

Eltham Newsletter

Eltham Business & Professional Association

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Honoring a Legacy: Ian Murray Retires After 55 Years with the Eltham Fire Brigade

After an incredible 55 years of service, Senior Firefighter Ian Murray has officially retired from the Eltham Volunteer Fire Brigade, marking the end of a remarkable chapter in Eltham's history. His retirement not only celebrates his dedication and commitment but also closes a family legacy that has seen Murray serving in the brigade for 122 years.

A Journey That Began at 18

Ian's firefighting career started in 1969 when he was just 18 years old. In those days, shops didn't open on weekends, and many young men spent their free time playing cricket, football, or hockey. For Ian, joining the brigade seemed like a natural path—it was in his blood. His father and grandfather had served before him, and he figured he'd give it a try.

"I thought if I didn't like it, I could just pull the pin after two years. But somehow, those two years turned into 55," Ian recalled with a smile.

Commitment Beyond the Call of Duty

Ian's commitment to the brigade went far beyond responding to emergency calls. In addition to fighting fires, he competed in Taranaki firefighting competitions,

which ran from Labour Weekend to February. "That meant three nights a week plus Sunday mornings—on top of normal callouts," he said.

One of the most challenging fires Ian remembers was fighting underground peat fires, which could burn for days beneath the surface. "You'd put water down in one spot, and then the fire would pop up behind you. It would burn the roots underground—it was a tough one," he explained.

Ian experienced both rewarding and difficult moments throughout his years of service. He always gave 110%, but some calls were harder to move on from than others. "However, the next call comes, and you pick yourself up and go again."

Firefighting Then and Now: The Evolution of the Job

Over the decades, Ian has seen firefighting change dramatically. When he started, equipment was basic—hoses leaked, and after every fire, they had to be dried and rolled manually. Now, modern hoses are lightweight and more efficient.

Technology has revolutionised the job as well. Ian mentioned that gas detectors, heat sensors, personal torches, and advanced breathing apparatus have all made firefighting safer and more effective. iPads are now installed in fire trucks, helping firefighters quickly locate water sources.





"Back in the day, we had none of that. Now, even the uniforms and gloves are designed for better heat protection," he said. "We used to have just one torch on the truck—now every firefighter has their own. Even the breathing gear is lighter and safer."

A Mentor to Many

As one of the brigade's most experienced firefighters, Ian took pride in mentoring new recruits. His advice to young firefighters?

"The first few years are tough. You miss family time, and the training is intense, but once you get through that, you see the real purpose behind it," he said. "Every fire, every callout is different—you learn as you go. And once you get the groundings for it, you start to see that it's more than just a job—it's about being part of the community."

Serving the Community with Heart

For Ian, firefighting was never about personal recognition. "You don't do it for the payment. You do it because it helps the community," he shared. Looking back, he doesn't count the hours he spent responding to emergencies—he counts the people he has helped.

His dedication was evident in the way his fellow firefighters looked after him, too. "One night, I was working late and missed practice. The guys rang me up, just checking in, making sure I was okay. That's the kind of support we have here."

Even outside the brigade, Ian loves the small-town community spirit of Eltham. He could have moved away, like some of his schoolmates, but he chose to stay. "It's a good place to live. There's a good bunch of people at the station, and if you ever need help, someone's always there."




Retirement: A New Chapter

With his pager now silent, Ian is adjusting to a new reality—one where he doesn't have to drop everything at the sound of a siren.

For decades, he was always aware of who was in town, making sure there was enough cover at the station in case a call came through. Now, that responsibility is no longer on his shoulders. It's a big shift, but also a newfound sense of freedom.

"Someone told me, 'When one door closes, another one opens.' I just don't know what that door is yet."

While he figures out his next steps, one thing is certain—Eltham will always be home.  video coming soon

A Safer Path for Our Seniors: Lions Club Community Project



Rest home residents watching volunteers doing the job

The Lions Club has once again demonstrated its dedication to community service by transforming the outdoor space at Eltham Care Rest Home. This heartfelt project reimagined an uneven and unsafe pathway into a safe, inviting walkway and sitting area, ensuring residents can now enjoy the outdoors with comfort and peace of mind.

The project began with preparation work two days before the main construction. Volunteers worked hard to dig out the old, uneven pathway, lay the groundwork, and prepare the area for concrete. On the final day, the team came together to spread and smooth the concrete,



completing the transformation with precision and care.

A True Community Effort

This project was brought to life by the hard work and dedication of local volunteers: Ray Smith, David Tunner, Alan Jamieson, Ray Lawrence, and Joycelyn Carter.

Their teamwork and passion made it possible to turn a challenging space into a beautiful, accessible area for residents. From preparing the site to pouring and spreading the concrete, their commitment to the project was unwavering.

A Space to Thrive

Residents now have a tranquil place to sit, socialize, and take in the breathtaking views, fostering physical activity, social connection, and overall wellbeing. Joycelyn Carter, one of the key volunteers, reflected on the project: "Every time I see a smile on someone's face, it feels so rewarding. It's such a good feeling to help people and know you're making a difference in their lives."

Looking Ahead: Reviving a Hidden Gem

The Lions Club is already planning its next community project—restoring Eltham's iconic Toys Wall. Originally created in the 1970s, this hidden gem has brought joy to generations but has fallen into disrepair over the years.





"The toys are all ready, and we're excited to redo the wall and bring back a bit of nostalgia for the community," Joycelyn shared.

A Heartfelt Thank You

This project is a shining example of what happens when communities come together. As the whakataukī (Māori proverb) reminds us:

"Nā to rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi."
"With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive."

The Lions Club extends its gratitude to Firth Concrete Hawera for their generous contribution and to the Eltham Care Rest Home for their partnership in this meaningful initiative. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected community.  

Barber x Barber: Fresh Cuts, New Beginnings in Eltham

Eltham just got a fresh new look—literally! Sora, the friendly and talented barber behind Barber x Barber, opened his doors on Saturday, January 25th, at 38 Bridge Street. For Sora, this wasn't just a new chapter in his career; it was the realization of a long-time dream to run his own barber shop.

Two years ago, Sora and his family made the big move from Wellington to Taranaki, looking for a quieter, more community-focused lifestyle. After a brief stint in Inglewood, they found their perfect home in Eltham. "We always loved the idea of being part of a close-knit community," Sora shared. "You walk down the road here, and people smile and say hi. It's a great place to raise our daughter."

Sora's journey to opening Barber x Barber was inspired by his passion for family and a desire to create a meaningful work-life balance. "When you want that family lifestyle, working for someone else in this industry can be tough. We decided to take a bit of a calculated risk and make it happen."



The shop's name, Barber x Barber, has a fun backstory. Sora, a fan of anime, drew inspiration from the popular series Hunter x Hunter. "I thought it was a cool way to make the name stand out—and, of course, it lets people know exactly what we do!"

But there's more than just great haircuts. "The haircut's almost a byproduct of the experience," Sora explained. "I want people to feel like this is a space where they can relax, have a great chat, and connect. For me, it's all about building relationships and meeting people. That's the best part of the job."

Whether stopping by for a haircut or just to say hello, Sora's shop has quickly become a friendly spot in the heart of Eltham. It's a place where people can feel welcome, enjoy a chat, and leave looking sharp. The community spirit is alive and well at Barber x Barber.



Sora Sewambar shared his story



Hatha Yoga Classes Coming to Eltham

Eltham locals will soon have the chance to explore a new community activity, with Hatha Yoga classes set to begin at the Eltham Golf Club starting February 25, 2025.

The classes will be led by Tracy Mace, founder of Tadasana Taranaki, who recently completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training course in Hatha and Vinyasa yoga after practicing for over 30 years. Originally from Auckland, Tracy moved to Eltham with her partner Paul two and a half years ago in search of a lifestyle change. Since settling in, she has embraced the rural way of life—growing her own food, raising animals, and immersing herself in the community.



Tracy Mace

"I realised after moving here that there were no local yoga classes, and I continued practicing at home. But I soon felt the need to take it further and deepen my knowledge, which led me to complete my teacher training," says Tracy. "Now I'm ready to share what I've learned."


Hatha Yoga is a gentle and accessible practice, making it ideal for beginners while still offering benefits for those with experience. The style focuses on holding poses for longer periods, mindful breathing, and developing strength, balance, and flexibility.

"There has already been a huge response from the community, with lots of people expressing interest," Tracy shares. "I'm hoping to create an enjoyable and accessible class that meets people where they are, regardless of experience."

The Eltham Golf Club has welcomed the new class, offering a spacious and peaceful setting for practice. Tracy believes the space will be perfect for creating a calm and grounding atmosphere, with plenty of room for those keen to give yoga a try.

The weekly class will be held on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 PM to 6:45 PM, with a \$15 drop-in fee. Participants are encouraged to bring their own yoga mat, but Tracy will have spare mats available for those who need one.



Articles marked with  have videos available on our YouTube channel. Watch them here: <https://www.youtube.com/@ElthamBusinessAssociation>



Wash O Laundromat Sells Business to La Nuova

Eltham's laundromat landscape has shifted, with Wash O Laundromat selling its business to La Nuova. This change leaves La Nuova as the sole laundromat operating in town, continuing to serve the community's laundry needs.

The owners of Wash O initially opened their first laundromat in Hawera in December 2023 and later expanded to Eltham, seeing an opportunity to provide more laundry services locally. With increasing competition in the region—another laundromat opening soon in Stratford and the possibility of a 3rd in Hawera—they made the decision to step away from the industry.

With their primary business in dairy farming requiring their attention, the sale of both locations to La Nuova was a practical move. While not the outcome they originally envisioned, the decision allows them to focus on their core work while ensuring the community still has access to reliable laundromat services.

We reached out to La Nuova for any comments or updates regarding their plans,



but as of the publishing date, we have not received a response.

The former Wash O laundromat space is now available for rent, and the owners are looking for potential tenants. If anyone is interested, they are encouraged to reach out directly to discuss opportunities for the space.

The efforts of the Wash o team in bringing additional services to Eltham are appreciated, and we wish them all the best as they continue with their farming business.

Eltham School Reunion 2025 – 150 Attendees Expected!

Excitement is building as around 150 former students prepare to return to Eltham for the 2025 School Reunion on February 15-16. This event, held every five years, is an opportunity for past schoolmates to reconnect, reminisce, and celebrate their shared history in the town.



1986 reunion small group

The People Behind the Reunion

Ian Baxter - the organiser, he first took on the challenge of organizing the reunion in 2020.

“This reunion is about reconnecting and celebrating Eltham,” Ian shares. “We’ve designed Saturday so people visit the town, walk through the shops, and support local businesses. I hope shops take advantage of this opportunity.”

At the same time as Ian Baxter is running the reunion, Errol O'Byrne took the opportunity to run a series of raffles with 24 local businesses donating prizes. Errol said "the raffle isn't just about fun—it's about giving back to the community," "All proceeds from ticket sales will support local charities."

“A big thank you to all the businesses who supported us—it's been amazing to see the generosity of the community.”



How the Community Can Get Involved

With a big crowd expected on Saturday morning, shops are encouraged to be open to welcome visitors, attract foot traffic, and boost sales. In 2020, businesses that stayed open saw a huge increase in sales—let's make this year even better!

Saturday Market at Touchpoint Carpark

Home businesses, craft makers, and anyone interested are welcome to set up a stall and be part of the event. Let's bring the community together and showcase what Eltham has to offer!

What's Next? – Reunion Highlights Coming Soon!

The next newsletter will feature:

- Photos & stories from the reunion weekend
- Interviews with attendees sharing their memories
- Reflections on Eltham's past & present

If you're attending, we'd love to hear your stories! Email us at elthambizassn@gmail.com to share your experience.

See you all at the reunion on February 15-16!

Discover Unique Art at the Creative Clearance Exhibition!

This exhibition is all about making art more accessible to the community while supporting local artists. With a reduced commission rate, participating artists have priced their works lower than usual, which means you'll find a fantastic selection of paintings, photographs, handmade crafts, and more—all at reduced prices. Whether you're looking for a standout piece for your home or a unique gift, there's something here for everyone.

Why Visit the Creative Clearance Exhibition?

- **Affordable Art:** With prices starting under \$20 for small items, it's easier than ever to bring home something beautiful without stretching your budget.
- **Support Local Artists:** Every purchase helps sustain and encourage the talented artists in our community.
- **Ever-Changing Display:** The 'Cash and Carry' format means as pieces sell, new works may take their place, so multiple visits are worth it!

Make sure to stop by, explore the stunning pieces on offer, and take advantage of this limited-time opportunity to buy original, local artwork at discounted prices. Don't miss out on this celebration of creativity and community!



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