



**AUSTRALIA DAY**  
IN LEETON



**Australia Day**

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

# 2025 CELEBRATIONS in LEETON

Compiled by: Leigh Houghton | LSC Tourism & Events Officer







# Australia Day CELEBRATIONS in LEETON



Australia Day 2025 in Leeton Shire was a vibrant celebration of community, culture, and connection. Across the region, residents came together to reflect on our history, respect the contributions of all Australians, and celebrate the diverse and inclusive society we share.

Events were held in Leeton, Whitton, Murrami, and Yanco, ensuring that people of all ages and backgrounds had the opportunity to take part.

The day featured a Citizenship Ceremony, Australia Day Awards, community breakfasts, live entertainment, family-friendly activities, and pool parties, with strong attendance and engagement across all locations.

This report provides an overview of the event's success, key highlights, attendance figures, and financials, along with recommendations to ensure future celebrations continue to bring the community together in a meaningful way.

Leeton Shire Council extends its gratitude to all volunteers, service organisations, and community members who contributed to making Australia Day 2025 a memorable occasion.

## Friday 26 January

<i>Community breakfast</i> Murrami	from 7am
<i>Official Ceremony</i> Mountford Park	9am – 12pm
<i>Free Aussie Movie Screening</i> Roxy Theatre	1pm
<i>Pool Party</i> Leeton Regional Aquatic Centre	3pm – 8pm





# PROMOTION



**WE'RE ALL PART OF THE STORY.**

Help us celebrate the outstanding contributions of Leeton Shire residents

## NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

FOR THE 2025 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

in the following categories:

- Citizen of the Year • Young Citizen of the Year
- Achiever of the Year • Young Achiever of the Year
- Event/Group/Organisation of the Year
- Lifelong Citizen of the Shire
- Sportsperson of the Year • Junior Sportsperson of the Year

Nominate online today at <https://bit.ly/LSCAusDay2025>

**NOMINATIONS CLOSE TOMORROW**

**Australia Day**  
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

**LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Australia Day**

# POOL party

**JAN 26**

@ Leeton Regional Aquatic Centre

**FREE ENTRY 3pm - close**

Plenty of fun games & activities  
with a visit from a Disney Princess!

**Sausage sizzle BBQ**  
hosted by the  
Leeton Rainbow Pride Collective

**Lions Train**  
(from 4pm)

**Australia Day**  
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

**LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL**

**AUSTRALIA DAY**

## LAMINGTON EATING CONTEST

*At the* **Leeton Pool Party**  
**4pm & 6pm**  
**FREE to enter**  
**Prizes on offer**



**Australia Day**  
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

**LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Sunday 26 January 2025** in Mountford Park

**7.30am - 9am** **Australia Day BBQ Breakfast** hosted by Rotary Club of Leeton with Leeton Town Band on stage

**9.15am** **Official ceremony** with Ambassador Robina Beard OAM followed by a bush tucker lunch

**3pm - 7.30pm** **POOL PARTY**  
at Leeton Regional Aquatic Centre

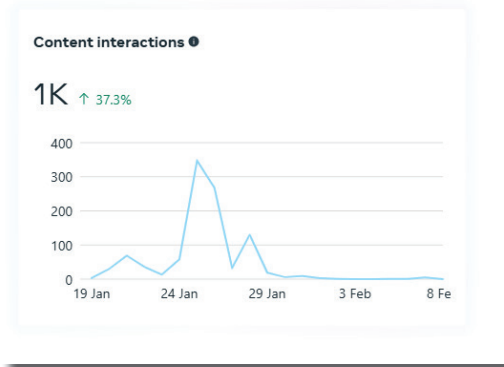
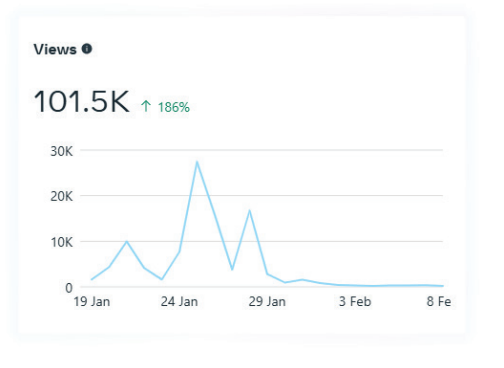
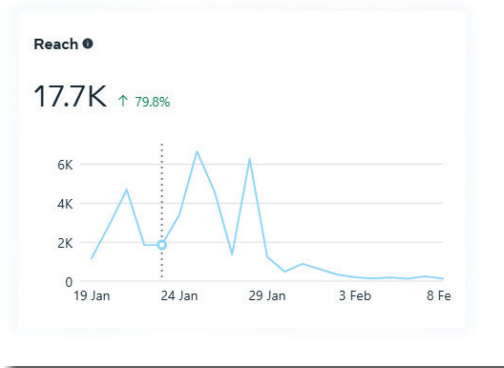
**FREE POOL ENTRY 3pm-close**

- fun games & activities
- Lions Train

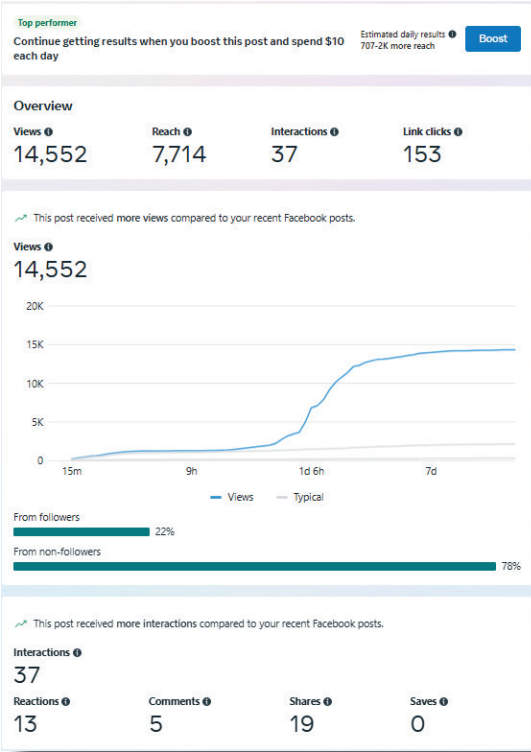


# PROMOTION

Promotion of the  
official proceedings  
by *The Irrigator*



Promotion of the  
official proceedings  
by *The Irrigator*



**Feed preview**

Visit Leeton  
Published by Leigh Houghton  
20 January

**POOL PARTY EXTRAVAGANZA THIS AUSTRALIA DAY**  
Cool off, kick back, and celebrate Australia Day at the Leeton Pool with an afternoon full of fun for the whole family.  
Here's what's in store: ... See more

**Sun, 26 Jan**  
**Australia Day Pool Party**  
Leeton Regional Aquatic Centre  
2 went · 12 interested

**Boost**

[View Post on Facebook](#)



## Entertainer Robina Beard heads our way

**AUSTRALIA DAY  
AMBASSADOR**  
BY CAI HOLROYD  
Leeton

ENTERTAINER and advocate Robina Beard OAM has been announced as Leeton's Australia Day ambassador for 2025, sharing her experiences and wisdom from a decades-long career in entertainment.

Ms Beard is perhaps best known as the witty 'Madge the Manicurist' from a famed Palmolive commercial which ran for two decades - but her roles go far beyond that.

After starting her career in the 1950s with a theatre company, Ms Beard has performed as a dancer, actress and choreographer and appeared on classic soaps such as Number 96, G.P. and Home and Away.

Behind the scenes, Ms Beard has directed and choreographed plenty of theatre productions and become known for acting as a mentor and educator for younger performers. Her contributions to dance education include involvement with NAISDA.

After decades in the arts

“Ms Beard has been a former NSW Seniors Festival Ambassador, and to this day, runs exercise and tap-dancing classes for seniors.

and performance and being awarded an OAM in 2011, Ms Beard wrote her memoir 'My Life - You're Soaking in It' recounting her journey and chronicling her love for the arts.

Ms Beard has been a former NSW Seniors Festival Ambassador, and to this day, runs exercise and tap-dancing classes for seniors.

Her next role will be as Leeton's Australia Day ambassador, and Ms Beard promises to bring her enthusiasm and love for community to the shire.



Robina Beard has been announced as Leeton's Australia Day ambassador. Picture supplied



# OFFICIAL CEREMONY INCLUDING CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Community breakfast hosted by Rotary Club of Leeton  
with performance by Leeton Town Band prior to ceremony

19 Leeton citizens naturalised – conferees from New Zealand, Ireland,  
Afghanistan, Fiji, Samoa and the Philippines took the pledge of citizenship

Address by 2025 Leeton Australia Day Ambassador Robina Beard OAM

Approximately 140 people in attendance<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> data collected by nCounters installed at Mountford Park.



# AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Nominations opened on 6 November 2024, closing 8 January 2025.

28 nominations received and assessed by an independent and anonymous panel of judges.



## 2025 AWARD WINNERS

2025 Junior Sportsperson of the Year:

Ava Gilmore

2025 Young Achiever of the Year:

Airlie Chilko

2025 Young Citizen of the Year:

Ruby Miller

2025 Group of the Year:

Leeton Jumpstart

2025 Organisation of the Year:

Yanco CWA

2025 Sportsperson of the Year:

Scott Brindley

2025 Lifelong Citizen of the Shire:

Leo Watts

2025 Achiever of the Year:

Margaret Sands OAM

2025 Citizen of the Year:

Alanna Rolfe



**NEWS**  
Australia Day Award Recipients



All Leeton Australia Day 2025 award recipients in front of the stage in Mountford Park following the morning's proceedings on Sunday, January 26. Picture by Allan Wilson



Alannah Rolfe (third from left) Leeton Shire's 2025 Citizen of the Year, with Murray MP Helen Dalton, Robina Beard OAM and Leeton Mayor George Weston.



Murray MP Helen Dalton, Lifelong Citizen of the Shire Leo Watts, Robina Beard OAM and Leeton Mayor George Weston. Pictures by Allan Wilson



Murray MP Helen Dalton, Margaret Sands OAM, Leeton Mayor George Weston and Robina Beard OAM. Pictures by Allan Wilson

## Community in their hearts

BY ALLAN WILSON

ALANNA Rolfe is Leeton Shire's 2025 Citizen of the Year. Ms Rolfe received the honour at the Leeton Australia Day Awards event at Mountford Park on Sunday, January 26.

Celebrated for her enthusiasm, creativity, reliability, and selflessness, she was honoured for her decades of contributions to the Leeton community since coming to the MIA.

Her involvement spans numerous organisations, including as President of the Parkview Public School P&C and Chairperson of the Leeton Uniting Church Council, and Pieces and Patches Group. Her passion for education has shone through in her decades as a Food Technology and Textiles teacher at Yanco Agricultural High School, where she initiated innovative programs.

Ms Rolfe has also been pivotal in spearheading the construction of the Uniting Church Family Centre and upgrading the Arts and Crafts Pavilion at the Leeton Showground. At the event, she credited her husband, Peter, as her greatest supporter and thanked the community.

Numerous other Leeton leaders were also honoured as recipients at the park amid perfect conditions on the morning. Well-known local historian and community member Margaret Sands OAM was named Leeton's 2025 Achiever of the Year.

Her 30 years of dedication to the Roxy Theatre through restoration efforts, historical research, writing, and serving as the longest-serving chairwoman of the Roxy Community Theatre Management Committee are traits that led to her recognition. Her passion for the performing arts saw her deeply involved with the Leeton Elstidod Society and the Theatre Organ Society of Australia, hosting events, supporting young performers, and mentoring countless individuals.

Lifelong Citizen of the Shire went to Australia's first Indigenous Australian Ambulance officer Leo Watts. Joining the NSW Ambulance Service in 1968, he was later appointed as Regional Aboriginal Liaison Officer, teaching vital first aid skills to remote communities across the state. A founding member of the Leeton Rescue Squad in 1974, Leo also trained countless individuals in life-saving techniques, many that are still used today.

He continues to give back by supporting retired ambulance officers, volunteering at the NSW Ambulance Museum, and visiting elderly residents. Leeton Jumpstart was named Group of the Year while Organisation of the Year went to Yanco CWA. Ailie Chalko was named Young Achiever of the Year and Ruby Miller was named Young Citizen of the Year.

## Achievements on and off the field rewarded



Ruby Miller (second from left) congratulated by Member for Farrar, Helen Dalton, Leeton Mayor George Weston and Australia Day Ambassador Robina Beard OAM after receiving the Young Citizen of the Year. Picture by Allan Wilson

## SPORT

# Leeton's sporting stars recognised



Ailie Chalko, Ava Gilmour and Scott Brindley were among the sports stars from Leeton recognised on Australia Day. Picture by Allan Wilson

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BY ALLAN WILSON

THE top achievements from the sporting stars of Leeton were recognised at the Australia Day Awards held at Mountford Park. The Young Sportsperson of the Year went to Ava Gilmour whose achievements span multiple sports and reflect her dedication to excellence, community, and sportsmanship. A standout at Leeton High School, Ava broke a 22-year-old record in the 1500m, set a new 3000m record, and earned titles as Swimming, Athletics, and Cross Country Champion. She was recognised as the Astill Family Most Outstanding Female Athlete as a Year 7 student - a rare accomplishment. Ava's talents extend to regional and state levels, where she excelled in athletics and contributed to her premier-ship-winning U13s League Tag team. Beyond sports, Ava volunteers as a referee, supports community initiatives like the 24-hour Mental/Physical Challenge, and contributes to local events through the Leeton Elstidod Society. "I was surprised that I had won; I was sure that it would be someone else," Ava said. "It feels so special and I'm shocked but very proud and

grateful. It's very important for me because it inspires me to continue my sporting pursuits." Meanwhile, Scott Brindley came away with the Sportsman of the Year. Scott is an accomplished long-range target rifle marksman whose dedication to the sport has seen him excel at state, national, and international levels. In 2024, Scott represented Australia at the World Championships in South Africa, winning a Silver Medal in the Individual Veterans World Championships and leading the Australian team to Gold as Team Manager in the Veterans Teams World Championships. He also claimed victory in the prestigious Kings Prize after a nail-biting shoot-off and achieved back-to-back wins in the 900m Bistley Trophy shoot. As the current Riverina Champion, Scott continues to inspire others by mentoring young shooters, coaching juniors, and promoting safety in the sport. Beyond his competitive achievements, Scott contributes significantly through leadership roles, including Captain of the Explorers Rifle Club and Secretary of the Riverina District Rifle Association and Narrandera and District Pistol Club. "I Story continues Page 15

has represented Australia in Deaf Football, earning international caps and winning medals at the Australian and Pacific Oceania Deaf Games, including gold in Mixed Football and Women's Football. At state and regional levels, Ruby broke records in swimming and competed in athletics, cross country, and squash. Her resilience as a deaf athlete inspires her peers, particularly those with disabilities, to push boundaries and pursue excellence. Academically, Ruby ranked in the top four across all her subjects, earning 1st place in Business Studies and 3rd in English.

She has been elected School Prefect for 2025, while also serving as Sports Vice Captain, SRC Vice President, and a member of the Leeton Shire Youth Council. "It's an absolute honour. It shows how much hard work I've put in and that if I keep going I can conquer anything. So it's great fuel to drive me forward," Ruby said.

I'm aiming for the Deaflympics in Japan in November which I'm very excited for this year and I feel confident of doing well. I think what it shows is that just because you are in the country, doesn't mean you are limited in what you can achieve."

Coverage of the official proceedings by The Irrigator



# LEETON POOL PARTY

Free pool entry from 3pm to 7.30pm

Entertainment: Lions Train, inflatables, glitter tattoos and roving characters

Strong participation in the Lamington and pie eating competition

Leeton Rainbow Pride sausage sizzle

– sold 85 sausage sandwiches and 16 drinks each at \$2.

Approximately 600 people in attendance<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> data collected by Camlytics counter on the side gate entry point between the hours of 3pm to 8pm.





## OTHER AFTERNOON EVENTS

**Whitton Pool Party:** A simple event offering family-friendly activities.

**Yanco All Servicemen's Club:** hosted an afternoon of entertainment, live music, and social activities for the Yanco community which has great engagement from residents.

**Free Movie at Roxy Theatre:** Provided a family-friendly indoor alternative to outdoor celebrations. Well-attended, particularly by young families.



# BUDGET BREAKDOWN

## FUNDING



**Australia Day**  
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.



**LEETON**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

### NATIONAL AUSTRALIA DAY COUNCIL COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

Base Grant for inclusive events	\$10,000.00
Additional events promoting recognition for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander peoples	\$5,000.00

COUNCIL FUNDING	\$8,000.00
	<b>\$23,000.00</b>

## EXPENDITURE

### OFFICIAL CEREMONY

Community Breakfast catering (Rotary & Murrumbidgee CWA)	\$1,635.00
AV Production	\$1,200.00
Infrastructure hire	\$786.36
Set up (outdoor staff wages)	\$1,494.19
Decorations	\$792.00
Award certificates	\$48.73

### *Cultural Elements*

Welcome to Country	\$400.00
Cultural Dance Group coordination	\$500.00
Smoking ceremony	\$600.00
Artefact display	\$1,500.00
Bush tucker lunch	\$5,000.00

### AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Accommodation	\$320.00
Gift	\$118.00
Official dinner (Thursday & Friday)	\$771.95

### CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Citizen gifts	\$299.50
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### POOL PARTY

Entertainment (Lions Train, inflatables, roving character & glitter tattoos)	\$1,223.18
Vouchers for prizes	\$120.00
Staffing (pool staff)	\$1,912.36

### MOVIE SCREENING

Licencing	\$300.00
Staffing (Roxy staff)	\$527.23

### ADVERTISING & MARKETING (Newspaper & Social Media)

PHOTOGRAPHY	\$733.63
	\$800.00

**\$20,286.17**

## PROFIT/LOSS

**\$2,713.83**



# EVENT FEEDBACK

## Demographics & Attendance Motivation

Majority of feedback came from 35–44 year-olds, with additional responses from 18–24, 45–54, and 65+ age groups.

- Main reasons for attending:
  - Award presentations (especially seeing winners and nominees)
  - Supporting the community
  - Citizenship ceremony participation.
  - Promoting cultural diversity

## Positive Aspects

- Weather was frequently noted as a positive factor.
- Many praised the event as well-run and well-orchestrated.
- The inclusive and friendly atmosphere was appreciated.
- Personal moments, such as a family reunion for a new citizen, were highlights for attendees.

## Areas for Improvement

- Event Timing & Venue:
  - Multiple comments suggested moving the main ceremony to an evening event at the Roxy Theatre due to the intense daytime heat.
  - Concern that attendees sit too far back in the park to find shade, which diminishes the atmosphere.
- Awards Selection Process:
  - Some attendees expressed confusion and disappointment regarding judging criteria for awards.
  - Requests for greater transparency in how award winners are selected
- Cultural Representation & Entertainment:
  - Welcome to Country felt repetitive and could be more meaningful.
  - Suggestions to include Indigenous games and more interactive cultural activities.
  - Desire for more entertainment, especially from local schools and musicians.





# EVENT FEEDBACK

## Perceived Importance & Relevance of Australia Day Events

- 50% of respondents felt the event was somewhat or mostly important to the community, while a smaller portion questioned its significance.
- Majority (66% respondents) believed Australia Day celebrations need to evolve, while others were content with the current format.

## Ambassador & Award Ceremony Feedback

- Mixed views and commentary on the importance of the Australia Day Ambassador visit – some seeing it as valuable, while others found it unnecessary.
- Recognition of diverse community heroes was seen as somewhat effective, but improvements in selection transparency were suggested.

## Key Takeaways for Future Planning

1. Consider shifting the main ceremony to an evening event at the Roxy Theatre to avoid extreme heat and improve atmosphere.
2. Improve education around the awards selection process, possibly through clearer criteria and public nominations feedback.
3. Enhance cultural representation, particularly through a more engaging Welcome to Country and the inclusion of Indigenous games or activities.
4. Expand entertainment offerings, including live performances from schools and musicians.
5. Assess involvement the Australia Day Ambassador program, as opinions on its value are divided.

This feedback provides valuable insights to refine future Australia Day events, ensuring they remain relevant, engaging, and meaningful for the entire community.





# EVENT FEEDBACK

## Committee Recommendations:

### *Recommendations for Future Events*

#### Challenges & Areas for Improvement

- Optimise use of remaining grant funds for cultural and inclusion initiatives in future Australia Day events
- Seek early confirmation of grant eligibility and criteria to ensure full utilisation of funds
- Maintain cost-effective infrastructure and staffing strategies to keep event expenses within budget

#### Seating & Infrastructure:

- Seating can be better distributed between the food and viewing areas

#### Cultural & Community Engagement:

- Indigenous food offerings required stronger promotion and better integration into the event program

#### Awards & Nominations:

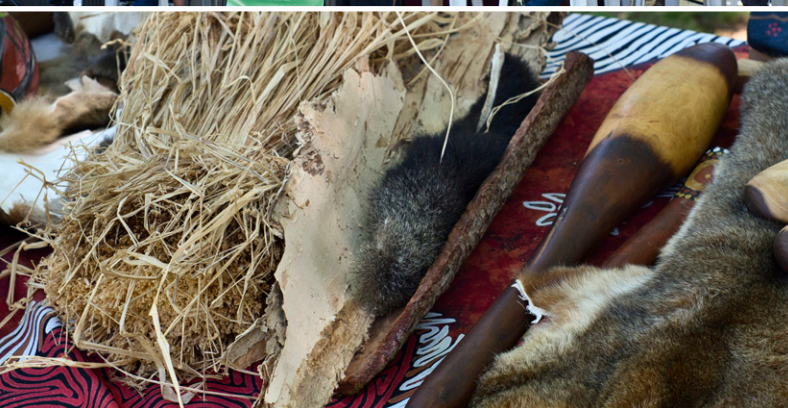
- Encourage sporting clubs to nominate more individuals for Sportsperson and Young Sportsperson of the Year
- Consider introducing a Volunteer of the Year category

#### Logistics & Planning:

- Clearly define roles for official guests and politicians to prevent confusion
- Marquee setup at pool should be scheduled earlier to avoid delays
- Two dedicated event staff for the day

#### Marketing & Promotion:

- Increase poster placements in shop windows
- Introduce QR codes at venues for real-time event feedback





# AUSTRALIA DAY COMMITTEE

Thank you to all who assisted in the coordination  
of Leeton Shire Council's Australia Day celebrations.

Particular acknowledgement goes to:

**Cr George Weston**

Chair of the Australia Day Committee  
and MC of the Official Ceremony

**Cr Michael Kidd & Cr Sandra Nardi**

Coordination of the independant judging panel for award nominations  
Coordination of activities at the Leeton Pool Party

**Mr Glenn Preston** – MC of the Official ceremony

## **Council staff**

Leigh Houghton, Daniel Boerma & Fran Macdonald – Events team

Terry Schmidt – Communications

Josh Eurell, Caleb Millar, Rob Freer – Outdoor staff

Eloise Crelley, Hayley Graham, Dennis Irvine, Shane Leighton, Angus Crelley

Sophie Cross, Blake Kelly, Madeline Irvin, Rachael Lashbrook – Aquatic Centre staff

Matt Gatt, Cythia Arel, Tim Coulter – Roxy Theatre staff



Photos: Neil McAliece; NDM Photography