



The community gathered to watch the Winter Solstice livestream.

LEFT: StandBy representatives Rachel Barry and Emma Knapp organised the event in Boort.

Light on the darkest night

Louis Harrison

COMMUNITY members from around the Gannawarra and Loddon shires joined together in Boort for the 14th Winter Solstice.

People impacted by suicide, friends family and anyone interested in attending were welcome to enjoy hot soup as well as tea and coffee among community on the longest night of the year.

Emma Knapp and Rachel Barry from support after suicide organisation StandBy hosted the event at the Boort Anglers club on Sunday.

The Survivors of Suicide and Friends' 2026 Winter Solstice event was livestreamed, and provided a safe space for the community to remember loved ones and reflect on mental health.

Ms Knapp said the focus of the event was to create conversations and a sense of community.

"It's about coming together on the longest, coldest day of the year and coming into a lighter day tomorrow," she said.

The theme of this year's event was 'a gentle look back to look forward' and throughout the event, speakers and performers shared personal stories of grief, mental ill health, advice and insights in hopes of removing some of the shame, stigma and judgement that surrounds suicide.

The livestream, hosted by David Astle, featured performances and speeches from well-known Australian artists including Emma Donovan, Clare Bowditch, Mark Coles Smith and Tim Rogers.

At the Angler's Club, candles were set out for attendees to light in memory of loved ones and a campfire was burning next to the lake.

Ms Knapp said that while mental health issues could contribute to suicide risk, feelings of disconnection and social isolation were also significant factors.

Recent global events, including the conflict in the Middle East, rising financial pressures and increasing rates of homelessness, can also have a significant impact on mental health.

According to Lifeline, financial hardship



Candles were lit to honour loved ones. Pictures: Louis Harrison.

was also a growing concern, with one in three Australians struggling to make ends meet on their current income.

"There are lots of things that lead someone to take their life," Ms Knapp said.

"It could be someone isn't involved in the local footy club or they've suddenly experienced an injury that prevents them from taking part."

Both Ms Knapp and Ms Barry said mental health support extended beyond clinical services, and that communities affected by suicide needed connection and understanding.

They said events such as the Winter Solstice helped foster meaningful conversations about suicide and mental ill health.

Anyone requiring urgent help can call Lifeline: 13 11 14, Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 or Kids Helpline: on 1800 551 800.

Bridge hit with new load limit

MOTORISTS who use the Kangaroo Lake Road bridge that spans an irrigation channel connecting Lake Cullen and Racecourse Lake are advised that an eight-tonne limit will be in place until further notice.

Gannawarra Shire Council, which manages the structure, has introduced the load limit following a recent structural inspection and assessment.

"Council is committed to maintaining safe and reliable infrastructure across the municipality," Council chief executive officer, Geoff Rollinson said.

"Placing a reduced load limit on the Kangaroo Lake Road bridge will ensure motorists' safety as further investigations are conducted and options for repair or strengthening works are evaluated."

Motorists with loads that are larger than eight tonnes are requested to use the Murray Valley Highway and Gorton Drive to access either side of Kangaroo Lake Road.

"Council thanks motorists for their understanding whilst this load limit is in place and will provide an update regarding the bridge in the future," Mr Rollinson said.



New load limits have been introduced at the Kangaroo Lake Road bridge.

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