



## SERVICE ASPIRATIONS

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## MURRABIT'S MILESTONE

SPORT



## Spinning around

Patrick Doyle spins Emily Wight while Will O'Shea takes his dance partner's hand.

STORY AND PHOTOS  
— Pages 6 and 7

# MINE CONCERNS

JENNY DENTON

FARMERS around the site of the Goschen mineral sands and rare earth mining project are calling for more consideration of the impacts of the planned mine on what has been described as "some of the most highly productive land in north-western Victoria".

A concerned landholders and residents group has seen about 25 farmers meet about 10 times to discuss their concerns, which include biosecurity and contamination, loss of productive capacity, water use and post-mining rehabilitation.

New Australian mining company

VHM has been conducting explorations in an 8300-hectare site, straddling the Swan Hill and Gannawarra shires, which has found to be rich in zircon, titanium and significant rare earth mineral resources.

The deposits have been described as "globally significant", but little detail is publicly known about them and the company said it was still unsure where mining will occur.

VHM is currently preparing an environment effects statement for the Goschen Zircon and Rare Earth Minerals Project which will be released and open for public comment next year.

Cereal and grain farmer Craig

Kennedy, whose Swan Hill-Quambatook Road property falls partly within the project's third "target mineralisation zone", said local landholders had been meeting independently of a stakeholder group set up by VHM to discuss their concerns, which include biosecurity and contamination, loss of productive capacity, water use and post-mining rehabilitation.

"Some of the main topics were biosecurity and the potential for contamination of radioactive and heavy metal dust on our crop zones and the people who live here," Mr Kennedy said.

"They're mining rare earth and

heavy metals and there are radioactive components of that. If you have a dusty day or a dust storm comes through, I don't know how they expect to contain them. Then also, as an industry, the crops that we grow are under more and more scrutiny in terms of what's on them, and we just don't know what's going to happen in the future."

Mr Kennedy described land in the area as "some of the most highly productive in northern Victoria" and said ongoing uncertainty was affecting the capacity of farmers and other agricultural operators in the area to plan their businesses.

"People want to know where it's

going, and VHM don't know or feel they can't tell us," he said.

Water is also an issue, with Mr Kennedy arguing the 3GL to 5.5GL required in the first few years could potentially have a significant impact on the local irrigation industry.

Agronomist and fellow Lalbert farmer Brad Bennett, whose property borders the mine site, also questioned the reliability of rehabilitation processes.

"In my role as an agronomist, I've seen rehabilitation jobs where crop growth following rehab is much lower than the undisturbed land around it," he said.

CONTINUED — Page 4

## Weather

TODAY  
Partly cloudy, 2-15



TOMORROW  
Partly cloudy, 4-16



THURSDAY  
Mostly sunny, 4-16



FRIDAY  
Sunny, 5-17



SATURDAY  
Partly cloudy, 7-18



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New club members Terri Hancock, Vic Grundy, back, Cheryl Cooke and Angela Clark-Grundy, front middle, with sponsors Rob Shanahan, Keith Cummings and Anne Graham.



Cohuna Lions Club 2019-20 executive includes Anne Graham (president), Allan Walkington (minutes secretary), Peter Coleston (Lion tamer), Rob Shanahan (first-year and junior public speaking), Anthony Troy (treasurer and first vice-president), Keith Cummins (tail twister, youth programs and catering), Malcolm McLennan (director) and Norm Walkington (membership chairman and Leos).

# NEW LIONS JOIN THE DEN

JENNY DENTON

FOUR new members joined the ranks of the Cohuna Lions Club at the group's annual changeover dinner last Wednesday.

Lions from Leitchville, Pyramid Hill, Gunbower and Kerang, as well as Kerang Rotary Club members, attended the large gathering at the Bower Tavern.

Also present was Gannawarra Shire mayor Cr Lorraine Learmonth, who expressed the shire's appreciation for Cohuna Lions' service in the community.

There were smiles all round as Terri Hancock, Vic Grundy, Angela Clark-Grundy and Cheryl Cooke

were inducted into the club, with the support of sponsors Rob Shanahan, Keith Cummings and Anne Graham.

Mrs Graham was re-elected president and the club's executive roles remained largely unchanged, with the exception of first time director Maree Purton and administration secretary Christine Coleston.

The club had enjoyed a good year, Mrs Graham said, in particular with the successful hosting of the District 201V6 Convention in October.

"The whole weekend went well, from the people who helped in many ways to the fine food supplied by various organisations and

the friendship enjoyed by all," she said in her president's report.

Last year's convention had also been special in its recognition of local member Laurie Archard's 50 years' of service.

"Laurie over the years has been a hard worker and has served our club and the community in a dedicated manner," Mrs Graham said.

Sadly, Mr Archard passed away two weeks ago and a minute's silence was observed at the dinner to remember him.

Mrs Graham outlined some of the club's fundraising over the past 12 months, which included catering for Anzac eve, Australia Day, Gunfire breakfast and men's breakfast

events.

Close to \$9000 had been raised for the Good Friday Appeal and the club had donated \$12,000 to the Cohuna Hospital on relinquishing organisational responsibility for the Bridge to Bridge event to the Cohuna Progress Association.

The wood yard firewood initiative, run by Bill Bruns and his team, had also been very successful.

In other activities, the club plans to continue to support the fruit fly prevention program and has started training members to take part in the primary school eye health program, which it will work with other district clubs on.

The club has supported its junior

offshoot, the Leos group, throughout the year and also been helped by it in many activities, Mrs Graham said.

Junior public speaking, Youth of the Year, and Leo of the Year events were held in Cohuna, with the latter competition won by outgoing Leos president Fifi White.

Fifi also won the public speaking section of the Leo of the Year district final, which the Leos travelled to Yarrowonga to attend.

Early in June the Leos took possession of a new food van.

The event finished late, with a lengthy joke telling session from Tail Twister Keith Cummins capping off the evening.



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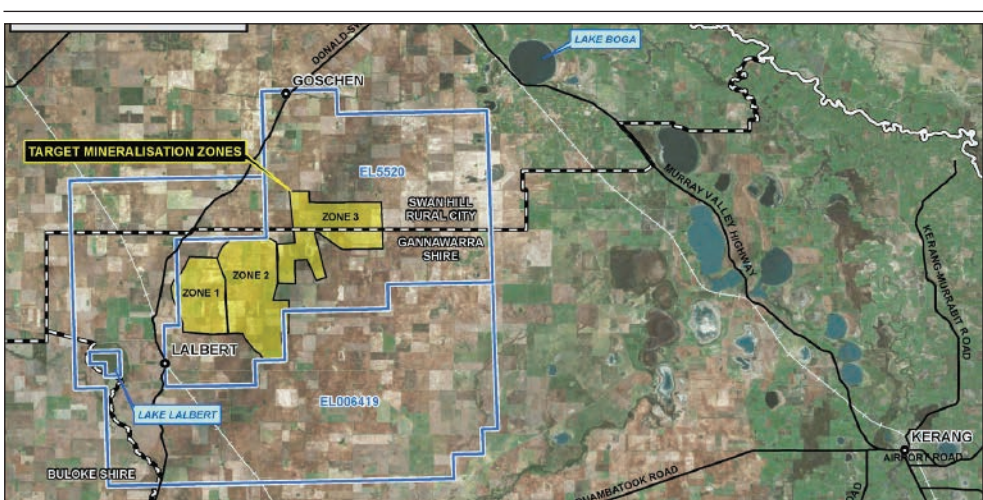


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The location of the Goschen project.

## Mine concerns

**FROM — Front Page**

HE also queried the employment and other benefits the company has said would flow locally from the project.

While not all landholders in the area are opposed to the mine, Mr Kennedy and Mr Bennett said a significant number of them had concerns, and some were deeply worried.

VHM's executive general manager, external affairs and marketing Brent Jackson said the project was subject to detailed legislation and regulation. He said the company also wanted to make sure they did the right thing by the local community.


Information on water use, land rehabilitation, biodiversity and other factors would be included in the detailed environment effects study the company was preparing, he said.

VHM is required under legislation to rehabilitate the land, and was strongly committed to doing so in consultation with landholders, he said.

The company would work with local high schools, TAFE, and training organisations to provide transferable training and apprenticeship opportunities.

"We think this project will be very beneficial for the local economy and the local community," Mr Jackson said.

- The Goschen project area contains "numerous high-grade zones of heavy mineral sand rich in zircon, rutile, titanium and rare earth minerals".
- It is projected to extract 5-10 million tonnes of ore per year over about 30 years.
- It will need 3GL to 5.5GL of water annually in the first few years before tailings water becomes available for reuse.
- It will create 200 jobs in construction and 200 in operation, the company says.
- It could be operating from the end of 2020.
- It is described as the "flagship project" of VHM, which has exploration licences over land stretching from Kerang to just south of Robinvale, and claims it has "the potential to supply up to 10 per cent of the world's zircon and rare earth minerals".



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