



STEELS CREEK COMMUNITY NOTES – Phoenix Edition No. 3 – bumper edition! (May 2026)

'FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE VALLEY'

<http://steelscreek.vic.au/>

Welcome to the Jolly Thing. This was a much loved newsletter for many years, and we have bought it back as a way of keeping the community informed about what is happening in the valley. Contributions for future newsletters always welcomed!

IN THIS EDITION:

A message from the Steels Creek Community Centre President
Steels Creek groups and what they do. Plenty of room for more to join!
Resilience. What is it in the context of community and why we need it
Meet some of the people of Steels Creek
Some more history, courtesy of the Etham District Historical Society
One way to start a veggie garden
Our rainfall

And food! Also in this edition, a focus on food in the surrounding area. We were asked to include an article about markets in the area, so ever obliging, here it is (P11). We thought while we were talking about markets, we could also include a little about some local food suppliers. These are small suppliers you may not be aware of.

Is there is a topic you would like to see covered in the next issue of The Jolly Thing? Just ask!

How beautiful is this? Sunrise over Steels Creek, taken from the walking track.



Photo courtesy of Linda Lyons

A message from our Community Centre President

Community Centre Reflection

Some of you will have noticed, things are looking a little different up at the community centre. After many years being based at the centre, the Garden Club relocated into Yarra Glen, in December 2025. We thank them for their contribution to the community centre, in particular with the annual flower show and wish them well at their new home. While it is sad to see one of our groups move away, opportunities arise for other groups to utilise the spaces on offer. The committee is welcoming of those who may be looking for a space to house other activities, that our community could engage with.

The grounds are also being ably maintained by Ivan Filsell and his busy bee crew. This is a once a month endeavour to keep our centre tidy and well presented for those that use the space. In addition, it also ensures we meet our lease obligations with council. Over the past 12 months, this has become a regular part of the centre schedule, and for those who have pitched in when they can, it is greatly appreciated. Keep a look out on the sign for the next BB.

And speaking of signs, that has been a journey of fun for the past 3 or so years. Our new or should we say, long awaited replacement sign was installed in March. For those that can remember the previous sign, it fell victim to a falling tree limb, way back in 2021..... or maybe 2022..... regardless, after a bit of investigation it came to pass that council thought the sign issue had been sorted, while we thought "why hasn't this been sorted?"..... The end result is our grand, new sign, installed by Council, to whom we are very thankful, for their efforts to resolve. Look to the sign for short messages on upcoming events, community announcements and other relevant information.

Many members of our community will be well aware that Garden Fairy has been our long term cleaner and general overseer of the centre. However, the time has come for her to hang up her cleaning cloth. The community centre is very grateful to Garden Fairy for all her work and commitment over the past, many years, and are appreciative of all her efforts. We look forward to continuing to see Garden Fairy at future Steels Creek events.

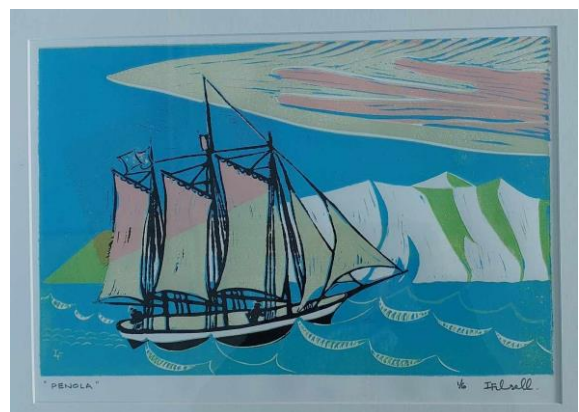
Kerry Guthrie
Community Centre President

News from Steels Creek Groups

If you see a group here that interests you, you're very welcome to join. If you don't see anything you like, why not start your own special interest or activity group?

Art Group (Contact: Ivan Filsell 0458 507 181)

Art in Steels Creek continues to thrive with regular workshops at the centre on Thursday afternoons. Our group members have a wide range of skills and are more than willing to pass on tips to any new participants. No special training is required for new members, just come and join us and we can help with most aspects of art. Water colour and acrylics are popular and so is print making such as lino cut and monoprints. Photography is welcome and recently liquid art has had a good run, with plenty of scope for free expression.



Pinola in the Antarctic by Ivan Filsell



Liquid art by Glenda Tjepkema

We have visiting artists from time to time giving us workshops in something different such as book making or pen and ink drawing, or other subjects of our choice. To keep us on our toes we visit other galleries such as Tarrawarra Museum of Art and Monsalvat.

Just recently we discovered the Art Society at Ferntree Gully. They have a nice gallery and workshop with good printing facilities and regular classes that appeal to our members.

Yileena Park in Steels Creek Road continues to support us by exhibiting our Art Work at the cellar door. Each of our members



Botanical art by Malcolm Calder

that wants to has had a turn and we are now going round again. We change the display every 2 to 3 months. Scott has been very inviting and visitors are welcome to sample the food and wine and admire the art Friday to Monday. For those not drinking wine there is tea and coffee available. Drop in and say hello.

The quality of the work produced by our group of artists can be seen from the small sample shown here.



Amazing birds by Margaret McLoughlin

Bookgroup (Contact: Mary Shiel 0418 426 530)



The book club has 11 members from Steels Creek and Yarra Glen. Some have been members for many years, although in the last year we have also gained a few new members.

We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in the community centre for some lively discussion, a cuppa and supper.

The library selects and provides books each month, and we receive a wide range of books, covering both fiction and non fiction. So far this year, the selections have included Australian, British, American and Japanese authors.

We finish each year with lunch at a local restaurant.

Film Club (Contact: Keith Montell 5965 2202)



Dinner and movie in our Gold Class venue (Steels Creek Community Centre). Guaranteed laughs; suspense; and drama together with fine food and good company. DINNER FROM 6pm – FILM STARTS 7.30pm

The film club has had 2 showings to date this year, with more planned each

month until the hot weather. There is an average attendance of 20.

A mixture of movies is shown and they are usually very well received. The evenings are very well catered for, often by chef extraordinaire Angie Lloyd, well supplemented by other attendees.

Everyone is welcome to all screenings.

Keep an eye on the Grapevine for dates, or go to the [What's On Calendar](http://steelscreek.vic.au/noticeboard/calendar-of-events) (steelscreek.vic.au/noticeboard/calendar-of-events).

Cost: A Bargain. Only \$10 for dinner and movie (or free to those helping to supply the meal) plus \$5 for the centre



How good does this food look?

Stitchers (Contact: Julie Wilcox 0407 311 584)

Stitchers has had a good year continuing our enjoyment of different craft activities including quilting, knitting, crochet, cross stitch and spinning. The members all enjoy experiencing new crafts and sharing our achievements.

The group is very active in supporting various charities. Most recently the group supported families in need by providing a range of handmade quilts, rugs, dolls and personal items, through Benwerren women and children's support centre in Yarra Junction.

We love to welcome new members and enjoy a variety of crafts and activities including knitting, crochet, quilting and patchwork. Love to see you there on a Tuesday afternoon.



Some of the Stitchers with a carload of donated goods

Steels Creek Tennis and Social Club (Contact: Graham Lloyd 0430 243 442)

The Social: We capped off 2025 with our annual Christmas Carols night - basically our regular Friday social night, with singing. An enthusiastic group of revellers came along, feasted on Christmas goodies, solved the worlds problems (as one does over the dinner table.....) and sang heartily. Our social nights are generally held on the 2nd Friday of the month during the warmer times of the year. Even with the installation of heaters in the outdoor area, we are all hard pressed to venture out in June, July and August. It is worth noting that you do not have to be a tennis player to be a member of the club. There is quite an emphasis on the "Social" part in the name. Membership does keep our little club going so please consider joining and coming along to our social evenings. Of course, there is always an opportunity to pick up a racquet and test your skills out on the court.



And the tennis: Participation in our social tennis has remained steady. The Monday morning ladies often have two courts in use, and morning tea always on offer. Quite a flexible group, varying their start time, depending on the weather - no one wants to start at 8am in winter, and equally, 9am on a hot day is unpleasant, and if rain interrupts, change the date as "we are not giving up our court time". Sunday mixed social is equally well attended and pragmatic - morning start in the

warmer months and afternoon start during winter (currently on winter time). We have a cohort from Healesville that join us and post play, we share in refreshments. I see a theme - social & tennis.

Our other club scheduled time is Thursday evenings at 7:30 and no, there is no change of time if it is cold. Toughen up is the theme for those evenings and if you are cold, then run faster! So if you are driving past mid winter, and the lights are on, there is a good chance you will see clothing layered people, only eyes visible, running around the court like fools, because we love our tennis. At times the fog plays a part and seeing the opposition is a challenge but we soldier on - it is all a lark and an opportunity to connect with others.

If you are interested in coming along to the club, please just turn up at any of the above mentioned sessions or email sctc@yarraglen.com with your query. Details of upcoming events are also on the sign beside the courts.

Steels Creek Landcare Group



This excellent summary of Landcare activities has been provided by Andrew Guthrie, President and Bruce Kellet, Secretary.

There is a lot happening with Landcare in Steels Creek and we are happy to welcome new members and ideas for new projects.

If you'd like to volunteer or provide insight, please contact any of our Committee members: Andrew Guthrie, Peta Whitford, Bruce Kellet, Marcia Broche, Graeme Hamilton or Tom Batkin.

Highlights

- New website with easier equipment booking for members
- Continued efforts to reduce deer numbers
- Sub-catchment management gaining momentum
- 2026 celebrates 40 years of Landcare

Yarra Valley Deer Management: A Growing Community Effort

Over the past two years, the Yarra Ranges Council's deer management program has quietly grown into one of the most successful community-supported initiatives in our region. What began as a small pilot in late 2023—followed by a broader rollout in November 2024—has now become a coordinated, multi-area effort involving hundreds of local landholders, professional wildlife controllers, and neighbouring councils.

The program was created in response to the rapidly increasing feral deer population across Victoria. Deer are now recognised as one of the state's most damaging invasive species, affecting native vegetation, farm productivity, water quality, and road safety. Local survey results from the Northern Yarra Landcare Network (NYLN) show that **83% of residents support a coordinated deer management program**, with many reporting significant environmental and property damage.

How the Program Works

When the initiative first launched, most participating landholders had never hosted professional shooters on their properties. To build confidence and transparency, the Council and Landcare groups organised demonstrations, including **thermal drone sessions** that showed how deer can be safely located at night. These early demonstrations were highly rated by attendees and helped establish trust in the program's methods.

The program uses:

- **Professional, accredited wildlife controllers**
- **Thermal drones and monoculars** for safe, targeted detection
- **Strict safety protocols**, including background checks and controlled access
- **Coordinated property groupings**, allowing controllers to move across adjoining land efficiently
- **Carcass removal and processing**, ensuring no waste

These methods have been refined each year, with improvements such as longer intervals between visits (allowing deer to return to the area before the next control night) and larger, better-connected cull zones.

Community Participation Continues to Grow

Participation has expanded steadily. In Steels Creek alone, involvement increased by more than 50% between 2023 and 2025. Across the broader Yarra Ranges, **around 150 properties are now registered**, with many more expressing interest as they see the program's results.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Property owners consistently praise the professionalism, communication, and respect shown by the controllers. Many also note that the program has helped reduce illegal shooting by significantly reducing numbers and providing a safe, structured alternative.

Environmental and Road Safety Benefits

The environmental case for deer control is compelling. Deer consume enormous quantities of vegetation—**up to 1 million kilograms per year** in the Northern Yarra area alone if left unmanaged. This affects:

- Native plant regeneration
- Soil stability and erosion
- Habitat for species such as lyrebirds
- Farm pastures, orchards, and vineyards

Road safety is another major concern. Residents have reported multiple collisions and near-misses on local roads, particularly during dry seasons when deer move downhill in search of food. By reducing deer numbers, the program directly lowers these risks.

The program has achieved strong results in Steels Creek. **Deer are now noticeably harder to find**, which is a positive sign that the program is working. Residents report fewer sightings, less property damage, and reduced browsing pressure on native vegetation. The program's education efforts have also strengthened community awareness, with more residents now confident in reporting illegal shooting activity and understanding why safe, coordinated deer control is essential for the valley.

A Statewide Shift

Yarra Ranges is not alone. Several Victorian councils—including Nillumbik, Murrindindi, and others—are now running or trialling similar programs, often in partnership with Parks Victoria. Professional wildlife controllers working in our area also support programs across multiple shires, reflecting a broader recognition that deer management requires long-term, coordinated action.

Looking Ahead

The program's future depends on continued funding and community involvement. With state grants tightening, councils are under pressure to maintain annual control targets. Even so, the Yarra Ranges program remains one of the most cost-efficient in Victoria, thanks in large part to strong local participation and well-organised property groupings. For residents who wish to join the program or learn more, Steels Creek Landcare and the Northern Yarra Landcare Network remain key points of contact.

Sub-catchment Management Plan: Working Together for a Healthier Creek – 2025 Highlights

Over the past year, the Steels Creek community has taken some exciting steps towards improving the health of our creek and the surrounding environment. This work has been co-ordinated the Steels Creek Landcare Group, in partnership with local landholders, community members, BirdLife Australia, Melbourne Water, and ecological specialists. Together, we've been building a shared approach to caring for Steels Creek now and into the future.

A shared vision for the Steels Creek Sub-catchment

The Steels Creek Sub-catchment area covers about 6000 ha and a project was set up to bring people together and take a coordinated, whole-of-catchment approach to land and water management. By focusing on areas with high environmental value and tackling key threats, the aim is to support biodiversity, improve creek health, and strengthen long-term stewardship across the valley.

Progress on the Management Plan

Great progress has been made on developing the Steels Creek Sub-catchment Management Plan. On-ground surveys and initial investigations are now complete, providing a solid foundation for future planning and investment. The final stage of writing the plan is the next step, with funding currently being sought to bring this important work to completion.

Once finalised, the plan will help guide future projects and funding across a range of programs, making it easier to deliver well-planned, effective works across the catchment.

On-ground works: 2025 at a glance

The first year of on-ground projects has been a big one. Larger and more complex plantings were undertaken, supported by strong technical advice and plenty of hands-on coordination. This year has been as much about learning what works well as it has been about getting plants in the ground.

Looking ahead

Reviewing the 2025 works has been a valuable opportunity to reflect on what we've learned so far. These insights will help improve planning, coordination, and delivery in the years ahead, making future projects even more effective and enjoyable for everyone involved.

A big thank you to all the landholders, volunteers, partners, and supporters who have contributed their time, skills, and enthusiasm. Your involvement is making a real difference to the health of Steels Creek and the wider catchment.



May 2025. Intrepid Landcare with Kerry Guthrie after their hike and planting day

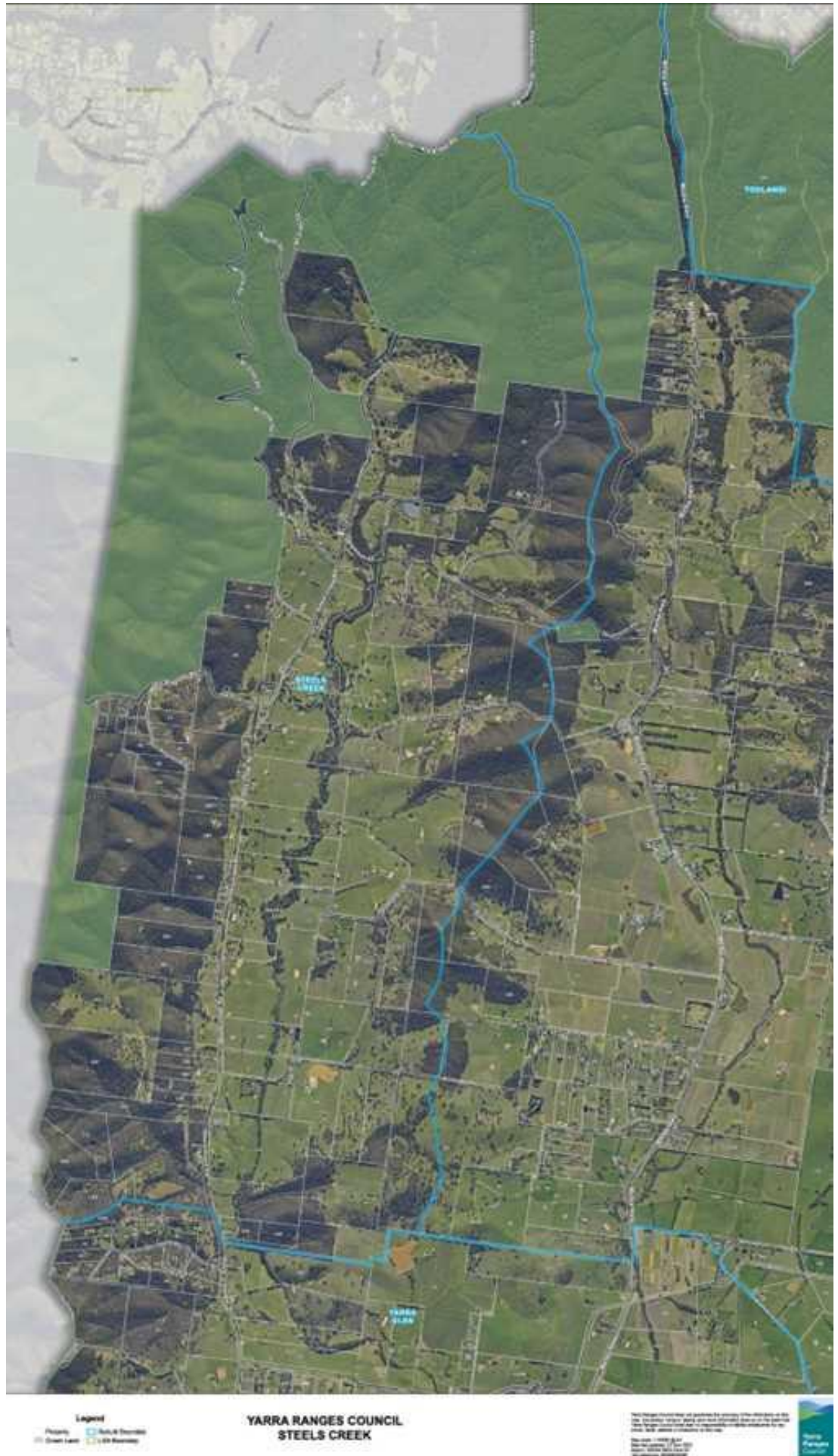
Email: steelscreeklandcare@gmail.com

Aerial Map of Steels Creek

This photo of Steels Creek was provided by the Shire of Yarra Ranges to SCCC.

Always interesting to see land from the air.

You can see a much bigger version at the centre, particularly if you come along to the Resilience Day on May 17 (see next page)



Steels Creek is Building for the Future — And We Need Your Voice by Fiona Martin



Steels Creek has never needed to be told what community means. We live it. But the world around us is changing in ways that are hard to ignore: pandemics, global conflicts, fuel and supply chain shocks, and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazards are no longer distant news stories. They shape our costs, our livelihoods, our sense of security, and the services we rely on.

Our community knows from experience that no place is insulated from these pressures. But those with strong local connections, shared knowledge, and the confidence to act collectively are far better placed to absorb disruption, recover, and adapt. What the research consistently confirms — and what many of us already know — is that the communities that fare best through disaster and difficulty aren't necessarily the ones with the most resources or the best emergency plans. They're the ones with the deepest connections: neighbours who know each other, local knowledge that's valued, and a collective confidence to shape their own future.

Introducing the Steels Creek Community Resilience Project

A group of community-minded locals has formed the Steels Creek Community Resilience Project to do exactly that: take meaningful, practical steps toward a stronger and more resilient Steels Creek. The project has received vital support from The Resilience Canopy, a national organisation dedicated to helping communities build lasting resilience from the ground up. The Resilience Canopy has awarded Steels Creek a \$25,000 community resilience grant — seed funding that will be directed toward priorities identified by the community itself.

As Chairperson Fiona Martin puts it: "This is your community. Come along to the lunch, and I guarantee you will get heard. This is a genuine conversation, not a consultation that disappears into a report. Your voice here sets the agenda for everything that follows."

Nothing about this process is predetermined. The direction will come entirely from you.

You're Invited: Community Lunch & Workshop

Sunday 17 May | 11.00 am – 2.00 pm Steels Creek Community Centre, Steels Creek.

Free and fully catered

The first step in this journey is an open community conversation — and we'd love you to be part of it.

Over a free catered lunch, you'll have the opportunity to meet neighbours, share what matters most to you, and help shape the direction of the project. A Resilience Canopy Community Leader will give a short presentation on what the grant process makes possible. We'll then move into a structured but relaxed set of activities to explore what's working well in Steels Creek, what the community most wants to strengthen, and which areas deserve deeper attention.

There will also be plenty to keep the kids entertained, including a colouring corner and giant Jenga, so bring the whole family.

Those findings will directly shape the next stage of work. This is community-led, from start to finish.

Everyone Is Welcome

Long-timers, newcomers, owners and renters alike — all members of our community are encouraged to attend and have their say. We recognise that not all property owners live in Steels Creek full-time, but we welcome everyone who considers themselves part of our broader community.

Please RSVP by Wednesday 13 May to help us with catering.
Scan the QR code here.

The Steels Creek Community Resilience Project is supported by The Resilience Canopy. To learn more about their work with communities across Australia, visit

<https://www.resiliencecanopy.com.au>

Steels Creek Community Event
Sunday 17 May - Registration



Markets and More

The Jolly Thing was asked to write about local markets, and we thought we would extend this to write about some local food suppliers as well, the small places that you may not be aware of.

We start of course, with the **Steels Creek Exchange Hub**. The Hub meet twice a month from 10-11am on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. Upcoming dates are the 9th and the 23rd May. Attendees ranged from 10-20 each time with old and new, young and older community members enjoying conversation and trading fresh garden produce, along with tea, coffee and scones.

Saturday working bees continue each month for the hour before the hub, and workers reward themselves with a cuppa and scone, expanding the numbers and fun.

The next Busy Bee is the 23rd May starting at 9am. There is always plenty to do - pruning, weeding, trimming, blocking rabbits holes, rock edging – there are plenty of jobs both large and small, to be tackled so all welcome to join in the fun.

Markets

There are many markets across the Yarra Valley, depending on how far you want to travel. In these days of high fuel prices and perhaps constrained supply that may not be far. To help you decide, we have included how far each market and supplier listed is from the Steels Creek Community Centre (SCCC).

Craft Markets Australia. Yarra Glen Racecourse

Distance from SCCC: 8.5km

1st Sunday of the month. Not held over winter.

As the name indicates, mainly craft products at this market, but also food such as jams, chutneys, biscuits, chocolate, and some fresh produce.

Yarra Valley Regional Farmers Market. Punt Road winery, St Huberts Road, Coldstream

Distance from SCCC: 16km

3rd Sunday of the month, year round. 9.00am-1.30pm

Fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables, biscuits, fresh-ground coffee and beans, jams, preserves and sauces, honey, chocolates, fruit vinegars, locally baked bread, free-range eggs.

St Andrews Market. Kangaroo Ground – St Andrews Road and Heidelberg – Kinglake Road.

Distance from SCCC: 20km

Every Saturday, between 9:00am-2:00pm, except for days of total fire ban.

The original hippie market, running for close to 50 years. A not for profit market, with profits made donated back to the local community.

Sells hand crafted items, vintage items, plants as well as fresh food including bread, fruit and vegetables, herbal teas, chai and honey.

Healesville Organic Farmers Market. Coronation Park River St

Distance from SCCC: 22km

Every Saturday 8.30am-12.00pm

Fresh organically grown produce direct from local farmers. Also honey, seeds and seedlings, breads and bagels, cheeses, and locally roasted coffee. All fruit, herbs and vegetables sold are grown organically and other baked goods are made from organic ingredients where possible.

The Healesville Community Market

Distance from SCCC: 22km

9am–2pm

1st Sunday of the month at the River Street Car Park: Jams, sauces, olive oil, fruit, vegetables, eggs, nuts, crafts, clothing, jewellery, plants, books and toys.

3rd Sunday of the month at Coronation Park on River Street: Homemade products, such as soaps and crafts, honey, jam, plants, recycled books, DVD's and children's costumes.

ECOSS Valley Market. 711 Old Warburton Road Wesburn

Distance from SCCC: 46km

Every Friday 3.30pm-6.00pm

Held in a permaculture designed Community Environment Hub, selling fresh and dry organic goods.

Some small food suppliers you may not be aware of...

Oasis Berry Farm. 22 Adams Lane Steels Creek

Open daily while berries are in season – approx. Nov to April. Blueberries, raspberries, tomatoes.

Open weekends in winter. 9am-5pm. Butternut pumpkins, citrus (lime, lemon, mandarin, orange). Frozen blueberries.

Also has a dinosaur park and gardens.

Yarra Valley Custom Meats. 181 Bottings Lane Dixons Creek

Distance from SCCC: 11km

Open: Mon- Fri 9am-5:30pm; Sat 8.30am-5.30pm; Sun 9:30am-5pm

Butcher shop supplying organically grass fed, chemical and antibiotic free pork, beef and lamb.

Tasman Produce. Located on roadside just down from the Lilydale airport, on the south side of Macintyre Lane

Distance from SCCC: 13km

Open Sat and Sun 9am – 4pm

Salami, free range eggs, honey, jams, relishes. In season strawberries. Pink lady apples from their Shepparton orchard May to October.

Bear Bagels and Baked Goods. Shop 5, 4 North Gateway, Coldstream

Distance from SCCC: 17km

Open Fri and Sat from 8am till noon (or until sold out).

A variety of hand-rolled bagels, pretzels, and Turkish bread.

WLR Ag. 13-15 Medhurst Rd, Gruyere.

Distance from SCCC: 24km

Open Sat and Sun 8am-4pm

Family-run orchard primarily growing apples, pears, and apricots. Also sell other seasonal fruit and vegetables.

Weeping Grevillea Nursery. 10 Bartletts Lane, Panton Hill

Distance from SCCC: 24km

Primarily a nursery, but also has a roadside hut and honesty box out the front of the property selling eggs and citrus fruits. Lemons and limes are available year round. Seasonal produce includes blood limes, blood oranges, grapefruit and pumpkins, jams, fruit jellies and marmalade made from fruit from the property.

Wineries

There are of course an enormous number of wineries across the Yarra Valley and there are many sources of information about them. In Steels Creek we have two wineries which have open cellar doors.

Yileena Park

271 Steels Creek Rd Steels Creek

Open Fri-Sun 11am-5pm

A convivial spot for wine tastings, perhaps with a cheese platter or a charcuterie board and dips.

The range of wines include Chardonnay, Merlot Rose, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Aged Topaque.

Steels Creek Estate is the Yarra Valley's smallest vineyard and winery.

1 Sewell Rd Steels Creek

Open Sat-Mon 10am-5.30pm

From Joanne Ginger: *"Simon hand planted the vines in 1981 and together we care for the vines and hand pick the grapes. Simon makes our straight varietal wines using wild ferments and hand plunging. Our 5 acres are planted with Colombard, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz."*

And cooking lessons

Yarra Valley Cooking School

910 Old Toolangi Rd Dixons Creek

Distance from SCCC: 6.3km

Small group cooking classes in the preparation and presentation of regional French and Italian dishes in a purpose-built kitchen.

Bake and Gather

24 Bell St Yarra Glen

Distance from SCCC: 8.4km

Cooking classes covering a variety of cuisines. Usually held on Saturdays.

How To Grow a Veggie Garden

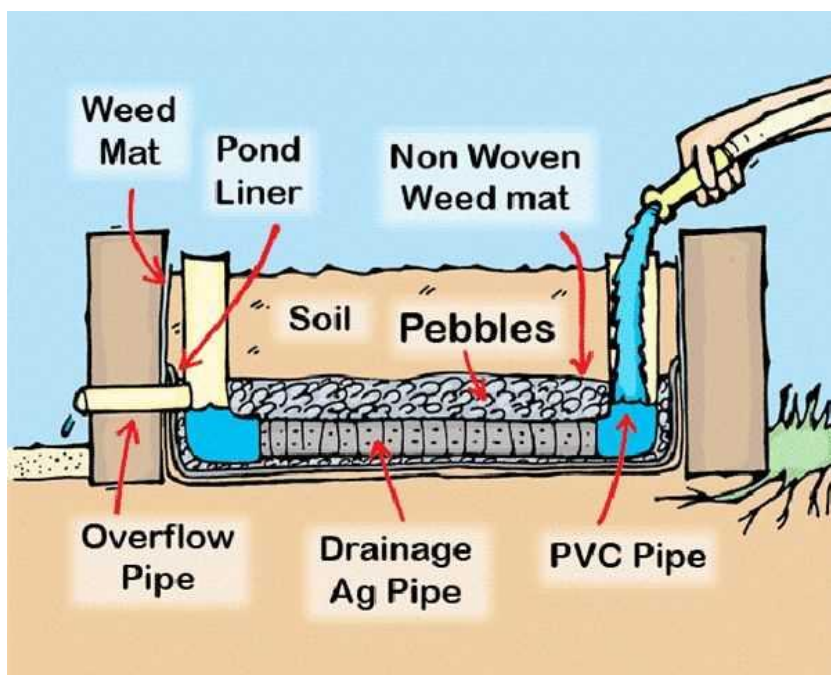
With the price of food and fuel, you may be thinking of starting a veggie garden. One way to do this is by using wicking beds.

Jennifer Duncan has a wicking bed vegetable garden, using recycled water cubes, as shown here. You can use this approach with any type of raised bed. She has found it a very easy and convenient system to use.



A key advantage of wicking beds is that once established, they are very water efficient. If you want to build your own, there are lots of “how tos” that are easy to find, but in brief this is how they work.

A wicking bed is essentially a large self watering plant box. It consists of a raised garden bed with a waterproof lining that holds a reservoir of water at the bottom. Water is drawn up into the soil via capillary action (wicking).



*From The Urban Food Garden website
(<https://urbanfoodgarden.org>).*

In Jennifer's beds, the cubes were first lined with heavy duty plastic, then about 30cm of red scoria was laid on this. This was followed by a membrane (any fine-meshed fabric like shade cloth), to stop the soil filtering down into the scoria, with good quality soil on the top.

A pipe with holes is laid through the scoria, which goes up to a large open pipe sitting above the soil. Water is poured into the pipe, and disperses through the pipe with holes. You also need an overflow pipe, so that any excess water can flow out.

It's important to remember that the wicking bed will not start working immediately. You

should water the garden bed for the first two to three weeks as you would a normal garden bed, in order to provide time for the capillary action to start working throughout the bed.

After two to three weeks you can taper off the extra watering and just fill the bed up via the inlet pipe.

Jennifer has kindly offered that anyone who would like to look at how her garden works is welcome to visit. Please contact her on 0427 970 965.

Introducing

Who's Who In the Valley

Meet Amanda and Edd Williams

Amanda and Edd are long term residents of Steels Creek, having arrived here in 1979. Originally from England, they came to Australia for 2 years and never looked back. They first rented in Belgrave, but thought it was too suburban, and wanted the farming lifestyle they had enjoyed in the Yorkshire moors, but without the freezing cold of the moors.

Driving around, they came over the hill from Lilydale, saw the Yarra Valley laid out before them and decided this is where they wanted to live. More specifically, they drove up The Crest, looked out over the valley and decided "we would be happy living here for the rest of our lives".

They first rented in Dixons Creek, and then bought their current 50 acres in Steels Creek. The first few years were hard. They put up a shed roof and a water tank on the land, put pallets around the shed to keep the livestock out, and lived there for two years with their 3 young children, no electricity, a gas powered fridge and a pot belly stove. Much of the time Amanda was by herself with the three children, because Edd was travelling for work. On top of that of course, she was in a new country, with no family and knowing very few people.

Over time, they built a house, and set up a goat dairy, milking about 100 dairy goats. They believe this was the first goat dairy in Australia, because when they contacted the Department of Agriculture to find out what the regulations were, there weren't any! -

The whole family loved their life in Steels Creek. It was a life centred around horses and community. The kids would ride their ponies everywhere. Pony Club was a very social time, with the kids riding their ponies and the adults having a barbeque and socialising. The community was particularly strong, with many young families, each building their own houses. Everyone in the community drew together to help each other with the building.

A highlight was the annual Christmas horseride during the 1980s, where a large group of adults and children from Steels Creek, Dixons Creek, Yarra Glen and Healesville would go off for around 10 days, riding 20-30 kms a day and camping each night. These rides took a lot of organisation – finding routes, identifying appropriate spots to camp with enough flat land for the tents and horses, and access for trucks to get in with supplies, liaising with the park rangers, arranging enough food, etc, but this planning was all part of the fun. The last ride the Williams went on was to Neerim South, with 57 horses and 83 people.

Over the years they have lived here, the Williams have seen many changes, and themselves have gone through many changes.

After running the goat dairy for a number of years, they decided they wanted a change and moved to the Tanami desert for 5 years in the early 90s, where Edd taught in a local school and Amanda worked for Skillshare, which was a community and youth network for employment & training. Among many fascinating activities, Amanada spent some time travelling around the area with a traditional healer.

When they returned to Steels Creek, they ran a host farm , while their daughter and son in law built Hargreaves Hill Brewery. When both were burnt out by the Black Saturday fires, it was time to start a completely new chapter.



Edd and Amanda built a new innovative grass topped underground house, designed by their architect son Alwyn, and showcased on Grand Designs in 2012.

They started hosting groups of schoolchildren through camps run in spring and autumn, setting up projects for the children to do, depending on their ages and skill levels, and teaching them farm activities such as feeding the chooks and

milking goats. They continued this until Covid forced this closure.

They are now “subsistence farming”. Growing organic vegetables, milking a small number of goats, whose milk Amanda makes into cheese for family and friends. They have a small herd of Persian sheep, a breed rare in Australia, which are the original shedding sheep, with hair instead of wool. These sheep graze the roof of their house and surrounds, keeping the grass down, and Amanda weaves wool from their hair.

Edd and Amanada love living in Steels Creek, and sharing their life and their property with many different people.

Meet the Montells

Living in the Valley *By Lindy and Keith Montell*

It was May 2001, on a wet and stormy afternoon, when we arrived at our new home in Steels Creek. The next morning it was bright and sunny as we drove towards Yarra Glen and noticed a sign for the forthcoming market at the Steels Creek Community Centre. We decided to check it out and were very warmly welcomed by the twenty-plus attendees. In those days the (very small) tables and chairs were carried out to the area next to the old school and we were impressed by the range of local produce available. From that day we were given a great deal of helpful advice and assistance from a number of local people. There were many opportunities for social interaction including the tennis club; the film night; the garden club and, at that time, a men’s coffee group. Before long we were co-opted on to various committees including the then very successful Yarra Glen Art Show.

The 2009 bush fires brought a lasting change to the valley; many friends and neighbours left the area but over time have been replaced by new homes and families. One post-fire benefit is that the Community Centre was rebuilt with a much larger space for activities and vastly improved facilities and equipment. We derive a great deal of pleasure from the fact that many of the former activities have continued and are well attended

We both thoroughly enjoy our daily farming activities, the wonderful views throughout the valley, the companionship of neighbours and the broader community.

Who's New(ish) In The Valley?

Meet Craig Irvine and Tara Bennetts

Craig and Tara are relatively new to Steels Creek, but wasted no time in embedding themselves in the community, and feel very much at home here.

They moved to their current property in Steels Creek towards the end of 2022, and prior to that rented in Yarra Glen while looking for their ideal property.

They had originally intended to buy in Yarra Glen, as they had family there, and it was a convenient spot between their two workplaces. Craig is Principal of Yea Primary School while Tara is a nurse in the Emergency department at Angliss Hospital in Upper Ferntree Gully.

They had very clear ideas of what they wanted – a house with a big verandah and a view, a garden, enough space to have friends who mainly have young children, to come and stay. They couldn't find this in Yarra Glen, but the perfect house came up in Steels Creek.

"We walked into the house and it felt like home. It's the right place to be. ...It's part of our new life."

When they bought the property, it also came with many of the tools needed to maintain it, plus three alpacas which they look after. Henry, the previous owner, who had lived in the property for 40 years, and was glad to see buyers who also wanted to live there for a long time, spent a lot of time with them explaining how everything worked and how to maintain it.

Craig and Tara had no trouble identifying things they love about living in Steels Creek - the views, the wildlife, the many walks in the area, the wineries. Craig often drives to work up the Slide, because he loves seeing the wildlife on the way – kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, echidnas and lyrebirds. His record is seeing 7 lyrebirds in one morning.

But the thing they mentioned above all is the community.

As many reading this will be aware, Craig and Tara recently married, using the Steels Creek Community Centre as the venue, which was a first for the centre. Craig and Tara were keen to use the centre because they wanted their wedding to be as local as possible. They loved the venue, and said the community was so helpful, with many people chipping in – assistance in cleaning and setting up the centre, catering, providing wine, providing a vintage car for transport.

"We feel so connected to the centre now. ... every time I drove past I think – that's where we got married."

They are both very busy. In addition to their work, they are keen on camping and hiking, gardening, and catching up with friends and family, which they often do at various locations around the valley, such as the berry farm, Steels Gate estate locals nights, breakfast at De Bortoli, etc.

In addition, Craig is Treasurer of the Steels Creek Community Centre, and a member of the tennis club, Vice President of his football club (not in the valley), and does some deejaying on the side. They have both joined Landcare, and Tara makes good use of the walking track, as well various other fitness activities such as Bootcamp and Pilates in Lilydale.



A little of our history

Many of you will be familiar with the concrete bridge on Pinnacle Lane, running over Steels Creek. That bridge was built in late 2008 / early 2009, but before that, there was a wooden bridge. The photos below show the wooden bridge being built in 1955.



The old bridge looking eastwards. Pinnacle Lane, Steels Creek, Sep. 1955

Photo: J.A. McDonald (Shire of Eltham) 1955; courtesy Eltham District Historical Society



The old bridge looking downstream. Pinnacle Lane, Steels Creek, Sep. 1955

Photo: J.A. McDonald (Shire of Eltham) 1955; courtesy Eltham District Historical Society

Our history for the future: Unfortunately, after many, many years of dedicated work, the Yarra Glen & District History Group has retired. Their contribution preserved records, stories and memories that define our community.

In an effort to keep, capture, and further share - particularly Steels Creek history there is a small group within Steels Creek which is considering the creation of a publicly accessible digital platform.

Initial thoughts are to bring together existing archives and create space for new content (timeline, profiles of people/nature/built environment, and oral stories) to be added; making our history easily accessible to community newcomers, and future generations.

More details on how to get involved will be shared soon. We'll certainly be encouraging community members to be part of the project in every way, especially by contributing photos, documents, and memories.

Any immediate thoughts, ideas, interest, please email erinmarieoneill@gmail.com or contact Erin-Marie O'Neill 0407 353 379

Gates of Steels Creek *By Lindy Montell*

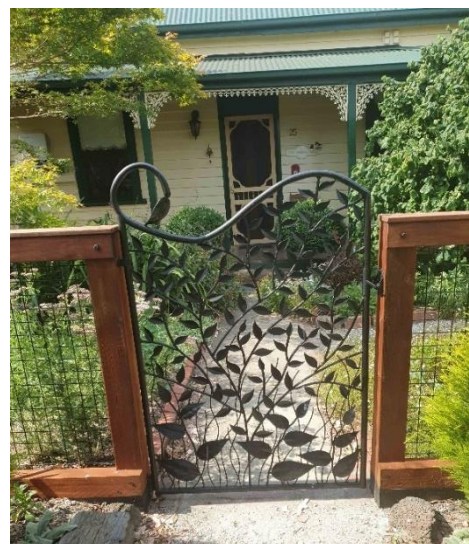
Driving around the local area you see a number of very interesting gates and gateways. Here's four of them.



Justin Purser, a local artist from Yarra Glen, was responsible for this very family orientated gate. He re-purposed rusted metal hoops - kindly left in the vegetable garden by previous owners Chris and

Christine Mullen - into graceful reeds bending in the wind. All metal used was recycled from the 2009 bushfire catastrophe. This artwork cleverly depicts the Brand/O'Neill family within the local landscape, with JB reaching down towards son Henry clambering up and Erin-Marie watching and waving from the lower rung.

This lovely front entrance is located in the south of Yarra Glen. The idea of a profusion of beautiful leaves was that of the owners and was produced by the company, Overwrought, near Daylesford. The iron gate is surrounded by a great variety of lush, green plants creating a beautiful entry into a quiet and peaceful garden.



Richard McLoughlin's desire to produce something positive out of the 2009 bushfire disaster resulted in this arresting, quirky, interesting work of art. Sourced from piles of burnt and broken pieces of rusted metal, such as nuts, bolts, screws, spanners and other tools, this amusing and uplifting creation was the result. Too heavy for the gate posts, it now rests alongside the entry to the McLoughlin's Scott Road, Yarra Glen home.



Steels Creek Estate. A desire not to have to get out the car on a cold wet night to open the gate was the catalyst for coming up with a redesign of our entry. We wanted a solution that would respect the rural landscape we lived in, be made using local products/ contractors, be

strong and wide enough to take trucks, low maintenance, solar powered and operated by a remote. It was covid lockdown and we had plenty of time to design a solution.

The rough sawn post and rail side panels are Victorian hardwood; the stone pillars are local Castella rock by master stone mason Campbell of Flintstone constructions. The wrought iron work was a harder choice. We didn't just want it to be about the winery, but the idea for a landscape took hold, things that could be drawn in the heavy black lines of wrought iron. Facing west I sketched the lines of the Kinglake range. Looking east I drew the lines of the vineyard and the skeletal remains of a large gum, stark beauty created by the Black Saturday.

Bluegum Metal of Healesville were excited to make something from our drawing. They advised that for structural strength we needed to join the mountain range to the top frame of the gate so added the setting sun.

From laying the foundations to installation of the solar powered automation it was a lengthy process. We love the way it looks and believe it adds beauty to the property and neighbourhood and hope others enjoy it too.

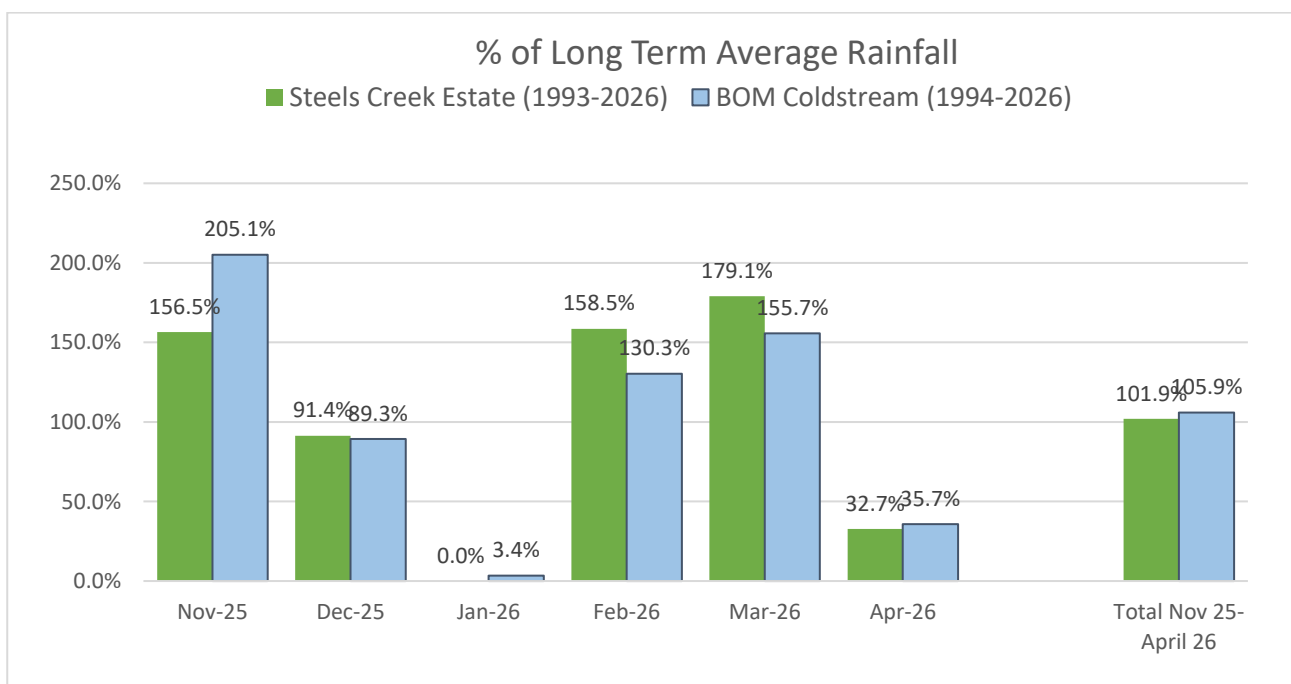
Rainfall Report

Over the last 6 months, our total rainfall has been about the same as the long term average, but the pattern of rainfall has been very different from the norm. November was very wet, December rainfall was about average, but there was no rainfall in January. February and March rainfall were again above average, while April had very low rainfall.

Monthly rainfall is shown below for various areas across the valley, and for Coldstream.

	Brennan Avenue (mm)	Steels Creek Community Centre (mm)	Steels Creek Estate Sewell Rd (mm)	Steels Creek Estate Sewell Rd long term average 1993-2026 (mm)	Bureau Meteorology Coldstream (mm)	Coldstream long term average 1994-2026 (mm)
Nov 25	147.0	157.0	131.0	83.73	153.8	75.0
Dec 25	58.8	93.5	61.5	67.29	52.6	58.9
Jan 26	0.0	1.0	0.0	57.35	1.8	52.6
Feb 26	78.2	75.0	76.0	47.96	60.6	46.5
March 26	95.6	88.0	91.0	50.82	75.2	48.3
April 26	21.8	20.5	22.0	67.27	23.4	65.6

The Bureau of Meteorology provides long term data from its station in Coldstream, which is the closest station to Steels Creek. We are also fortunate to have access to long term rainfall records kept by Steels Creek Estate in Sewell Rd. The data from these 2 sites is used in the graph below, showing monthly rainfall since November 2025 until April 2026, compared to the long term average rainfall for each month.



Fun fact: For Steels Creek Estate, in the last 33 years only one other month, in February 1997, had zero rainfall.

About the Steels Creek Community Centre

The community centre is for you! It is an important gathering place for all Sreekians. The Community centre Committee is responsible for the management and maintenance of the centre, which is leased from the Shire of Yarra Ranges. The centre is predominantly funded by users, who pay a small fee when attending the centre. The committee also fundraises and seeks community grants and donations, in addition to acting as a coordinator of the many groups and users of the centre.

The centre now has a new sign, so you can quickly see what activities are coming up as you drive past.

The Vera Adams Award: Vera Adams was the headmistress at Steels Creek primary school from 1955 to 1973. The SCCC sponsors the Civic and Citizenship Award at Yarra Glen Primary School each year in her honour. Last year the prize was presented at the year 6 graduation on behalf of the community by Julie Wilcox to Oliver Senior for his excellent work in promoting community spirit. Congratulations to Oliver on the award and on graduating year 6.



An easy way to support the Steels Creek Community Centre



Did you know you can help your community by shopping at IGA / Ritchies?

You can get a Community Benefit card at the store, or download the app, and link your card to the Steels Creek Community Centre.

Scan your card every time you shop at any Ritchies (displaying the Ritchies Card promotional material), and they will donate money back to the centre.

As of the end of April 2026, the Steels Creek Community Centre has received a total of \$5164.55 from this program.

Having a party? (or a wedding ...)

Have you thought about using your Community Centre for a function or event? Great venue – lots of room, kitchen and barbecue facilities, children's play area.

You can book online. Simply:

- ✿ Open the Steels Creek Community web-site (go to www.steelscreek.vic.au).
- ✿ Select the SCCC tab.
- ✿ Scroll down the page to find, 'Do you want to book the Centre for a function/event?'
- ✿ Click on, 'Check availability and make an on-line booking enquiry here.'
- ✿ Follow prompts for information, charges and to make a booking request.

You will receive an acknowledgement of your request and further confirmation when the booking is confirmed. Any queries, contact Maree Rothwell 0414 278 649.

Steels Creek Calendar

Check [What's On Calendar](http://steelscreek.vic.au/noticeboard/calendar-of-events) (steelscreek.vic.au/noticeboard/calendar-of-events) for latest updates to the calendar.

The Steels Creek Grapevine

Want to be kept up to date on Local Steels Creek events and offerings? Let us know and we will put you on the email list for the ***'The Steels Creek GrapeVine'*** so you don't miss out. The Grapevine is emailed every second week.

Email thegrapevine@steelscreek.vic.au or

<http://steelscreek.vic.au/publications/the-steels-creek-grapevine/>

"The Jolly Thing" is published by and for the Steels Creek Community Centre Inc. (SCCC), 699 Steels Creek Road, Steels Creek.

Management Committee: **Kerry Guthrie**, President; **Maree Rothwell**, Vice-president; **Craig Irvine**, Treasurer; **Julie Wilcox**, Secretary; Ivan Filsell, Art Group representative; Mary Shiel, Bookclub rep; Fiona Martin, exchange hub rep; Peta Whitford, Landcare rep; Mark Newell, Tennis and Social Club rep.

The Jolly Thing is distributed at the Yarra Glen Post Office, Steels Creek Community Centre, the Yarra Glen Reading Room and Hoogies; via the website, and by email.

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