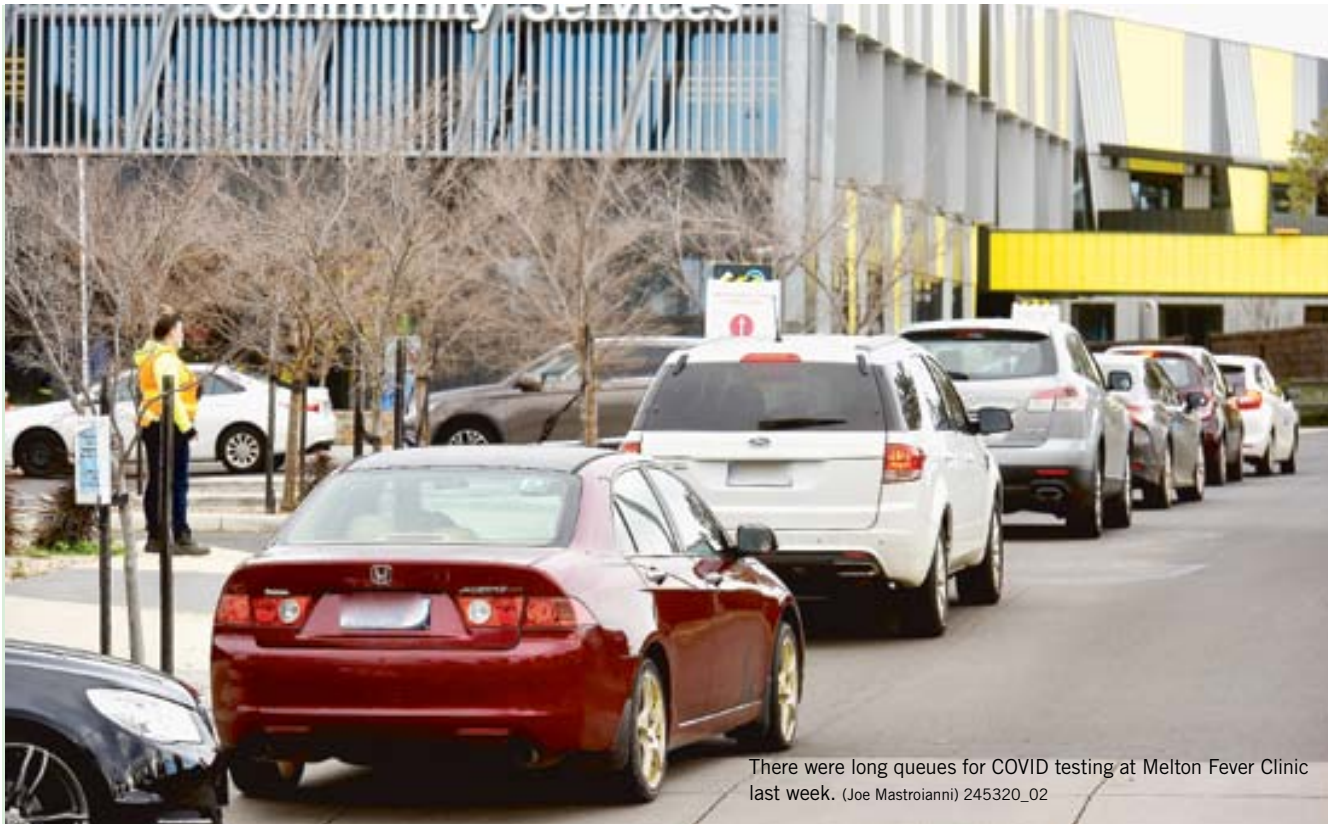


MELTON & MOORABOOL

Star Weekly

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There were long queues for COVID testing at Melton Fever Clinic last week. (Joe Mastroianni) 245320_02



New Justice of the Peace Kyle Lockwood. (Joe Mastroianni) 244855_02

JP continues family connection

Kyle Lockwood is one of the newest recruits to hold one of the world's oldest justice roles.

The Cobblebank resident was recently sworn in as a Justice of the Peace, a volunteer position serving a valuable role in everyday legal matters.

Mr Lockwood said he was drawn to the role due to a family link as well as a local shortfall in numbers.

"I just wanted to help out the community and there's also been quite a shortage of JPs for the last five years or so," he said.

"Also my great aunt was a JP so there is a family connection as well."

The volunteer role involves everything from certifying copies of official documents and validating people's identities to witnessing statutory declarations and powers of attorney documents.

"I think it's one of the oldest roles in the judiciary, it's been around for about 700 years," Mr Lockwood said.

JPs are selected via an interview, written exam and practical testing.

The Honorary Justice Services Support area is responsible for appointing and managing Honorary Justice volunteers.

Mr Lockwood said Victoria currently has a significant shortage of JPs and there is a recruitment drive planned to sign on hundreds more this year.

"The only thing you need to be is an Australian citizen over the age of 18 and of good character," he said.

"The Victorian government does a really good training course, we've got a big manual that we've gone through in learning everything about the role."

Mr Lockwood said age is no barrier to the role, with people from his intake coming from all age groups from young adult to retirement age.

The Department of Justice is recruiting in stages across Victoria and plans to release a recruitment schedule later this year.

Details: justice.vic.gov.au

Benjamin Millar

Grammar students back

By Benjamin Millar

Bacchus Marsh Grammar staff and students have returned to school this week despite new cases emerging in the cluster towards the end of the school community's 14-day quarantine period.

Star Weekly last week reported that the school's cluster had grown to include at least seven staff, four students and four close household members who had tested positive to the fast-moving Delta strain.

A further two household contacts linked to Bacchus Marsh Grammar were reported as

positive last Monday and it was revealed on Thursday that four more students, who had been in isolation, tested positive on their day 13 tests.

Another household contact of a positive case in a student linked to the Bacchus Marsh Grammar School was reported on Friday.

No further positive tests were detected at the weekend ahead of Monday's return to face-to-face schooling at both the Maddingley and Aintree campuses.

Principal Andrew Neal thanked the students and their families for their patience during the testing blitz.

"The process of Maddingley families getting tested on day 13 and then released has had its frustrations for many of you and I have been heartened by the good-natured way in which you have faced these difficulties," he wrote to parents. "There is a general sense ... of a task almost over, but people are tired."

Maddingley students have only been permitted to return to the campus if they were tested on day 13, received a negative test result and were cleared by the health department.

Authorities reported two new local COVID-19 cases on Monday, both linked to the current outbreaks.

Volunteers put a lid on litter menace

Bacchus Marsh volunteers have been praised for their help in keeping thousands of pieces of litter from choking Melbourne's vital waterways.

Environmental groups, schools and residents have rallied to rid their region of rubbish over the past four years as part of Melbourne Water's innovative Litter Action Project.

Melbourne Water team leader Yvonne Cabuang said community volunteers carrying out regular clean-ups and rubbish audits around waterways and other litter hotspots have made a huge and positive difference to the environment.

"In the past three and a half years Litter Action groups have removed and recorded almost 40,000 pieces of litter, with single use soft plastic and polystyrene the most widely collected items," she said.

"This is an amazing achievement."

Ms Cabuang said population growth and urbanisation means more litter is reaching Melbourne's waterways and into the bay.

That rubbish threatens surrounding habitat and the wildlife that live there, affecting water quality, stifling plant life and presenting as a potential choking hazard to animals.

Ms Cabuang said most people don't realise that more than 90 per cent of litter that ends up in Port Phillip Bay comes from rubbish dropped on suburban streets and washed into stormwater drains.

Melbourne Water estimates the economic contribution of the thousands of volunteer hours of rubbish collection through the Project equates to almost \$240,000.

Benjamin Millar



Litter Action group members Jodie Valpied, John Spain, Liam Coombes and Mara Hayler. (Supplied)

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