

From the Committee

Still in lockdown, however the weather is improving with a warm start to spring. We can only hope that the opportunity to get out and enjoy each others company comes with it. It is a long time since everything has been so green and hopefully the forecast wetter spring will keep it that way and reduce our fire risk.

The opportunity to hold our AGM in September looks remote but maybe October is a possibility. Everything is subject to Covid of course.

Thunderstorm Asthma

We have been asked by Dept of Health to distribute the following message.

During grass pollen season (1 October–31 December) people may notice an increase in asthma and hay fever. Grass pollen season also brings the chance of [thunderstorm asthma](#).

Thunderstorm asthma is thought to be triggered by a unique combination of high amounts of grass pollen in the air and a certain type of thunderstorm.

For people with asthma or hay fever, especially those who experience wheezing or coughing with

their hay fever, thunderstorm asthma can be sudden, serious and even life threatening.

The symptoms of [asthma](#), [hay fever](#) and [COVID-19](#) can be similar, and it can be difficult to tell the difference between them. If you are experiencing symptoms different to your usual asthma and hay fever symptoms, they have restarted after a period of absence or if you are unsure – get tested for COVID-19 and stay home until you get your results.

The epidemic thunderstorm asthma risk forecast will be issued throughout the grass pollen season from 1 October to 31 December. You can access the risk forecast via the [VicEmergency website](#) or app, the [Health.Vic website](#) or the [Melbourne Pollen website](#) or app. To receive up-to-date epidemic thunderstorm asthma advice and warnings during the season, access the [VicEmergency website](#) or app and consider setting up a ‘watch zone’ for your area.

Thank you for your assistance in promoting thunderstorm asthma health messages. Working together, we can continue to improve the health of all Victorians during the grass pollen season.



“They took away his library card when they found out he was a bookkeeper.”



“They won’t come near me since I gave them some of my wife’s homemade cake.”

CRESWICK HISTORY

Miss Elizabeth Northcott, 1911-2006



When you walk down the main street and see Miss Northcott's garden do you wonder who she was? The following citation from the Creswick Historical Society Roll of Honour will tell you.

For civic mindedness, few families would surpass the Northcott family, in their contribution to the substance of Creswick, since the 1870s. None the least was the last surviving member resident in the town, Miss Elizabeth Northcott.

Born on 29 December 1911, the second of William and Winifred Northcott's four children, Elizabeth grew up in Creswick and completed her education at Ballarat High School. She started work with, and later co-managed with her father, the family boot business in Albert Street, opposite the Town Hall. In 1935 she established a newsagency next door, now the Smokeytown Cafe. She also became the Registrar of Births and Deaths for Creswick which began her lifelong interest in historical research.

She inherited a sense of responsibility from the example set by Grandpa Northcott and his wife Leah. Willingly, Elizabeth took up the reins and held them throughout her long life.

Living next door to the fire station in Albert Street, for thirty-two years she opened the fire station doors and disarmed the siren for the men, purely on a voluntary basis, enabling them to be on their way much faster.

For 50 years she served the Girl Guides movement, from being a Pack Leader in Creswick, to the

position of District Commissioner. So many young Creswick girls have benefitted from her leadership and guidance.

A lifetime was spent in the service of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Creswick, particularly on the Blind Auxiliary.

Elizabeth was also one of the forces behind setting up the Meals on Wheels delivery system in Creswick.

A myriad of other activities received her attention and service. She was a foundation member of the Museum Committee of Management on which she served for 35 years. She was a foundation

member of the Creswick and District Historical Society, which she served for 30 years, giving willingly of her time to researching and answering people's queries. Elizabeth was the original compiler of the '100 Years Ago' column in the Creswick and District News.

She was recognized by the old Shire of Creswick in 1980 and 1986 for her citizenship and in the Shire of Hepburn in 2005, when a standing ovation acknowledged her dedication to Creswick.

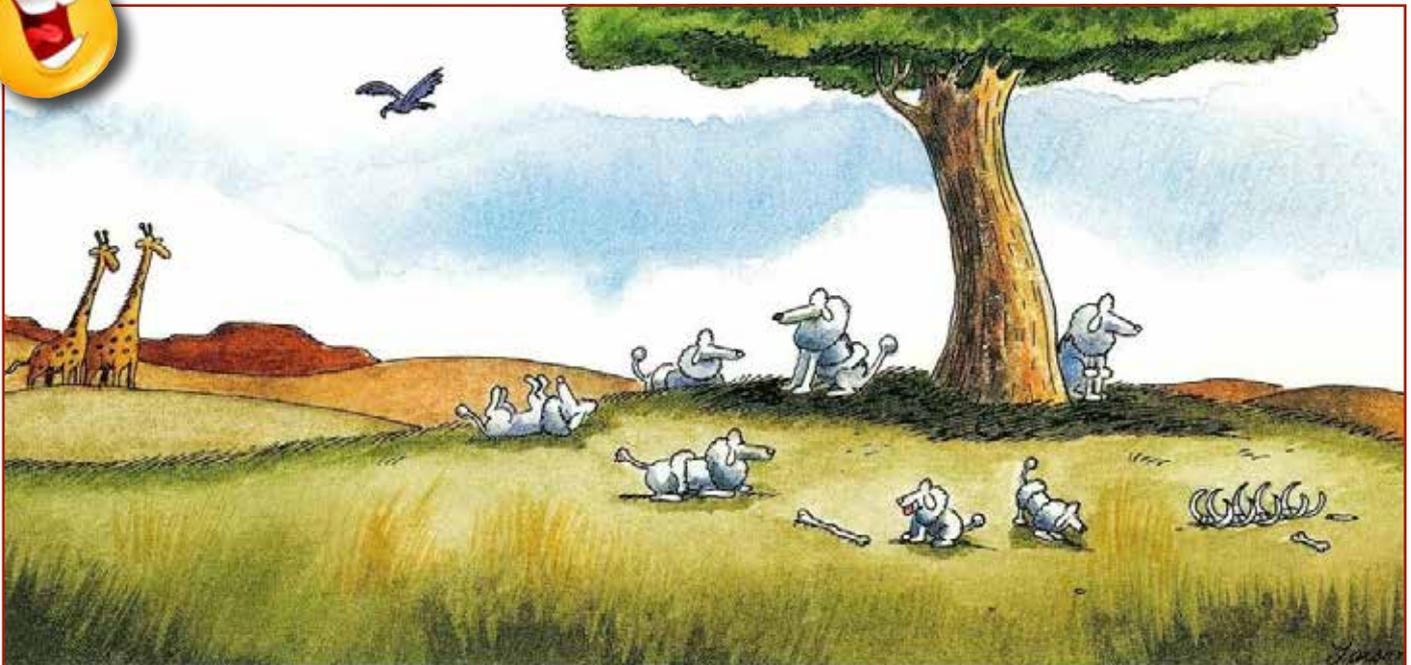
The list leaves one breathless, and these were just the avenues of her energy within the town. There were outside interests and work

places too, but it was to Creswick that her heart and passion belonged. She truly gave a lifetime of service to the town and truly did the town benefit from that service.

Her wish for herself was that she would be remembered as a "cheerful person who enjoyed making friends and helping others, wherever possible", and that she certainly did.

Elizabeth Northcott died on 19 December, 2006, aged almost 95, and as a highly valued Creswickian, takes her well-deserved place on the Honour Roll.





Poodles of the Serengeti

You don't have to be Einstein...



Einstein is scheduled to speak at an important science conference. On the way there, he tells his driver who happens to look a bit like him: "I'm sick of all these conferences. I always say the same things over and over!"

The driver agrees: "You're right. As your driver, I attended all of them, and even though I don't know anything about science, I could give the talk in your place."

"That's a great idea!" says Einstein. "Let's switch places then!"

So they switch clothes and as soon as they arrive, the driver dressed as Einstein goes onstage and starts giving the usual speech, while the real Einstein, dressed as the car driver, attends it.

But in the crowd, there is one scientist who wants to impress everyone and thinks of a very difficult question to ask Einstein, hoping he won't be able to respond. So this guy stands up and interrupts the conference by posing his very difficult question. The entire room is silent, with the audience holding their breath, waiting for the response.

The driver looks at him, dead in the eye, and says: "Sir, your question is so easy that I'm going to let my driver answer it for me."

Is Google making it harder to find what you're looking for?

Mohiuddin Ahmed, Edith Cowan University and Paul Haskell-Dowland, Edith Cowan University

Over the past 25 years, the name 'Google' has become synonymous with the idea of searching for anything online. In much the same way 'to Hoover' means to use a vacuum cleaner, dictionaries have recognised "to Google" as meaning to undertake an online search using any available service.

Former competitors such as [AltaVista](#) and [AskJeeves](#) are long dead, and existing alternatives such as Bing and DuckDuckGo currently pose little threat to Google's dominance. But shifting our web searching habits to a single supplier has significant risks.

Google also dominates in the web browser market (almost two-thirds of browsers are Chrome) and web advertising (Google Ads has an estimated 29 per cent share of all digital advertising in 2021). This combination of browser, search and advertising has drawn considerable interest from competition and antitrust regulators around the world.

Leaving aside the commercial interests, is Google actually delivering when we Google? Are the search results (which clearly influence the content we consume) giving us the answers we want? →

Advertising giant

More than 80 per cent of Alphabet's revenue comes from Google advertising. At the same time, around 85 per cent of the world's search engine activity goes through Google. Clearly there is significant commercial advantage in selling advertising while at the same time controlling the results of most web searches undertaken around the globe. This can be seen clearly in search results. Studies have shown internet users are less and less prepared to scroll down the page or spend less time on content below the 'fold' (the limit of content on your screen). This makes the space at the top of the search results more and more valuable. In the example below, you might have to scroll three screens down before you find actual search results rather than paid promotions. In a simple Google search (for 'buy shoes'), you have to scroll a long way to find the results.

While Google (and indeed many users) might argue that the results are still helpful and save time, it's clear the design of the page and the prominence given to paid adverts will influence behaviour. All of this is reinforced by the use of a [pay-per-click](#) advertising model that is founded on enticing users to click on adverts.

Annoyance

Google's influence expands beyond web search results. More than two billion people use the Google-owned YouTube each month (just counting logged-in users), and it is often considered the number one platform for online advertising.

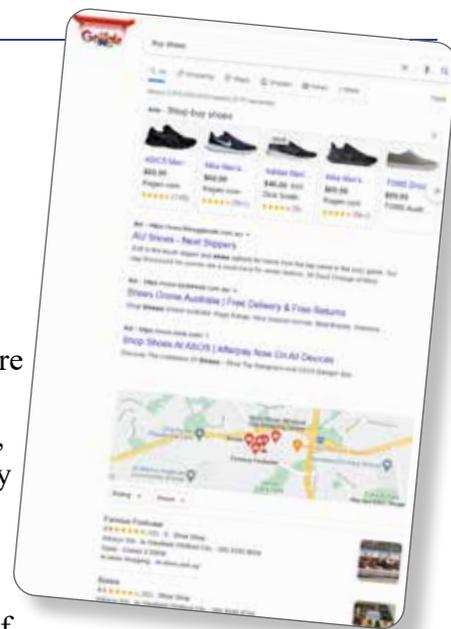
Although YouTube is as ubiquitous to video-sharing as Google is to search, YouTube users have an option to avoid ads: paying for a premium subscription. However, only a minuscule fraction of users take the paid option.

Evolving needs

The complexity (and expectations) of search engines has increased over their lifetime, in line with our dependence on technology.

For example, someone trying to explore a tourist destination may be tempted to search "What should I do to visit the Simpsons Gap". The Google search result will show a number of results, but from the user perspective the information is distributed across multiple sites. To obtain the desired information users need to visit a number of websites.

Google is working on bringing this information together. The search engine now uses sophisticated 'natural language processing' software called [BERT](#), developed in 2018, that tries to identify the intention behind a search, rather than simply searching strings of text. AskJeeves tried something similar in 1997, but the technology is now more advanced.



BERT will soon be succeeded by MUM ([Multitask Unified Model](#)), which tries to go a step further and understand the context of a search and provide more refined answers. Google claims MUM may be 1000 times more powerful than BERT, and be able to provide the kind of advice a human expert might for questions without a direct answer.

Are we now locked into Google?

Given the market share and influence Google has in our daily lives, it might seem impossible to think of alternatives. However, Google is not the only show in town. Microsoft's Bing search engine has a modest level of popularity although it will struggle to escape the Microsoft brand.

Another option that claims to be free from ads and ensure user privacy, [DuckDuckGo](#), has seen a growing level of interest – perhaps helped through association with the [TOR browser project](#). While Google may be dominating with its search engine service, it also covers artificial intelligence, healthcare, autonomous vehicles, cloud computing services, computing devices and a plethora of home automation devices. Even if we can move away from Google's grasp in our web browsing activities, there is a whole new range of future challenges for consumers on the horizon.

Editors Note. *Alphabet is the parent company of Google. On January 16, 2020, Alphabet became the fourth US company to reach a \$1 trillion market value entering the trillion dollar companies club for the first time. As a matter of comparison the GDP of Australia in 2020 was \$1.330 trillion.*



Help!

The query...

Dear Tech Support,

Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed a distinct slowdown in overall system performance, particularly in the flower and jewellery applications, which operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0.

In addition, Husband 1.0 uninstalled many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.5 and Personal Attention 6.5, and then installed undesirable programs such as: NRL 5.0, AFL 3.0 and Golf Clubs 4.1. Conversation 8.0 no longer runs, and House cleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system.

Please note that I have tried running Nagging 5.3 to fix these problems, but to no avail.

What can I do?

Signed: Desperate



This is the response (that came weeks later out of the blue)...

Dear Desperate,

First keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an Entertainment Package, while Husband 1.0 is an operating system. Please enter command: I thought you loved me.html and try to download Tears 6.2. Do not forget to install the Guilt 3.0 update. If that application works as designed, Husband 1.0 should then automatically run the applications Jewellery 2.0 and Flowers 3.5. However, remember, overuse of the above application can cause Husband 1.0 to default to Grumpy Silence 2.5, Happy Hour 7.0, or Beer 6.1.

Please note that Beer 6.1 is a very bad program that will download Snoring Loudly Beta version.

Whatever you do, DO NOT, under any circumstances, install Mother-In-Law 1.0 as it runs a virus in the background that will eventually seize control of all your system resources. In addition, please do not attempt to re-install the Boyfriend 5.0 program. These are unsupported applications and will crash Husband 1.0.

In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly. You might consider buying additional software to improve memory and performance. We recommend Cooking 3.0.

Good Luck

Tech Support Team

Do you know what concessions are available to you?

National Seniors Australia has launched a free, simple to use online [concessions calculator](#) which takes the angst out of discovering exactly what you can apply for, and hopefully puts money in your pocket.

The online calculator allows you to tick which concession card you have - Seniors Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veterans' Affairs Concession Cards (PCC, Gold, White and CSHC) Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Health Care Card; then click on your state and view all the concession available to you.

To check out the concession calculator visit: nationalseniors.com.au/concessions-calculator