

Rescuers open doors to the community

LARA LEAHY

The VRA are an integral part of the safety and security when it comes to rescue on our roads, at places of work and in our homes.

They have had a solid presence in Casino since September 1980 which has been largely supported by local donations and people. Their professional approach and the tasks they accomplish for the community is a testimony to the Integrity and dedication of its members. Casino VRA are opening its doors this month, so you can get a glimpse inside the organisation.

The VRA are involved in various roles in the community. In rescue operations they attend road crashes, animal rescues, industrial and domestic entrapments - whether it's a ring stuck on a finger or machinery, swift water rescue and USAR or Urban Search and Rescue. But they also attend community events in supportive roles.

The Open Day on



Sunday July 24th is so the community can learn first-hand about who they are, what they do and how they do it.

Melanie Brenton is an active General Land Rescue operator which means she is accredited to attend road accidents. She has been involved for eight years. Mel's initial motivation was to meet people and become more involved in the

community, but she has benefitted so much more from the experience, "I feel very proud of the people, our capability and resources in the team. We function as a smooth unit which is important. We trust each other and there is a great sense of professionalism and contribution."

"At the open day there will be an opportunity to see how one of the

rescue vehicles is set up for operations. We will do a live demonstration of a rescue from a car, and you can speak to the members and learn more about how to get involved," Paul Cowles, the Deputy Region Coordinator, says "It's a great way of giving back to the community in a different way." There will also be a sausage sizzle.

Women and men over 18 are invited to become involved. Paul confirms, "For those that are interested, the training is free and accredited nationwide." Melanie says.

"There are many options and paths you can take. The training and mentoring are constant. I feel like I have been nurtured for my whole eight-year journey. The experience of those supporting you is important - some are founding members. Next, I'd like to train in flood rescue, which is a personal interest for me.

"Working with other services is part of the role - fires, SES, ambulance and the police," Mel says.

"When you rescue anything, even a cat and the tears of a family turn to smiles, it is such a good feeling. We are a small team, but we have a mighty impact!"

The open day is on Sunday July 24th at the VRA headquarters on Graham place in Casino. It starts at 11am and goes until 2pm. All are welcome.

RECORD INVESTMENT IN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EARLY LEARNING EDUCATORS

More than 400 aspiring early childhood teachers across NSW are set to receive a cash boost to complete their studies thanks to a NSW Government investment.

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet, Treasurer Matt Kean and Minister for Education and Early Learning Sarah Mitchell announced today that a record 439 scholarships are being awarded across the state, to attract and retain staff to support supply in the early childhood education and care sector.

Premier Perrottet said almost \$11 million has been invested from the NSW 2022/23 Budget to deliver scholarships to support educators in entering the workforce or to boost their skills as degree qualified early childhood teachers.

"Early learning professionals are invaluable and we need more of them, which is why we are making a record investment in the early childhood education workforce," Mr Perrottet said.

"This investment of almost \$11 million in delivering 439 scholarships will support our commitment to address workforce supply issues."

Fourth COVID vaccine dose protects the vulnerable

As COVID-19 continues to circulate in our communities, Healthy North Coast is encouraging all those who are eligible for a fourth vaccine dose to book now.

From Monday, 11 July an additional 7.4 million Australians became eligible to receive a fourth vaccination. This

followed the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) updating its recommendations.

ATAGI now recommends that people aged 50 to 64 years should have their fourth dose. People aged 30 to 49 years may choose to have a fourth shot, as they are now eligible.

Healthy North Coast Chief Executive Officer Julie Sturgess said ATAGI had also reduced the recommended interval between vaccinations from 4 months to 3 months. The interval between a person catching COVID and recovering, and their next recommended vaccine dose, is also 3

months.

"The North Coast has an outstanding COVID vaccination rate - greater than 95% for people aged 15-plus who have had 2 doses, but it is important to continue to strengthen protection given COVID-19 variants are still circulating," Ms Sturgess said.

"For those who've had 3 or more shots, we're slightly behind the NSW average - 66% compared to 68% as of 10 July.

"It's important we all stay up to date to protect ourselves and our community and help lessen the strain on the health system."



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