



Autumn
2026

Hello Buninyong

Community Bank · Buninyong

Pots of Summer Colour

The Ready Set Grow students from Buninyong Primary School made the walk from school to our branch and Community House, proudly delivering their beautiful home-grown flower pots for us to display over summer.

From tiny seedlings to colourful blooms, the students grew the floral displays themselves, alongside their volunteer program mentors who support them every step of the way.

Volunteer program mentor Dr Mark Jones said, "We're just so grateful to Community Bank Buninyong for the hot house. We love doing this program because it's so much fun and we wanted the pots to sit somewhere the community could enjoy them", he said.



Chair Message



Welcome to our latest update. There's plenty happening at Community Bank Buninyong and this edition is your snapshot of both the momentum over the last few months and what's coming next.

We're thrilled to continue welcoming customers into our new branch at 407 Warrenheip Street and we're equally proud to keep backing local projects through our Community Investment Program.

You'll read impact stories from across the region, plus updates on community initiatives like the Community Chest and Community Gold, which keeps local dollars circulating through local businesses.

We're also gearing up for our first FUEL Youth Summit, a major investment in local young people and their future.

Thank you for being part of the model that helps us continue to do good for our community.

Brett Jones
Chair

Community Chest

A few years back, we funded the Community Chest on the Buninyong roundabout... and now it's been gifted back to Community Bank Buninyong to manage.

Here's how it works...

- We're taking care of bookings and overall management.
- It's a community DIY asset, meaning community groups organise their own artwork and installation.
- Artwork must be approved and terms of use apply.
- Booking the space is free (however naturally your group is responsible for artwork and print costs)!

If you've got a community interest event coming up, this is a brilliant way to get the word out there in a very prominent space.

To apply to book a space, visit www.communitygrowshere.com.au/resources and scroll down to Community Chest.



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Community Gold Creates Local Spending

Local businesses, this one's for you. If you're a Buninyong business and you're not already part of the program and you'd like to accept Community Gold in 2026, now's the time to jump in.

Over the last four years, Community Bank Buninyong has distributed more than \$25,000 in Community Gold. That's a lot of \$10 and \$20 vouchers being spent locally... So the question is... what portion of that do you want coming through your doors?



It's simple:



1 We distribute Community Gold to local community groups



2 Customers spend \$10 and \$20 Community Gold cards with you



3 You bank them at Community Bank Buninyong just like cash



4 The funds go straight into your account and we pick up the bill.



Which businesses are participating?

You can see the current list of participating businesses online.



For more information...

For more information or to register, visit <https://www.communitygrowshere.com.au/community-gold>

Community Impact

Here's a great story: we've put well over \$2,500,000 back into local community projects!

Nallei Jerring Strengthens Cultural Connection

"I don't have to hide it anymore. I'm proud of who I am."

That's the impact of the Nallei Jerring Program supporting First Nations youth to build confidence, connection and cultural pride right here in the Ballarat region.

Backed by Community Bank Buninyong and delivered by the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, the program is creating powerful outcomes and did again in 2025:

- 100% of participants felt more confident connecting with their community
- 80% felt stronger in themselves and their abilities
- 98% built strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models.

Western Bulldogs Community Foundation Head of Programs and Impact Hannah Singleton said,

"We are really proud to partner with Community Bank Buninyong on our Nallei Jerring Program. Together we're championing youth empowerment."

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/nallei-jerring-strengthens-cultural-connection



Students Pay It Forward

We loved supporting over 100 Year 9 students from Mount Clear College as they took their learning beyond the classroom through the 2025 Community Impact Explorers program as part of the school's Pay It Forward initiative.

Across the year, students gave more than 400 hours of hands-on volunteering to community causes, including:

- Rubbish clean-ups at local sites
- Tree planting for a wildlife corridor
- Volunteering with Friends of Specimen Vale's Urban Ripple project
- Helping Ballarat Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation Inc
- Supporting Food Is Free and homelessness awareness fundraising.

It's not just the community that's grown, student empathy, engagement and 'school connectedness' (for want of a better word or two) have all increased.

One community partner said "They were a pleasure to have with us. The students worked like crazy and were true ambassadors of Mount Clear College. A truly successful day!"

Read more:

www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/students-pay-it-forward



Arts Centre Takes Shape

Thanks to a \$15,000 grant from Community Bank Buninyong, the Ballarat Performing Arts Community has taken a huge step towards transforming the old Neill Street Uniting Church into the Ballarat Performing Arts Centre.

This support helped cover early site occupation costs in the first year of the project giving BPAC the breathing room to:

- Unite 15+ local performing arts groups under one collaborative purpose
- Save a historic site from deterioration
- Make the venue "fit for use" and secure a planning permit for future performances.

BPAC Treasurer Millie Koenders said, "We were very pleased and relieved to receive the \$15k seed funding from Community Bank Buninyong. As a new umbrella organisation representing the performing arts community, we had taken on a 12 month lease of the property... the grant bought us time to establish our hall hire rental business and other income streams."

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/arts-centre-takes-shape



10 Years Since Scotsburn Fires

Ten years on from the devastating 2015 Scotsburn bushfire, the Clarendon community came together to mark the anniversary with a heartfelt evening of reflection complete with a visit from Santa and a free BBQ.

With support from Community Bank Buninyong, over 110 locals gathered at the Clarendon Community Centre to reflect on a decade of resilience, thank the volunteers and emergency crews who had their backs, and reconnect with neighbours in a social setting.

Trevor Smith from the Clarendon Recreation Reserve said "Thanks very much to Community Bank Buninyong for their generous donation towards our recent community event at the Clarendon Community Centre".

Community Bank Buninyong was involved first-hand in these fires with the Community House serving as an emergency relief and coordination station. It was great to see our volunteer Director Andrea Mason both in attendance and on the microphone!

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/10-years-since-scotsburn-fire



Supporting Our Local CFA Volunteers

Again our local CFA volunteers showed up in the heat, smoke and chaos especially over the last number of months.

While Bendigo Bank launched the official Victorian Bushfire Appeal, we worked locally with the Buninyong-Mount Helen Fire Brigade to understand what was challenging for volunteers at the time.

We took a very practical tact gifting a significant amount of Community Gold cards to CFA volunteers across our local brigades in the region, so they could grab a coffee and something to eat after their shifts. This was our small way to help these local heroes stay fuelled and supported while they were looking after all of us.



Kinder Mornings Made Brighter

In 2025, Buninyong Kindergarten's Healthy Hearts Breakfast Program served up more than just cereal, it delivered comfort and calm mornings for little students.

We said 'YES' to supporting this program again with some truly delightful milestones:

- 3,810 breakfasts served
- 1,925 Cheerios - the undisputed "captain" of cereals
- 976 Rice Pops - the runner up and loyal bestie!

Program Coordinator Mel Dreger said, "Your Community Bank grant didn't just fund cereal, it really fuelled content mornings with calm starts. It helped our little students settle and made breakfast feel like home."

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/kinder-mornings-made-brighter



ParkRun Brings Local Movement

DeSoza Park is on the run! We said 'YES' to ensuring Buninyong now has its very own parkrun.

Already hundreds of people have walked, jogged or run the new DeSoza Parkrun, with plenty of locals stepping up to volunteer. Everyone is welcome for this free weekly 5km event which is about building healthy habits and stronger community ties.

DeSoza Parkrun Event Director Vicky Hallam said, "Already we have seen the community come together at Parkrun, seeing people connect, as well as becoming a hub for both physical and mental wellbeing in the region".

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/parkrun-brings-local-movement



Women's Clinics Drive Growth

We proudly supported Buninyong Golf Club's women's clinics and community tournaments and the results speak for themselves!

Because of this support:

- 7 new female members joined and are now actively playing competition golf
- Many clinic participants now regularly play social rounds
- 300+ players took part in club tournaments, including around 150 from across Victoria for the Community Bank Buninyong sponsored day!

Women's Captain Helen McSparron said she's "overwhelmed with the success of our Women's Beginner Golf Lesson."

It's great to see women's golf growing stronger, more inclusive and with greater participation.

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/women-s-clinics-drive-growth



More Kids on Court

From junior racquets to new pickleball nets, the Ballarat Regional Tennis Centre is serving up a whole new community vibe.

With funding from Community Bank Buninyong, BRTC has:

- Launched a fully equipped Hotshot Musketeer Program for kids aged 3-18
- Upgraded tennis + pickleball nets to boost play and safety
- Revamped their clubhouse with fun, family-friendly zones.

BRTC Manager Vincent Stouff said, "Community Bank Buninyong has helped us create a more vibrant, welcoming and community-focused club. These improvements mean kids stay longer, families enjoy spending time together and our centre has a renewed sense of purpose."

We love seeing local clubs grow into community hubs!

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/more-kids-on-court-more-families-staying-longer-at-brtc



Capacity Growing at the Core

Sometimes this is what community investment looks like. It's not financial support from us, but using our network, knowledge bases and personal time to share our knowledge and skills so local groups can develop their internal systems for longer term sustainability and impact.

We brought together 30 community volunteers for capacity building workshops at the Buninyong Community House alongside our friends at the Ballarat East Neighbourhood House.

With our Communications Lead Sam delivering a session on practical 'smart marketing' and our Partnerships Lead Kelly guiding sessions on grant writing and 'recruiting + retaining volunteers', the room had with energy, collaborative sharing and plenty of community ideas.

Kelly said, "The energy in the room was driven by plenty of discussion, open sharing and the deep learning was rewarding for us to see. We also loved doing this project in partnership with Ballarat East Neighbourhood House, as that's what it's all about."

A big thank you to everyone who participated. We can't wait to see change you make for the better!



New Bird Hide to Inspire the Future

A quiet place to watch, learn and remember. We said a big 'YES' to funding the Ross Creek Landcare Group to establish a new bird hide at the Ross Creek Wetlands.

The new hide:

- Supports citizen science surveys with the Latham's Snipe Project
- Gives Woody Yaloak PS – Ross Creek students a hands-on learning space
- Honours local Landcare champion Rosemary Barnett in a lasting memorial, designed and built by her family

Committee member and project designer Trevor Barnett said "What we see as 'B-grade land' can be an 'A-grade' plant and animal habitat. As ever, we are inspired by those who have gone before us."

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/new-bird-hide-to-inspire-the-future



Tri Timing Upgrade a Game Changer

Fast finishes, safer races and more fun for first-timers. Ballarat Triathlon Club has a brand-new dual-point timing system, thanks to our Community Investment Program where branch profits go to funding impactful community initiatives such as this.

With this upgrade:

- Results are instant and accurate
- Volunteers get a well-earned break
- Juniors and newcomers get safer course designs and a better experience.

Vice President Molly Voss said, "Upgrading from our 20-year-old timing system is a game changer. It means we can keep offering high-quality, low-cost local events and grow participation in triathlon."

Read more www.communitygrowshere.com.au/post/tri-timing-upgrade-a-game-changer



Smart Living Expo 2026

What a day at the Buninyong Sustainability Smart Living Expo in Buninyong... big ideas, good chats and a whole lot of locals doing brilliant things for our planet.

We loved meeting so many Sustainable Seekers and handing out \$1,000 in Community Gold to help you shop local while you live a little lighter. Win win.

And it was a perfect reminder of why we back projects that quietly change everything through our Community Investment program.

Huge thanks to the Smart Living organisers, stallholders, speakers and everyone who popped by for a chat... you made it such a fun day for us.



Year 10 students in 2026 get ready to FUEL your future!

FUEL Youth Summit

Introducing our first ever FUEL Youth Summit, coming to the Civic Hall in Ballarat on Monday 16 March 2026. It's a full-throttle, one-day event packed with world-class speakers and game-changing leadership tools.

Headlining is youth speaker and changemaker Will Massara, alongside a power lineup of presenters.

- Meet 200 like-minded students
- Lunch and snacks included
- All Ballarat public and private schools invited!

Attendees will hear from world class inspirational speakers, learn from real doers and gain practical leadership skills to kickstart the year with purpose. This is a fully funded opportunity thanks to Community Bank Buninyong valued at over \$175 per student.

This event is just another way Community Bank Buninyong creates local change and impact through our Community Investment Program. Huge thanks to our event partners: Youth Leadership Academy Australia and City of Ballarat.

We'll bring you a wrap up of the event via our socials and in our next Winter newsletter.

Learn more at www.communitygrowshere.com.au/fuel



Fuel YOUTH SUMMIT 2026

16 March 2026

9am-5pm

Civic Hall Ballarat

Incredible speakers

Real stories

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www.communitygrowshere.com.au/fuel

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Colour in your best Easter masterpiece then bring it into our branch to score an ever so cute Bendigo Bank tin moneybox, the best little kick-start for super savers.

Get out your best pencils, textas or sparkly pens... we'd love to display your artwork in branch, so make it special for us.

When you return your entry (with a parent or guardian), the moneybox is yours!

* Limited stocks, available while they last. For primary school-aged children. One moneybox per child only. Parent, carer or guardian must attend drop-off.

Check in time?

With the current cost of living, there's never been a better time to review your home loan. Book an appointment for your home loan health check today.

We'll look at your rate, term, repayments, and equity, giving your loan a full check-up to make sure it's still right for your needs. New or existing customers welcome.

Enquire now. Contact us locally at Community Bank Buninyong on (03) 5341 8066 or email buninyongmailbox@bendigoadelaide.com.au and chat to our home lending specialists.

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Life doesn't stop at 5pm... and neither do we!

Thinking about a new car? Your first home? Maybe upsizing, downsizing or hitting the road on an adventure? Whatever's next, we're here to help make it happen.

Peita, our local lending specialist, offers after-hours appointments after 5pm on weeknights... and even weekends when it suits you both. She'll meet you at the Community House right next to our new branch at 407 Warrenheip Street, Buninyong.

To book, make sure you give Peita at least 24-hours notice:

Call the branch during business hours on 5341 8066

Or email Peita directly, peita.mcnaught@bendigoadelaide.com.au

Start off right, let's make your next big move a good one!

Talk to us today



Randall Dreger
Branch Manager
5341 8066
randall.dreger@bendigoadelaide.com.au

New location!

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We're open:

9.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday

Our Leadership Team:

Chair: Brett Jones **Company Secretary:** Scott Sherritt

Treasurer: Graeme Benn **Directors:** Joanne Innes, Andrea Mason, Omaru Maruatona, Debbie Rybicki, Stacey Oliver, Karen Snibson.

Branch Manager: Randall Dreger

Community Partnerships Lead: Kelly Bevan

Buninyong & District Financial Services Ltd

407 Warrenheip St, Buninyong VIC 3357

P 5341 8066 ABN 63 137 673 388



About Us

We're a local branch with a local purpose. Community Bank Buninyong is owned by the community and operated in partnership with Bendigo Bank. That means our profits go right back into our local area to help our community thrive. Our community company is Social Traders Certified and an award-winning organisation.

Chances are you've seen our impact in action, at your club, your school, your community group or a local event. Bank with Community Bank Buninyong where it's a win-win for you and your community.



Let's Be Friends!



Jump on your socials and follow us on Facebook and Instagram @communitybankbuninyong for local impact stories featuring your clubs, organisations and the community.

We'd love to show you more of what we do each week.