

# THE PROWL





# CEO MESSAGE

**Richard Irving**

Dear Wildcats Community,

As we near the conclusion of basketball for 2025 and head into the festive season, I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone across the Wildcats community for your support during 2025.

I also want to thank the hundreds of volunteers we have across our community in various roles – we cannot run the Club without your hard work and dedication.

As we move into the festive season, it is important that as a community we think about and check in on those who will be doing it tough over this period.

It is with mixed emotions that I let you know that Paula Hogan is stepping away from overseeing our Domestic program. Paula has committed a significant amount of energy and time to building our Domestic program, which is the envy of other Clubs. Our Domestic program has grown year after year, which is a testament to Paula's dedication in guiding the Club through the complexities of managing more than 380 domestic teams. Paula has been able to do this whilst balancing a full-time job and family commitments, which is a sacrifice that has often gone unnoticed. On behalf of the Wildcats community, I want to thank Paula for everything she has given to our Domestic program. Paula will continue to coach but hopefully will now have some more time to spend with her growing family. Paula will help the Club transition from the Summer competition to the Winter competition over the next month.

We have little rest from basketball, with preparations well and truly commenced for the 2026 Eltham Dandenong Junior Basketball Tournament (EDJBT). Team registrations have exceeded last year with 1,853 teams already registered. As we get closer to the 2026 EDJBT, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge Alicia Vengust who has made the difficult decision to step away from being directly involved in the EDJBT for 2026 due to work commitments. We are forever indebted to Alicia for her significant commitment to the EDJBT behind the scenes for several years. Alicia has left a successful legacy, which will ensure that the EDJBT continues to grow and be the landmark tournament for basketball clubs in Australia and around the world.

Congratulations to our Unified teams who represented Australia at 3x3 world championships earlier this month. Our women's team played in the bronze medal game and finished 4th. Our men's team played the gold medal game and finished 2nd. Well done to everyone involved, you should be proud of this magnificent achievement.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have thoughts or ideas for how we can better support our community.

Thanks,  
Richard

# OFFICE CLOSURE NOTICE

Just a reminder to all Wildcats that the Eltham Wildcats Office will be closed from 11:00 am Friday 19th December, and will reopen on Monday 12th January at 9:30 am.

During this period, our team will be taking a well-earned break and will not be available via email or phone.

We'll be ready to return refreshed and focused, finishing preparations for the biggest junior basketball tournament in the world and kicking off 2026 as the most successful year in Wildcats history.

We wish you a happy and safe New Year, and we can't wait to see you all back on the courts next season!

## ALL TRAINING AND GAMES NOTICE

As the year comes to a close, please find below the final training and game dates for EDJBA, VJBL, and Beginner Programs.

### EDJBA:

Last Game: 13th December 2025  
Last Training: 11th December 2025  
Games Start: 31st January 2026  
Training Starts: 27th January 2026

### VJBL:

Last Game: 12th December 2025  
Last Training: 11th December 2025  
Games Start: 30th January 2026  
Training Starts: 27th January 2026

### Beginners Program:

Last Session: 13th December 2025  
Games Start: 9th February 2026

Early next year, we will send out a form to teams competing in the tournament to organise training sessions leading up to the event.

# THE PROWL

## Nicola Reid

Hi Wildcats!

We're excited to share an important update about The Prowl.

This is our final edition for the year, and from next year we will be transitioning to a quarterly release schedule that aligns with school terms. Alongside this change, The Prowl will also receive a refreshed look and updated columns. The next Prowl will be released at the start of May.

Each edition will now include updates on our strategic pillars, a coaching column, property advice, a finance section, partnership benefits for our general members, and more.

Our aim is to deliver a higher-quality Prowl - focusing on value rather than volume.

Is there anything else you'd like to see included?

We'd love to hear your ideas! Please send your suggestions to Nicola at [business@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:business@elthamwildcats.net.au)

Your feedback is always appreciated and helps us enhance your experience as a valued member of the Wildcats community.

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED 3X3 BASKETBALL WORLD CUP

## Naomi Symington

On December 2nd our very own Eltham Wildcats Unified 3x3 Australian team set off to compete in the World Cup in Puerto Rico. There was a wonderful send-off at the airport and pride and anticipation were high.

Unfortunately, airline mistakes and delays meant that our trip took 55 hours, including 6 different flights. As coaches we couldn't believe the resilience and positivity of our entire team. Thankfully we arrived in San Juan, Puerto Rico just hours before the opening ceremony and we were able to meet teams from all over the world. Friendships were made instantly and we were welcomed into the fold of the international movement of Special Olympics.


Our Men's team were represented by our athletes Zac Stevens, Aiden Har-netty-King, Spencer O'Neill who were supported by our partners Dash Cottier and Lachy Broadbent. Coaches: Naomi Symington and Josh O'Neill

Our Women's team were represented by our athletes Brianna Killen, Manahil Merchant and Jordan McCormick who were supported by our partners Mar-ley Pascoe and Chloe Symington. Coaches: Helen Killen and Kylie McCor-mick.

We had three exciting days of competition, for Team Australia these games were our first 3x3 Unified matches. Other countries had made their way through district, state and national championships to earn their place. We are so proud that Eltham Wildcats will be the catalyst for growth of Unified programs and competitions throughout Australia.

The event was a FIBA standard event, we had the same commentators, ref-erees, courts, accommodation and hype as the FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualifying Tournament held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2024.

We witnessed gracious losses, exciting one-point victories, bouncing back from meltdowns, increased understanding of 3x3 plays and wonderful inclu-sion both on and off the court. Our Women's team had a strong pool perfor-mance resulting in a division 2 finals series. They finished 4th in division 2 which placed them 8th in the World Cup standings. Our Men's team qualified in division 4 for finals but had an exciting medal series of matches resulting in a silver medal finish.



Throughout the series the officials were observing games to see which athletes and partners demonstrated the true Unified spirit both on and off the court. At the closing ceremony event the prestigious MVP award was presented to our very own partner Lachy Broadbent. His leadership, effort to include all athletes on the court and to support the opposition both on and off the court were just some of the reasons for his win. As an Eltham Wildcat junior and former rep athlete this has been a highlight of his basketball career.

Our team all saved for and paid for their own 3-day pass to Disneyland, which was a well-deserved finish to an intense World Cup series. The opportunity to socialize with peers was a highlight, so many laughs were shared and the 'Incredicoaster' rollercoaster, the most challenging ride at Disneyland, was conquered by many of our team members who thought they would not go on any rides. Basketball is about so much more than what happens on the court. We would like to thank the Wildcats community for their support to help get our team to Puerto Rico, you have changed the lives of everyone who was part of the World Cup and you have also changed the future of Unified sport in Australia, thank you.

If you are inspired to become part of the Unified family please come along to our game nights each Wednesday in the school term, returning on the first Wednesday of Term 1 at Eltham High School from 6.45pm – 8.15pm.







# BEGINNER PROGRAM

## Taya Lupton

Our Eltham Wildcats Beginners Programs have finished up for the year! Thank you to all of our coaches for their hard work and dedication. We are starting to plan for 2026 and will have the registrations for Term 1 out prior to the holiday season break.

If you would like to expression your interest in Term 1, 2026, please fill out the form below.  
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/ElthamWildcats/BeginnersProgramsExpressionOfInter>

If you have any additional questions, please contact Taya at [Juniordev@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:Juniordev@elthamwildcats.net.au)

## MINI CUBS (FORMERLY KINDER CLUB)

**We're excited to announce that our Kinder Club program has now been renamed Mini Cubs!**

We received feedback from many parents who found the previous name confusing during registration, and we hope this change will make the process clearer and the program's purpose easier to understand.

Eltham Wildcats Mini Cubs is a fun and engaging introductory basketball program designed specifically for children aged 3–4 years old. Mini Cubs is the first step in our developmental pathway, helping young players build confidence while learning the foundations of the sport.

Through our 30-minute sessions, children will:

- Learn the core basics of basketball
- Develop coordination and gross motor skills
- Build early teamwork skills
- Enjoy a supportive, inclusive environment suited to all abilities

Once players turn 5 years old, they can progress to our Ford Aussie Hoops Cub Squad, continuing their journey through our development programs.



# EDJBT UPDATE

## 2026 EDJBT Venue Administrators

Are you looking for some extra cash?

Eltham Dandenong Junior Basketball Tournament preparation is well underway. This year EDJBT will run from 3:00pm Friday January 23rd until 5:00pm Monday January 26th.

If you are interested in being a venue supervisor, please fill out the following availability form.

EDJBT Venue Administrator

For those who are 16 or under, or who are new to venue supervision, there may be limited shifts available but we absolutely welcome you to submit your availability and we will do our best to roster you alongside our senior staff where the roster permits.

For those wondering, we will be using venues all across Metropolitan Victoria, out to Craigieburn, Kilsyth, Ringwood and Mill Park and everything in between.

If you know anyone else that may be interested in being involved in EDJBT 2026, please feel free to pass this email onto them and encourage them to reach out with any questions.

If the availability you specify in this form changes, please re-fill out the form and use the UPDATE function. If any changes occur after December 18th, please also email Taya at [juniordev@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:juniordev@elthamwildcats.net.au).

## 2026 EDJBT Photographer EOI

Want to capture the action at the 2026 tournament? We're looking for photographers for both the Dandenong and Eltham locations.

Fill out the form to let us know your availability, pricing, preferred locations, and more. We'll be in touch early next year once venues are finalised. Don't miss the chance to be part of our biggest event yet!

Photographer EOI

**NEW RECORD NUMBER OF TEAMS**  
BIGGEST TOURNAMENT **1853** TEAMS REGISTERED



# SENIOR PROGRAM

With recent announcements rolling out, you will have seen that we have now locked in our Big V Youth Men and Big V Youth Women teams. Both teams are brimming with young talent that we can't wait to continue developing as they step up to the next level. We're excited to welcome new players as well as some familiar faces returning to the program.

Our NBL1 Women's roster is fully locked in, featuring strong returning talent, promising young development players progressing from our Big V and U18 teams, and several exciting new import players.

Our NBL1 Men's roster is close to finalised, with returning athletes, emerging development players from our Big V team, and some dynamic new players joining the group.



# WEBSITE UPDATE

**Nicola Reid**

We're putting the finishing touches on the aesthetic features while the development continues behind the scenes.

Here are some exciting features you can expect:

- A Membership Hub with all the information you need about each program in one convenient place.
- A Partnership Directory showcasing our club partners and the exclusive benefits available to general members.
- A streamlined, minimalist, and modern design.
- An improved, easier user experience and much more!

We can't wait for you to explore it. Currently, we're aiming for a launch in February, just in time for the new EDJBA season.



# JUNIOR DOMESTIC REPORT

## Paula Hogan

Summer 2025/26 season grading has concluded, and teams have commenced the remaining rounds of the season.

For the summer season we have seen a slight increase in team numbers to 349 teams with some on waiting lists due to late requests. The number of teams is wonderful to see and many new coaches volunteering cannot go unnoticed.

Reminder to all participants in sport – The Codes of Conduct list the expected behaviour in basketball by administrators, coaches, officials, players, parents and spectators.

To view the BV Codes click [here](#)

To view the EDJBA picture of RESPECT click [here](#)

### Fill In Players on game day

This continues to be a problem each week. We receive a report weekly from the EDJBA advising of illegal fill in players which can result in a reversing of the final game result – please ensure that fill in players fall into the eligible category.

See the EDJBA table of eligible categories

Team Requiring Fill-in (U08 – U21)	Fill-in from Same Age Group	Fill-in From Younger Age Group
A	B, C or D	A, B, C or D
B	C or D	A, B, C or D
C	D	B, C or D
D	None	C or D

### Reminder – do not contact the EDJBA directly

Club members are not permitted to contact the EDJBA directly via email or telephone at any time during the season. Any contact with the EDJBA will be referred back to you to contact the club representatives. All information and requests must come via the club representatives.

Please forward your queries to [teamsupport@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:teamsupport@elthamwildcats.net.au) or [competitions@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:competitions@elthamwildcats.net.au) or [juniordomestic@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:juniordomestic@elthamwildcats.net.au)

## Thank you

I would like to thank my wonderful team of volunteer age group convenors, coordinators and committee:- the team - April Anderson, Lucinda Boca, Alistair Clark, Matt Evans, Cate Forbes, Cherie Hazelman, David Hickman, Breanna Hogan, Paula Hogan, Amy Jarmuz, Primrose Letcher, Anna Lewis, Jamie McNamee, Lara Masters, Tom O'Connor, Daniela Parisella, Isabelle Read, Katrina Read, Michael Stephens, and Matt Taylor.

Without these dedicated people the massive work of selections and behind the scenes organisation of the 349 teams would be a difficult challenge but each member goes above and beyond in their assistance to helping junior players enjoy the game.

Wishing everyone a safe and relaxing break and look forward to seeing many faces at the Eltham Dandenong tournament and then back on court for round 10 at the end of January. Safe break to all.



# Celebrating 25 Years of Creating Confident Smiles



CELEBRATING *25* years  
EST. 2000

**L&M**  
ORTHODO

# UNIFORM SHOP

As mentioned in earlier communications, the Uniform Store has now transitioned to reduced opening hours. The store will remain closed until January 2026, when we shift to a model of one weekend opening per month, along with additional opening times at the start of each EDJBA and VJBL season.

## **January 2026 Opening Dates:**

Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 January: 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

This is a great opportunity to pick up uniforms ahead of the upcoming tournament, or to replace any items for players who may have had a growth spurt over the holidays!

## **February 2026 Opening Dates:**

Friday 13 February — 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Saturday 14 February — 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

If you require a uniform outside these times, please contact Albi at [uniforms@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:uniforms@elthamwildcats.net.au)

A reminder that the Uniform store is located at Eltham High Schools Basketball Stadium (30-60 Withers Way, Eltham VIC 3095).

We will reach out early next year with updated March opening hours. Please note that we will have special opening hours for the start of the EDJBA season and may add a second monthly opening depending on demand.

All Merchandise is now available on our online store accesable via the three options below.

How to Access the Wildcats Online Store:

1. Via our website: Click the “Wildcat Store” button on our homepage to be directed straight to the iAthletic store.
2. Via iAthletic Website: Find us under the IA Clubs section (Scroll to the bottom of the webpage and click on our logo).
3. Direct link: Click the button below.

[Visit our Merchandise store.](#)



**ELTHAM FEMALE NETWORK**  
**Nicola Reid**

---

---

Welcome to the Eltham Female Network!

We're excited to introduce a new initiative aimed at supporting the females involved in our club and creating a strong community of support and resources.

This is still in the very early stages of development, but we've begun by establishing a WhatsApp community comprising women from different areas of the club.

With endless possibilities ahead, we're starting slowly and will continue to build the Eltham Female Network year after year.

To get things underway, we have created a WhatsApp group to maintain open communication, share suggestions, and begin advancing some of our ideas.

We have also established a VJBL Female Coaching Community where coaches can share resources and support one another.

Early priorities over the coming months include:

**Member engagement:** Sending communications to our members to understand what they'd like to see from the club and what support or opportunities would be most valuable for our female participants.

**Community Q&A session:** Hosting a discussion with prominent women in the community to share their experiences and explore ways to better support our younger female members.

**Mentorship opportunities:** Developing a framework to connect senior women at the club with younger female participants to provide mentorship and leadership support.

**Connection and networking:** Identifying ways to foster stronger connections and networking among our female members.

We'd love to hear from you! Are you a female involved with the club? Are you a female player / coach /referee with ideas? Do you have questions? Are you interested in getting involved in refereeing, coaching, or administration support at the Eltham Wildcats office? Or do you have suggestions on what would be beneficial to you? Please fill out the Cognito form so we can consider your ideas and explore how to bring them to life.

This is an exciting step for the Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club, and we can't wait to see how the Network evolves.

If you would like to be involved in the organisation as a business partner or as an organiser, please contact Nicola at [business@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:business@elthamwildcats.net.au)

[Submit your ideas here!](#)



**Number:** (03) 9439 2749

**Address:** 1/38 Bridge St,  
Eltham VIC 3095

**Opening Hours:**

Mon - Fri: 9am to 5pm

*With summer approaching contact the cooling experts Air Fusion*

# CHAMPIONSHIP REPORT

## David Hickman

We previously welcomed Caitlin Bryan, Luke Hughes, and David Quinn, who have taken on the responsibility of head coaches for their respective girls' and boys' age groups. We now take the opportunity to warmly welcome additional head coaches to their roles: Charly & Sienna Bandera, Penny Kafkalakis, Adam Todorov, Brett Whittingham, Jake Barille, Aaron Taylor, Alex Hayes, Kirstin Corless, David Gosling, Peter Colson, James Draper, Justyn Hazelman, Simon Chard, and Michael Naffa.

### GRADING

VJBL grading is a gradual, detailed process due to the format of four teams competing over three weeks. It's important that everyone involved avoids overreacting to early results, as the strength of pools at each age and rank level can vary significantly. By the time you read this, the first phase of grading will be complete, and the next focus will be participation in our own tournament.

# Season's Greetings

From the team at Jellis Craig North East

Wishing the entire Eltham Wildcats community a joyful festive season and a safe, happy New Year!

We look forward to working together again in 2026, and assisting you with all your real estate needs.

Eltham **9431 1222** | Greensborough **9432 1444** | Hurstbridge **9718 2222**  
Ivanhoe **9499 7992** | Rosanna **9459 8111**

## JellisCraig



LOCAL AS YOU LIKE IT.

# Make it a summer of savings with 15% off for the Wildcats community

Book our modern, serviced apartments - located adjacent to DFO Uni Hill, eateries and the scenic Plenty Gorge Parklands - and enjoy 15% off with the code 'WILDCATS25' until 1st February 2026. Book online at [questbundoora.com.au](http://questbundoora.com.au) or by calling 03 8306 0600.

\*Subject to availability. Terms & conditions apply.

  
**QUEST**  
APARTMENT HOTELS

# OFFICIATING UPDATE

## Pat Zerna

I had the pleasure of attending the TOC AGM last weekend, where our bench officials was formally recognised for their ongoing excellence and professionalism. This acknowledgment reflects the hard work, dedication, and continual development shown by our officials courtside every week.

We also extend our congratulations to our neighbours at Diamond Valley and Darebin, who received well-deserved awards for the strength of their officiating programs and the contributions of their administrators. It's fantastic to see the broader community continuing to thrive and elevate standards across the region.

### Referees

We are proud to share that our U18 representation now sits at 48% and our C-Grade representation at 69%. These figures demonstrate strong progress and confirm that we are well on track to meeting the commitments outlined in our strategic plan.

As we head into the finals series, we wish all teams the very best at the pointy end of the season. This week also sees our D-League Grand Finals take centre stage, congratulations to everyone involved in delivering another successful year.

A special shout-out to our dedicated team and the six visiting advisors who have supported us throughout the season, sharing their expertise and helping our officials continue to grow. Your contribution has made a meaningful impact and is truly appreciated.

# ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

We are reaching out for support from any architects or architectural students in our community who may be willing to assist us pro bono with preliminary concept drawings for a new stadium project we hope to develop.

We are seeking rough architectural sketches for a 10 Court stadium.

If you or someone you know is able to help, please contact Richard at [ceo@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:ceo@elthamwildcats.net.au)

Thank you for supporting the future of the Wildcats!

---

# JUNIOR PATHWAYS

## Mitch McCarron

Hello Wildcats Family!

I hope everybody is having an enjoyable end to the year as we head towards the holiday break. I wanted to use this opportunity as an update for the Junior Pathways Strategy implementation, and to give some insight on what our goals for 2026 and beyond are in this space. The three key concepts that the strategy is focused on are Athlete Skill Development, In-House Coach Development, and Parent Education & Conduct. I'll briefly expand on each of these concepts, and how we're planning on implementing these more consistently for the future.

### **Athlete Skill Development**

Athlete Skill Development is something that every junior sporting club should be focusing on, as it's an integral part of maximizing the athlete's experience. The challenge we face as EWBC is offering consistent opportunity for development due to the size of the club. One way that we try to offer development outside of individual teams is through academies, which is a great way to get more athletes in one place at one time. These not only serve as a place for athletes to get more repetitions with coaches, but also for coaches to continue working on their delivery and instruction for athletes outside of their teams.

### **What we're changing:**

We're beginning to challenge athletes more and more on understanding and replicating basketball concepts, as well as more advanced skills. Some of our academies were already doing this by reinforcing key actions that programs such as many NBL1, Youth League & VJBL teams utilize on offense and defense. The shift has been to begin introducing some of these same concepts and skills to athletes outside of these pathways, such as athletes in Futures Academy, Rep Prep & Junior Domestic Skills Academy. I personally believe that introducing slightly more advanced concepts, skills and techniques early in an athlete's development is crucial. We're often hesitant to introduce new things to young athletes because it's perceived as too advanced, and that it could lead to frustration and an overall negative result. In my experience, providing a challenge while removing the expectation of immediate success actually ends in enjoyment. When a young athlete is given the safe space and confidence to fail while learning, we're enabling them to get better. This is the overall goal for all programs and academies moving forward, but we'll be relying on our coaches to help drive this!

### **In-House Coach Development**

In-House Coach Development is something that we not only want, but need to provide within our club. We are extremely reliant on volunteer coaches in all of our pathways given the number of teams we have, including over 350 in the EDJBA alone. It's important we offer a development pathway for coaches much the same as players, as they're the ones who will be enhancing the juniors' experience on a weekly basis.

#### **What we're changing:**

We have increased our planning and focus around better supporting the coaches within the club, across all of the various pathways. We are intending on rolling out an online coaching network through our new website (once completed), that will provide a platform for coaches to communicate with each other for all things basketball. We're also intending on providing more access to coaching accreditation and education for all Wildcats coaches than ever before, but we'll provide a better update on this once it's locked in place!

#### **Parent Education & Conduct:**

Parent Education & Conduct is another area we are going to be focusing on in 2026, as the widespread impact on the athletes and coaches is a growing concern of ours. Everybody deserves a safe space to train and play the sport we love, and helping to educate parents on how to help support that is vital.

#### **What we're changing:**

We are reviewing our policies and procedures following the recent VJBL trials, as well as consulting our Integrity Commission on some consistent topics that may need to be addressed for the future. Our goal is help demonstrate to parents why certain behaviors are potentially damaging to not only their own child's performance and overall enjoyment, but also others in the team. Our goal is to have more education sessions from staff, coaches, as well as other industry professionals who may provide a better insight into the benefits of a supportive environment. We want EWBC to be a place that members love to come and play basketball, but we all play a part in ensuring that remains so.

I hope everybody has a fun holiday period with family and friends, and I'm looking forward to seeing everybody again at our annual Eltham Dandenong Junior Basketball Tournament in January 2026!



**mazda**  
**PRESTON**  
**MAZDA**

A Max Kirwan  
family business

P: 03 9480 3555  
120 Bell St, Preston VIC 3072

[maxkirwan.com.au](http://maxkirwan.com.au)

# SPORTFIRST

FIRST FOR SPORT

## ELTHAM SPORTS STORE



**20 Arthur Street ELTHAM** 



# LIFE MEMBERS

Hello to our Life Members,

We kindly ask that you complete the form below if you have not already done so, either for yourself as a Life Member or, if you are a family member of a Life Member, on their behalf.

We are working to collate all the updated contact details together so we can stay better connected.

If your loved one has sadly passed away, we would deeply appreciate it if you could let us know by emailing Nicola at [business@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:business@elthamwildcats.net.au)

Thank you for helping us keep our records up to date and for being such an important part of our community.

[Click here to fill out the form](#)



# PROUD TO SUPPORT ELTHAM WILDCATS

**LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED**

INTRODUCING THE  
OWNERS OF ELTHAM  
**NATHAN  
& STEVE**



**ELTHAM**

7 BRISBANE STREET, ELTHAM, 3095

☎ (03) 8457 5000

✉ [sales.eltham@totaltools.com.au](mailto:sales.eltham@totaltools.com.au)

Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club Incorporated  
27 Simms Road Montmorency VIC 3094  
[www.elthamwildcats.com.au](http://www.elthamwildcats.com.au)