

**News in brief**

**CFA brigades stop fire in lounge room**

A GLENROWAN teenager had a scare when a fire started in the lounge room of a Kelly Street home on Wednesday.

Country Fire Authority's District 23 operations officer, Paul Horton, said three trucks attended the fire at about 12.30pm and while everyone was evacuated safely, television and entertainment equipment were damaged.

"The exact cause is yet to be determined," he said.

**Voters want buffer**

THE idea of giving cyclists a one-metre buffer while passing on the road has won the support of voters in the Wangaratta Chronicle webpoll.

The poll finished with 130 voters (77 per cent) in favor of a new law, with 39 people (23 per cent) opposed.

This week's question at wangarattachronicle.com.au is: would a bigger Lake Buffalo solve Wangaratta's water security issues?

**Motorcyclists to hit roads to raise awareness of depression**



**READY TO RIDE:** Jim Redmond is calling on others to join him for the Black Dog Ride on Sunday, March 23. PHOTO: Luke Plummer

By STEVEN BURKE

A POPULAR ride in aid of depression awareness and suicide prevention is coming to Wangaratta.

The Black Dog Ride has made its mark in other areas and will be held for the first time in the North East on March 23.

Motorcyclists will start their day at Wangaratta Airport, with a breakfast supplied by the Lions Club of Wangaratta, before making their way up to Lake Hume.

Wangaratta's Jim Redmond is organising the ride, which will be held in conjunction with 29 other rides across Australia involving thousands of riders.

He said it was great to be able to raise awareness of depression.

"The closest rides to here were in Wagga and Bendigo so I wanted to have something in the North East," Mr Redmond said.

"I don't know of too many people who haven't had contact with someone with depression.

"The ride allows you to have fun while doing something worthwhile.

Riders are encouraged to register at blackdogride.com.au.

All proceeds will go towards Lifeline.

**Ambos vote on work bans**

**Possible action over EBA stall with state**

WANGARATTA paramedics will consider 22 work bans in an effort to secure better wages and conditions.



BY STEVE KELLY  
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Ambulance officers across the state are today commencing a three week process seeking to up the ante to break an 18 month long impasse with the State Government over a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

The Australian Electoral Commission will run the statewide ballot for all paramedics to vote from March 3-14.

Fair Work Australia approved the second Protected Action Ballot last week, with bans ranging from administrative to work stoppages.

A lot of the proposed action involves communications staff, who will perform bans on taking sick leave calls and after hours calls on vehicle issues.

Staff will also not take or log external complaints, but rather refer customers to general numbers or the Ambulance Victoria website.

And they will not undertake training in, or

use of, any new software, technology, processes and procedures if the bans are adopted.

The action is part of enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations that have been ongoing for 18 months.

Ambulance Employees Australia (AEA) secretary Steve McGhie said a major concern is the government's proposed trade off of conditions for a wage increase.

Negotiations stalled earlier this month when Ambulance Victoria offered an up front six per cent pay rise, followed by two lots of three per cent rises, totalling 12 per cent over the life of the EBA.

A \$1500 sign-up payment was also put on the table.

However, the AEA initially set out to achieve a 30 per cent increase while keeping conditions intact.



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