the species from New Guinea. There is also significant genetic divergence between populations from Tasmania, south-west WA, Barrow Island (off the northern WA coast) and the rest of the east coast.

The colour of their cute bellies changes as well. Rakali on Barrow Island have silver-grey coats, south-west WA specimens are mostly black, while golden-bellied morphs dominate the eastern states

Although rodents have been in Australia for a long time, they don't attract the same reverence as mammals like

marsupials. That's despite about one third of the country's 60 rodent species going extinct or suffering massive reductions since European colonisation.

#### How you can look after our rakali

There's still so much we don't know about the rakali, including whether any of these distinct populations are under threat of extinction.

Ms Sanders hopes to find out more about the plight of the species, although working with rakali isn't without its challenges.

"They've been difficult to track," the ecologist said. "[In] any radio-tracking studies that are done, they are notoriously good at getting out of their little collars that we put the transmitters on."

But Meg Shaw, an environmental behaviour researcher at Monash University said there were still a number of things people could do to protect the rakali on a local scale. "One of the key threats to rakali is being entangled in fishing line and nets, so you can actually report sightings of illegal fishing nets to CRIMFISH, or there are other authorities within your state," she said. "They are also predated on by dogs, cats and foxes, so the recommendations are to try and keep cats and dogs away from waterways where rakalis could be."

Finally, she said it was important to ensure cars drive slowly around rakali habitats, particularly at night when it's harder to see and more rakalis are out and about.

Credit - ABC Science News 16-8-26

#### **Letter to the Editor**

I'm reaching out to share an upcoming webinar hosted by the National Feral Cat and Fox Management Coordinator on best practice feral cat and fox management. This may be of interest to your community.

The 2 webinars are all day free online forums dedicated to sharing knowledge on effective management.

#### Day 1 - Foxes: Wednesday 20 August 2025 9am - 5pm

To register please visit: Feral Cat and Fox Management Online Forum — Day 1 — Foxes Tickets, Wed 20/08/2025 at 9:00 am | Eventbrite

Day 2 - Feral Cats, Monitoring and Community Engagement Thursday 20 August 2025 9am - 5pm To register please visit: Feral Cat and Fox Management Online Forum — Day 2 — Feral Cats Tickets, Thu 21/08/2025 at 9:00 am | Eventbrite

Kind regards,

#### Alexandra Pattinson (she/her)

Partnerships Against Pests Grants Team | Agriculture Victoria Dept of Energy Environment & Climate Action E: partnershipsagainstpests@agriculture.vic.gov.au

#### **Ruffy Vege Growers - NEXT Meeting**

The next Ruffy Veggie growers gathering will be on

**Saturday 30th August** 

at the Tablelands Community Centre 27 Nolan's Road Ruffy. 10 am -11.30 am

Melissa Honeydew of Rigby Cottage will be presenting Clever ways of growing fruit with espaliers, step-overs, tree clusters, tubs and barrels.

Melissa will also have a selection of fruit trees for sale on the day.

Afterwards we will be launching the Tablelands Community Gardens Perpetual Calendar and have them for sale (a bargain at just \$10.00)

but wait there's more .....we will also be showing off our newly completed shelter shed verandah, which was funded by Strathbogie Shire's Community Grants' program.

The event is free and everyone is welcome. Please bring something to share for morning tea.

We look forward to seeing you there. If you would like more information please contact

Cheryl - 0409 019763 or tccruffy@gmail.com





# CALLING FOR VOLUME AND LONG TO TREE PLANTING EVELS. Grassy Grey Box Woodlands Project 9.30AM (REGISTRATION) 10AM TO 12PM AUGUST 23RD 2025 FREE LUNCH PROVIDED. BYO SHOVEL, however there will be some tools availble for use. Registration of interest required for catering purposes. To register (address provided on registration) and for more information please contact: Jemma Norman Landcare Facilitator facilitator.lpcmn@gmail.com 0447 298 616

# Soil test interpretation session 10th September

#### You will learn:

- how to read your soil test
- visual soil assessment -what to look for
- how soil chemistry & soil biology interact management practices to enhance soil function =more production
  - · specific actions for your soil

•

**WHEN:** Wednesday 10th September 2025, 9.30 for 10am, until 2.30pm.

**WHERE:** Homewood Hall, 30 Homewood Road, Homewood

**BRING:** Sturdy, clean shoes for paddock walk, copies of your soil test results if you have them

**COST:** Free, registration essential. See contact details below for further information

Morning tea and lunch supplied.

MORE INFO: Rhiannon Sandford 0429 964 609

#### **Highlands Book Club - Recommendations from the August meeting.**

**NEXT MEETING Saturday Sept 13th at 6pm - Highlands Hall** 

#### **TITLE & AUTHOR**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

**Burmese Days** by George Orwell John Flory, a white timber merchant in 1920s Burma, has unorthodox views. To him, the Burmese culture and people should be appreciated as things of beauty and worth. To the other white members of the European club of which he is member, these views are dangerous, undermining the foundation of British colonial rule, of colonial society.

#### **George Orwell** by Gordon Bowker

Gordon Bowker writes about Orwell's family background; the lasting influence of Eton on his work and character; his superstitious streak and youthful flirtation with black magic; and his chaotic and reckless sex life, which included at least one homoerotic relationship. It highlights the strange circumstances of his first marriage and provides remarkable new evidence of his experiences in Spain and their nightmarish consequences. It also offers a fresh look at his peculiar deathbed marriage to a woman fifteen years his junior.

# **Memorial Days**

A poignant memoir recounting the author's experience of sudden loss by Geraldine Brooks and her journey through grief. The book focuses on the day her husband, Tony Horwitz, died unexpectedly on Memorial Day in 2019, and the subsequent years as she grapples with his absence. Brooks uses the book to process her grief, exploring the challenges of navigating loss in a society that often lacks the space and structure for mourning.

# by Claire Keegan

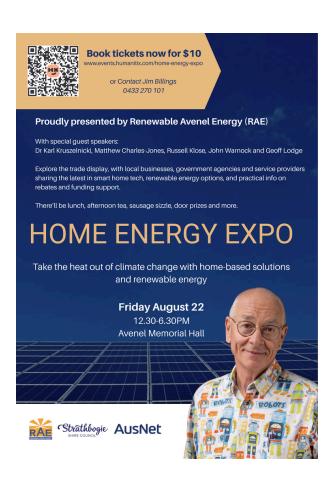
Small Things Like These Keegan's historical fiction tackles the issue Magdalen laundries in Ireland, which were essentially workhouses for women (especially young and teen woman) who had fallen pregnant out of wedlock. They were run by the Catholic church and families would drop off their female family members there so they could hide their pregnancies from society.

#### The Spy by Paolo Coelho

The Spy tells the unforgettable story of a woman who dared to break the conventions of her time and paid the price. When Mata Hari arrived in Paris she was penniless. Soon she was feted as the most elegant woman in the city. A dancer who shocked and delighted audiences, as a confidante and courtesan she bewitched the era's richest and most powerful men. But as paranoia consumed a country at war, Mata Hari's lifestyle brought her under suspicion. In 1917 she was arrested in her hotel room on the Champs-Élysées and accused of espionage. Told through Mata Hari's final letter, The Spy is the unforgettable story of a woman who dared to break the conventions of her time & paid the price.

## **Demon Copperhead**

Demon Copperhead is a retelling David Copperfield by Dickens. by Barbara Kingsolver Kingsolver's Demon Copperhead transposes this very English, quasiautobiographical story to her own home territory of Appalachia. At 60 something, Kingsolver creates the voice, humour and well-crafted, intelligent character of a teenage boy who is born into institutionalised poverty and drug addiction and the pitfalls of social welfare with a little help and kindness along the way.





How to Reduce Your Energy Bill with Q & A

Presenters: Ron Litiens and Ian Tobin

6:30 - 7:30pm When: Thursday August 21

Yea Butter Factory, 13 Rattray St, Yea Where:

Join Ron Litiens and Ian Tobin to find out how the energy market works and how you can make it work for you ... or even make you money!

They will also discuss how understanding your energy usage can dramatically reduce your electricity bill and how there are many energy retailers offering different rates and peak times for electricity usage ... how do you compare to save?



Energy retailers purchase at wholesale prices and on-sell it to the consumer (you and me). Consumers can also buy directly from the wholesale market through providers such as Amber. Come with your questions!

This is a free 2030Yea community event.

#### Call or text 0428969366 to book a seat (and for catering)

Become a member of 2030Yea Inc here:

Scan to register

M 0428969366

### **Planning for** Change in Landcare



#### **Presenter: Kimberley Boswell**

Kim is a Facilitator, Trainer and Coach with more than 25 years experience in community engagement, fundraising and volunteer program management.

Kim's involvement in Landcare and environmental volunteer groups spans 15 years having served as a Landcare Network president, group committee member, volunteer and in a working capacity at a network, state and national level.

Kim is a regular consultant and facilitator to the movement and the founder of Community Leaders Academy, an online community providing tailored support to professionals in Landcare and beyond.

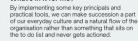
Kim has over 150 skills-based trainings and facilitation of strategic planning sessions for Landcare and environmental groups.

#### What will be covered

#### Understanding barriers to change

By understanding the most common barriers holding us back, we can understand where we are resistant to change in order to move forward.

#### What's in it for me?



A selection of recommended free tools and resources that support groups by making things easier to track where they are, capture organisational knowledge and recruit volunteers in a planned and systematic approach.

#### **WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE**

ol: Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1-5pm (lunch included)

Shepparton: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September, 9-1pm (lunch included) Register: <a href="https://www.trybooking.com/DEFKT">https://www.trybooking.com/DEFKT</a>

Seymour: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September, 4pm-8.30pm (dinner included) Register: https://events.humanitix.com/planning-for-change-in-landcare



kerstiel@gbcma.vic.gov.au

0437 310 840







#### CALLING ALL GUITARISTS - HIGH VOLTAGE IS COMING!

This is your chance to be part of something big, loud and community-powered. Join celebrated Australian performer Joseph O'Farrell (JOF) for an unforgettable mash-up of music, dance and performance featuring everyday guitarists like YOU.

Main Event: High Voltage Concert - Sunday 7 September, 4.00pm at Yea Shire Hall and it's totally FREE to take part!

How to get involved: Register your spot and you're in! To prep for the show, we are running workshops in Yea, Alexandra and Kinglake.

High Voltage project is led by Yea Arts and proudly supported by Murrindindi Shire Council to make it a Shire-wide celebration bringing local talent together for one HIGH-VOLTAGE concert to remember.

If you have any questions, please email us: eventsyeaarts@gmail.com or call on 0403 831 520 Visit the website: www.yeaartsinc.org/high-voltage































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#### Cr Paul Hildebrand

Koriella Ward phildebrand@ murrindindi.vic.gov.au 0428 758 617

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Project neil.phillips@bigpond.com



The Granite News is widely distributed on the lands of the Taungurung clans - First People of the Rivers and Mountains.

We thank the Taungurung ancestors and elders who, for millennia, have cared for this country on which we now live, work, play and grow.

May the current generations of Taungurung, HCCC residents & landowners continue this important custodianship into the future.