

More cars go to blazes

Marnie Reid

ARSONISTS have stolen up to six cars and then torched them in the hills.

The latest theft was last Sunday when thieves stole two vehicles, dumped them in Macclesfield and then set them alight.

It took the Macclesfield Fire Brigade 20 minutes to get the fires under control.

This has prompted warnings from the Macclesfield Fire Brigade and Belgrave police, who are urging

residents to lock their cars before they lose them.

Macclesfield Fire Brigade captain Sharon Merritt said the fire brigade was called out to Swales and Macclesfield roads last Sunday about 4.20am. She said when firefighters arrived, no one was there and it appeared the cars had been stolen, dumped and set alight.

This was the fourth car torching the fire brigade had attended within a month. The other burning cars were in Cockatoo.

Ms Merritt said that prior to this

arson spree, the last car torching was two years ago.

Sen-Sgt Tracey Leitch, of the Belgrave police, said the number of stolen cars set alight had increased significantly.

And she warned if it continued it would be extremely dangerous in the tinder-dry conditions in the hills over summer.

Sen-Sgt Leitch said vandals torched stolen cars for a number of reasons, including destroying evidence and the thrill of setting fire to something.



Up to six cars have been stolen and then set alight in the hills recently.

BRIEFLY

Funds for safer roads

BELGRAVE and Lysterfield roads are getting multi-million-dollar safety upgrades. State Government funding will see Burwood Highway from Wattle Ave to Reynolds Lane in Belgrave get safety improvements of \$83,000. And \$2.6 million will go on much-needed traffic signals at the Wellington and Lysterfield roads intersection in Lysterfield. A further \$2.5 million will go towards safety improvements on Wellington Rd between Napoleon and Lysterfield roads. Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas delivered the funding when he visited Lysterfield last week. Construction should start this financial year.

Watch on bird feeding

RESEARCHERS are checking the health of native birds in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. Queensland University researcher Michelle Plant is studying the health and feeding behaviour of wild birds at different feeding sites – including looking at what birds are fed by people or get their food themselves. Research to help guide new policies continues until Saturday and results will be available in 2009.

Keen on green

GREEN is now the "new black" across a multitude of industries, including fashion, automotive and even newspapers. To celebrate the new way of life, news.com.au is hosting the first annual Green Awards. Tell us about someone you know who has created a unique way of living to help the environment. Or, if you think your town as a whole is kicking goals towards a sustainable future, tell us about it. Entries close August 15 at 5pm. Go to news.com.au/greenawards.

Friendlier toilets

MONBULK'S new environmentally friendly public toilets are now open for business. The toilet building is made of recycled materials, features timed taps and lights, and a rainwater tank to collect water for flushing. Yarra Ranges councillor Graham Warren said they were designed to be environmentally and family friendly, and included a larger cubicle for those with small children. The toilets are one of many upgraded as part of the shire's public toilet strategy, and they are located next to the police station at 50-56 Main Rd, Monbulk.



Flashback to when the Federal Government pulled out of a funding agreement for the Burrinja redevelopment project. Cr Noel Cliff and Ross Farnell are shown with the axe man swinging his axe over the redevelopment model. Picture: STEVE TANNER N47FP113

Curtain lifts with federal \$2m on stage for theatre

THE Federal Government has put \$2 million back on the table for the proposed redevelopment at Burrinja Cultural Centre.

Now all the development needs is the Shire of Yarra Ranges Council to give the planning permit the tick of approval at its August 12 meeting.

The centre's funding through the Regional Partnerships program

was cut in May through a red tape glitch.

A contract for the money was not signed, despite it having been already promised by the previous Federal Government.

This prompted a huge campaign from hills residents who wanted the funding reinstated.

Regional Development Minister Anthony Albanese said the Gov-

ernment had signed a \$2,001,957 contract with the shire council for the Burrinja master development – and this would be honoured.

The proposed \$9.6 million project will be a three-way partnership: the shire will put in \$4.6 million and the State Government another \$3 million.

Burrinja president Paul O'Halloran said everyone at

Burrinja was thrilled and thanked hundreds of residents who wrote to the minister or who supported the Theatre "AXED" campaign in other ways.

Yarra Ranges councillor Noel Cliff welcomed the funding, saying the council had fought hard to have the Federal Government funding reinstated.

More good funding news, Page 4

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