

Boost for city's ambo services

By Robert Fedele

WYNDHAM'S ambulance stocks received a major boost last week after news it would share in \$185.7 million in State Government funding to improve services.

Some of the funding will be used to establish a 24-hour mobile intensive care ambulance unit in Werribee.

Laverton will also secure a new emergency paramedic team after a

restructure of its MICA unit. The upgrade will complement Wyndham's existing ambulance branches in Werribee, Point Cook and Hoppers Crossing.

Metropolitan Ambulance Service chief executive Greg Sassella said the funding would ensure the best possible service to the Wyndham community.

"This is a great development for the ambulance service, and in turn, a great announcement for the community, who

rely on us in times of emergency. The Laverton MICA will be involved in a restructure [of MICA] to ensure that the highest level of care is best delivered to Victorians, while providing best conditions for our paramedics to work," he said.

"This will see the team become a rapid response unit — a specialist single-officer response designed to quickly deliver care to those most in need."

Mr Sassella said increased ambulance services across the state would save lives.

"This means that we can continue to deliver on the main job of an ambulance service, which is saving lives," he said.

"These extra resources will improve response times in the area, while the commencement of 22 new teams and the recruitment of 250 new paramedics across metropolitan Melbourne means

that all paramedics will be responsible for less cases, decreasing fatigue across our workforce."

Mr Sassella said the proposed amalgamation of Victoria's ambulance services into one organisation, Ambulance Victoria, would benefit Wyndham.

"[It] will also mean better services and co-operation covering the areas that were previous borders between the two, such as the area between Werribee and Little River."

New-look CBD on the cards

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Iramoo Ward councillor Peter Ross, a member of the place management advisory committee, said Wyndham's expected growth posed many challenges.

However, the appointment of a place manager would ensure the Werribee and Hoppers Crossing town centres and the technology precinct were developed to their full potential.

"Our population is growing rapidly and is forecast to reach over 200,000 people by 2021," he said.

"We need to provide sufficient employment, accommodation and community facilities which are readily accessible to our population for this growth to be sustainable.

"The place manager position has been created to make sure they're developed in close proximity to train stations and major bus interchanges and are accessible to Wyndham residents."

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Weird science

World-famous Australian biologist and immunologist Sir Gustav Nossal and 10-year-old Harm take a peek through the magnifying glasses at the launch of the schoolyard safari unit at Mossfiel Primary School last Thursday. The event was also attended by federal Lalor MP Julia Gillard, Wyndham Mayor Kim McAliney and representatives of the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra. The schoolyard safari curriculum links science with literacy, with pupils encouraged to observe the features and behaviour of small animals to gain a better understanding of how they move, feed and protect themselves.

Picture: Andrew Kelly

\$15,000 fine for trying to smuggle snakes interstate

A TARNEIT man has been convicted and fined a record \$15,000 after being found guilty of attempting to illegally export 10 juvenile corn snakes and two juvenile Burmese pythons from Melbourne to NSW.

Matthew Borg, 29, was convicted and fined at the Sunshine Magistrates Court on April 22.

Borg pleaded guilty to five charges including illegally selling exotic species, possessing protected wildlife and failing

to keep accurate and up-to-date records of his wildlife collection.

Corn snakes and Burmese pythons are classified as controlled pest animals under the Catchment and Land Protection Act.

Borg also pleaded guilty to misleading Department of Sustainability and Environment wildlife officers about the origins of the snakes.

The record penalty is the highest fine imposed by a Victorian Court for illegally

selling exotic reptiles under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

In Victoria, the maximum fine for an offence of importing, keeping or selling an exotic species is \$26,400.

Senior prosecutor Sonya McDonald told the court that Department of Sustainability and Environment officers intercepted a large polystyrene package containing the reptiles at Tullamarine Airport last June.

Ms McDonald said the snakes were

seized by wildlife officers at the airport, and a search warrant was executed at Borg's home.

At Borg's residence, Wildlife officers also found a stuffed Tasmanian devil which had not been registered in his record book for protected wildlife — a condition of his DSE wildlife licence.

Ms McDonald told the court authorities had since been forced to euthanase the 12 seized exotic snakes because their origins could not be clearly established

and they posed a disease risk.

Magistrate Barry Docking denied a DSE application for the suspension of Borg's wildlife licence and the forfeiture of the Tasmanian devil found at his home.

■ To report suspected illegal possession or trading of exotic or native reptiles or birds, call the department on 136 186.

Information can be provided anonymously.

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