

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025

Community Bank Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell



(Photo Credits: The Regional Independent)

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH PURPOSE & PASSION

Our team member Helen had the privilege of attending the Country Women's Association (CWA) of NSW Queanbeyan Evening High Tea back in March, a truly inspiring afternoon raising funds for Love Your Sister. With Samuel Johnson OAM as the guest speaker, the event was filled with heartfelt stories, laughter, and a shared commitment to funding life-saving cancer research.

Helen shared her thoughts on the day:

"What an inspiring afternoon, a big congratulations to CWA NSW Evening Branch, on their amazing high tea and for giving us the opportunity to hear from Sam from Love your sister (LYS). Like most people in Australia I had an idea who Sam Johnson was and I knew some of his sisters Connie's story, living so close to Canberra.

In 2017 Bendigo Bank had been involved in the 5c piece challenge "Do it for Connie" where the Bank was a collection point for 5c pieces that could be donated to make the biggest silver love heart for Connie to raise funds. Thousands of people were involved and millions of 5c pieces were collected.

Everyone listening on Saturday afternoon couldn't help but be moved by Connie's journey and the devotion of Sam, we cried and we laughed. We felt inspired and proud and humbled for their bravery and the heroic difference they have both made that helps every Australian. I believe around \$30k was raised which is simply astounding.

If anyone has the opportunity please donate generous to LYS and if you should get cancer ask for precision treatment so get the right treatment from the get go regardless of your location, age, income or status.

The bank supported the event financially and also as a CWA NSW Majors Creek member I jumped at the chance to go. Thank you I feel privileged that I had the opportunity to represent our branches."

We proudly supported this event, and we are grateful to be part of a community that stands together for such an important cause.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As we embark on an exciting new chapter, I am excited to share with you the strategy that will guide Community Banks Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell from 2025 to 2028. Recently, our Board and staff came together to adopt a fresh strategy aimed at fostering growth, building strong community partnerships, and driving sustainable prosperity. Our purpose goes beyond everyday banking. We believe in harnessing the power of finance to create a stronger, more connected, and more prosperous community. Over the past 22 years, we have proudly reinvested \$9.6 million of our profits back into the local community, supporting schools, sporting clubs, art projects, and vital community initiatives. This impact is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. Looking ahead, our focus remains on growth—not just in numbers but in relationships. We want to deepen our partnerships with community groups and empower local projects that make a real difference. Our mission is clear: to be a sustainable, community-built business that contributes to the long-term prosperity of our region. As we approach budgeting season, we are also mindful of succession planning. With the announcement of our Community Company Manager's retirement at the end of this year, we are committed to ensuring a smooth transition that upholds our values and continues our legacy of community impact. To all our shareholders, partners, customers and staff—thank you for believing in our vision. Together, we are proving that banking can be a force for good. Let's keep building a better future, right here in our community.



Garry Cook, Chair

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Garry Cook (Chair)

Dale Towell (Dep. Chair)

Rhyll Tozer (Treasurer)

Shane Holness

Richard Elliott

Andrew Callan

Craig Hinder

Alex Rofe



COMMUNITY-OWNED. COMMUNITY-FOCUSED. COMMUNITY-POWERED.

BY SUSI PLUESS, COMPANY SECRETARY



(Photo Credit: Kathy Toirkens)

THE REAL GOLD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW? COMMUNITY.

Picture this: a small town where people know each other by name, where the local footy club is the heart of the weekend, and where a new café opening isn't just about coffee—it's about a dream coming to life. This is our community, and it's made up of people who care deeply about its future.

But here's something most people don't realize: the strength of a town isn't just in its people, it's in how it supports itself. And that's where Community Banks Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell come in. Unlike the big banks, we are **community-owned, community-focused, and community-powered.**

A Different Kind of Bank

Most banks take their profits and send them somewhere else. We do the opposite. Over the last 22 years, we have reinvested \$9.6 million straight back into our community—funding schools, local businesses, sports teams, and essential projects that keep our region thriving. But here's the real kicker: this only happens because of everyday people just like you, bank with us. That's right. Every home loan, every business account, every savings deposit fuels something bigger. You are not just banking—you are building.

Bank With Purpose

This is your chance to be part of something bigger. If you could make a real difference in your community just by choosing where you bank, why wouldn't you?

So, whether you are opening an account, securing a loan, or simply looking for a bank that truly cares, bank with purpose, bank with Community Banks Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell.

Because when you bank with us, you don't just keep your money local, you keep your community strong. **Community-owned. Community-focused. Community-powered.**

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NICK FRY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

People say there must be a reason that each morning we go to work. What motivates us to get out of bed, have a shower, breakfast and then head off to work? Surely work cannot be Ground Hog Day and do the same thing day after day after day.

I have been employed by Palerang Financial Services Ltd (Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell Community bank branches) for over 18 years and to be honest, not one day is ever completely the same. That statement, I'm certain, would resonate with all staff at the Community bank.

My current role of Community Engagement Manager (CEM) for our branches is one that brings me to work each day. The role, which was unique at the time the board of directors approached me some four years ago, is to promote the Community Bank model and how banking with your local Community Bank enables us to return funds back into the community. The directors took advantage of 2 vital ingredients for the role, firstly is my passion for the community and also witnessing first hand how successful our banking model has been in our communities.

My working days are always different, spread primarily between our Braidwood and Bungendore branches, depending on meetings. These meetings may include members of community groups, community and business leaders, different levels of governments ranging from local, state and federal, staff meetings, the list goes on. I am also sharing my knowledge with staff members from other branches who may be new to the role of CEM and look upon this as a mentor role.

Currently, my favourite word that I have been using is **“Partnerships”**. I feel that when any funding the Bank approves, we immediately form a partnership with that group. When we look further afield, our lives revolve around partnerships. It may be family, work colleagues, friendships, sporting and community groups. At the Community Bank, our partnerships are also vital. We have our customers front and centre and our partnership with Bendigo bank who we operate our banking licence under a Franchise Agreement. As you can see, my role and days are always interesting, never dull and one that I look forward to each and every day.



COMMUNITY GROUPS - APPLY FOR FUNDING ONLINE

Are you a local community group, club, or initiative in need of financial support? Our Community Funding is here to help! Whether you are planning a new project, hosting an event, or looking for sponsorship, we encourage you to apply for funding through our SmartyGrants online system.

How We Support the Community:

- **Grants:** Funding for specific community projects.
- **Sponsorships:** Support for events, projects, or organisations in exchange for brand recognition.
- **Scholarships:** Assistance for students pursuing further education.
- **Donations:** Financial support for community-driven initiatives.

Our investment in the community is made possible by the profits generated through our banking services at Community Banks Braidwood, Bungendore, and Crookwell.

How to Apply: Submit your application online via <https://palerangfsl.smartygrants.com.au/>. For more information, contact Nick Fry, Community Engagement Manager, at communityfunding@pfsfsl.com.au or call 02 4842 1700.



The Bank that works for you!

Banking convenience for you creates community support for all

\$9.6 million and counting!

OWN A PIECE OF YOUR COMMUNITY: BECOME A SHAREHOLDER

Have you ever considered investing in your local community while earning returns on your investment? Now is your chance! Shares in Palerang Financial Services Limited, the company behind Community Banks Braidwood, Bungendore and Crookwell are available for purchase.

As a shareholder, you are not just investing in a financial institution—you are investing in a business that reinvests its profits into local projects, community groups, and initiatives that strengthen our community. Our shareholders play a vital role in ensuring the sustainability and success of our local banking services.

Why Become a Shareholder?

- **Support Local Growth:** Your investment helps fund vital community initiatives and local businesses.
- **Earn Potential Returns:** Shareholders may receive dividends, subject to company performance and profit-sharing regulations.
- **Have a Say:** With our 'one shareholder, one vote' system, every shareholder has an equal voice in key decisions.
- **Long-Term Impact:** Help secure a strong future for banking services in Braidwood and surrounding districts.

How to Buy Shares

Palerang Financial Services Limited operates a Low Volume Market (LVM), allowing individuals to buy and sell shares directly. Current share availability includes parcels ranging from 750 to 3,000 shares, with prices starting at \$0.90 per share.

Investing in shares with us means more than just financial gain—it is about building a stronger, more prosperous community. Don't miss out on this opportunity to be part of something bigger.

Act now and become a shareholder today!

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A SHAREHOLDER?

If you are looking to support your community while investing locally, consider purchasing shares in **Palerang Financial Services Ltd.**

To register your interest or learn more, please contact us at admin@pfsl.com.au or visit this website: <https://www.bendigobank.com.au/branch/nsw/community-bank-braidwood-districts/lvm-shares>
By becoming a shareholder, you play a vital role in contributing to the prosperity of our community.

MEET OUR TEAM: DALE HUSKING

Business Development Manager, Bungendore Branch



This month, we are shining the spotlight on Dale, our Business Development Manager at the Bungendore Branch. With nearly four decades of experience in banking, Dale brings a wealth of knowledge, a passion for helping customers, and a commitment to community banking.

A Bit About Yourself

I started my career in banking with CBA back in 1986—39 years ago, which is hard to believe! That first job didn't last too long because it was summer, and I wanted to spend more time with my girlfriend... work was really cramping my style (back when I had some!). I eventually returned to banking in the winter and went on to spend 16 years with Westpac, finishing as a Business Banker before joining Bendigo Bank in 2002 as part of their newly established Business Banking Team in Canberra.

After 13 great years with Bendigo in various roles—mostly as a Business Banker, lending money to businesses—I left in 2015 after a back injury put me out of action for four months. I spent a few years in what I call 'banking wilderness' before running into Craig Pettit in Braidwood. He mentioned a potential role, and I was lucky enough to join the Community Bank Bungendore again in April 2021.

Why Bendigo?

*Bendigo's ethos has always resonated with me—**customer first, dollars second**. If we do the right thing by the customer, the dollars take care of themselves. Having spent years in Banking Industry, I've learned that the people who really pay the bills aren't the bank or even the employer—it's the customers. That's what drives me. I genuinely enjoy helping people achieve their financial goals, and there's no better feeling than knowing I've made a real difference in someone's life.*

What is Your Current Role at the Bungendore Branch?

*I'm the **Business Development Manager**, focusing on lending—home loans, personal loans, and credit cards. I'll talk to anyone about their lending needs and do my best to offer **competitive interest rates, great service, and most importantly, contribute back to our local communities**. That's our biggest point of difference at the Community Bank.*

What is One Piece of Financial Advice You Always Give Customers?

*In this increasingly digital world, there's so much information online about loans, lending, accounts... but my advice is to **keep it simple**. If you can't generate more income, you need to control your expenses—you can't spend more than you earn. It's an oldie, but so easy to forget in today's fast-paced, buy-now-pay-later world of constant consumption.*

Best Moment Since Returning to the Community Bank?

*One of my proudest moments was helping a **single mum, working three jobs, buy her first home**. She later wrote me a heartfelt thank-you letter, which Bendigo Bank noticed—and I ended up winning a \$400 Customer Service Award. But for me, the real reward was knowing how much it meant to her. I actually gave her the \$400 because she was the one who inspired me to work so hard to get her loan approved in the first place. That's what keeps me going—the little thank-yous from customers that remind me why I do what I do.*

What is Something People Might Not Know About You?

I compost my own humanure. Why contaminate perfectly clean drinking water just to flush away a valuable resource, only to use poisonous chemicals to clean the water again? That said, having a flushing toilet at work is a huge luxury! Yes, I'm a contradiction in terms.

If You Weren't a Banker, What Would You Be?

If I had enough land, I'd be a farmer, working to rehabilitate the land through regenerative agriculture.

Something You'd Like to Learn?

I'd love to be fluent in another language—probably Spanish, Italian, or French. Right now, I only remember a little Year 8 German—"Das ist der Bleistift" (This is the pencil!). Hopefully, when I retire, I'll have the chance to travel and properly learn a new language.

PHOTOS FROM THE BUNGENDORE SENIORS EVENT ON 28 MARCH

Photo Credit: Regional Independent



PHOTOS FROM THE BRAIDWOOD SHOW ON 1 MARCH

Photo Credit: Braidwood Bugle



MEET OUR DEPUTY CHAIR: DALE TOWELL

interviewed by Susi Pluess



Can you tell us a little about your role as Deputy Chair and what drew you to join the board?

I was aware of the Board, having friends already holding a director position. One of these friends approached me to become a board member and my thoughts at the time were – let's give it a go and see it through for a couple of years. That was in 2016 and I was signed up in 2017. The fact that I started my ninth year as a director in 2025, is a surprise to me, but the combined knowledge I've gained and friendships I've made has more than confirmed that this was the right decision. I was very aware of the 'community heart' within Braidwood and Bungendore branches- very much a draw card in making that decision.

You are deeply involved in running the scholarship program; what inspires you most about this initiative?

Inspiration comes easily from the benefits I can offer in some way to continuing education of our young citizens, not just in financial support, but in the chance to know them - they share their stories and dreams with honest candor. Their bright eyes into what lies ahead for them, is in itself inspiring. It's all made possible by Bendigo Bank and I have the simple privilege of linking the opportunity to those deserving of a chance.

As someone with such a diverse background - how do these roles complement your work on the board?

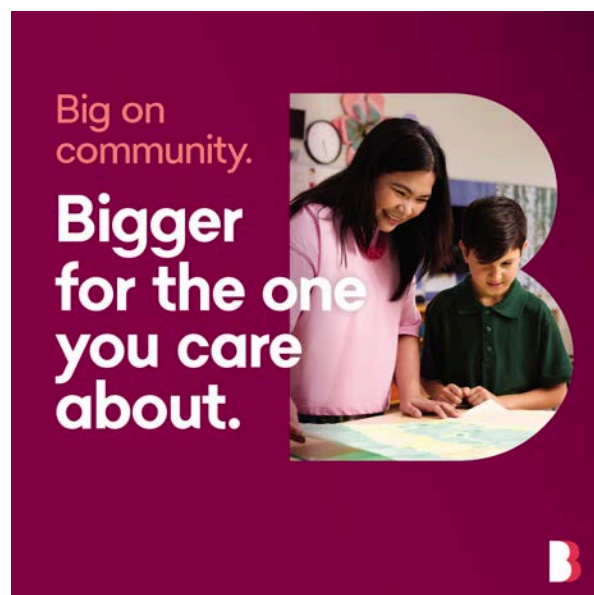
My young life brought up on a dairy farm gave me everything I needed to make the most of whatever I have; my study years gave me the opportunity for employment; a working life within the schooling system and then onto the public service helped me grow; my voluntary work within Motor/Motorcycle Clubs and event committees has been a massive time spender, but rewarding and an opportunity for discovery; my current income earner as Authorised Marriage Celebrant, is the chance to run a business of my own. Every 'room of my life' gives a little something for me to bring to the board.

What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the organisation and our community in the coming year?

One year leads to another, so I see the biggest opportunity for this year, is to create whatever is needed to be able to continue on with success, to the next. We are community based, and every year I've been on the board, I've seen progress. I've seen caring directors making decisions for community benefit. This work is to be proud of, and we are all here on the board to guide through more of the same.

What other responsibilities do you hold within the PFSL Board?

I sit on the Community Funding Committee and have the honour of being Chair of the Governance & Risk Committee. Governance holds much interest for me and is often not sufficiently well understood. We have brought it more into 'sight', our directors now much more aware of policy/procedure, able to have their say in the directions the board will take and better informed when changes are made. It's thanks to the expertise and support of committee members that we have a clear plan for the year ahead. My interest also lies in the welfare of board members and branch staff. It's vital that staff and directors understand each other and the work each does.



... continued on next page

MEET OUR DEPUTY CHAIR: DALE TOWELL

... continued

Your leadership style has been described as quiet but strong. How do you approach decision-making and teamwork on the board?

I'm very much of the 'listen and learn' variety. I see leadership as understanding what is needed, knowing how to acquire knowledge and the strength to deliver a result. It's a juggle to which you need to add care for others and a balance that teamwork requires. To be honest, I learn more when I'm not the one talking. I'm fortunate as Vice Chair, in having the option of time to consider my responses and if something needs to be said, then I will bring it to notice.

What advice would you give to someone looking to get more involved in the local community?

For anyone who would like to involve themselves more in anything, I would recommend they sign up and give themselves the best opportunity to at the very least enjoy at the most, make a huge difference. I really believe, that if you intend doing something for the right reasons, you will have the best results. Surprisingly, your choices may lead to just what you've been hoping to find.

Lastly, when you are not working on board matters or your other commitments, how do you like to unwind?

My one liner for family ears is - if I'm ever incapacitated, please plug me into music and intravenous chocolate.


That said, my second love is music – piano teacher in a past life – it truly is the food of life .Well, plus a little chocolate and crunchy chips. My third love is writing – my life is journalled in script and poetry. My first love is all the pieces of 'wonderful' in my life – husband and family - three children and their combined creations of six little people. I'm happy to be home where everyone can find me and where they can all enjoy just being together. I hope they will long remember the giant marshmallows in a jar on the sideboard, the playground, the garden, somewhere to be themselves and 'me' - always happy to spend time with them and trusting that I will be the one who keeps their secrets.

Publisher

Palerang Financial Services Ltd
Unit 1 / 2 Park Lane, Braidwood NSW 2622

Editors

Nick Fry & Susi Pluess
With thanks to all contributions from
staff, board & community members.



Time for a home loan health check!

With the current cost of living, there's never been a better time to review your home loan.

Enquire online at [bendigobank.com.au/healthcheck](https://www.bendigobank.com.au/healthcheck) or call your nearest branch on 4842 1700.

📍 Community Bank - Braidwood

Bendigo Bank

*Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), May 2023. All loans are subject to the bank's normal lending criteria. Fees, charges, terms and conditions apply. Please consider your situation and read the Terms and Conditions, available online at www.bendigobank.com.au or upon request from any Bendigo Bank branch, before making a decision. Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited ABN 11 068 049 178 AFSL 237879 (1676698-1734981) (05/22) OUT_39357823, 06/08/2024

COMMUNITY FUNDING APPROVALS

since January 2025



Scan here and Register now!



A Mother's Day Weekend community event to Celebrate and Support the Mums of Queanbeyan and surrounding regions. Please join us for the fun and help us break an AUSTRALIAN RECORD, right here at Queanbeyan Park!



- Braidwood Jockey Club: \$3,300 Sponsorship - 2025 Braidwood Races
- Braidwood Hospital Auxiliary: \$3,203 Donation - Marquee
- Braidwood Golf Club: \$5,000 Sponsorship
- Braidwood Show Society Campdraft: \$1,000 Sponsorship
- Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council: \$23,236 Grant for Youth Engagement Activities in the region
- Braidwood Junior Soccer Club: \$5,000 Season Sponsorship
- Braidwood and District heavy horse Association: \$2,500 Sponsorship for 2025 Heavy Horse Show
- Braidwood Redbacks Rugby Union: \$5,000 Season Sponsorship
- Bungendore Seniors' Association: \$4,000 for 2025 Queanbeyan-Palerang Seniors festival
- Bungendore Campdraft Club: \$5,000 event sponsorship
- Queanbeyan Evening Branch CWA: \$2,500 Sponsorship for International Womens' Day 2025 High Tea
- Bungendore Preschool: \$7,500 event sponsorship Fair & Pig Races
- The Rotary Club of Bungendore: \$2,240 sponsorship for Defensive Driving Course
- Bungendore Junior Rugby League Football Club: \$5,000 season sponsorship
- Bungendore Rugby Football Club: \$4,456 season sponsorship
- In Your Own Backyard: \$4,196 Donation
- Bungendore War Memorial Committee:
 - \$500 sponsorship for annual commemorative dinner
- Bungendore United Football Club: \$5,000 season sponsorship
- Braidwood Central School P & C: \$5,000 sponsorship for production "Pridelands"
- Araluen Progress Association: \$10,529 grant for hall ownership transfer
- Consensus Education Foundation: \$6,750 grant for extension of Think Tank program
- Mongarlowe Area Community Association: \$22,462 grant for hall acoustic improvements
- Terry Campese Foundation: \$20,000 donation for Sleep Podzs
- Braidwood Polocrosse Club: \$5,000 sponsorship for annual carnival
- First Steps Pregnancy Support Ltd: \$5,000 donation for Pramathon event
- Monaro Rugby Union: \$6,000 sponsorship for annual championships
- Captains Flat Community Preschool: \$500 sponsorship for fundraising event Step by Step walking
- Rotary Club of Bungendore: \$1,000 sponsorship for Youth First Aid Mental Health Course

Proud supporters of the Heavy Horse Show 2025

When you choose to bank with Bendigo Bank, good things happen in your community.

Like the Braidwood & District Heavy Horse Show on 3 May.

And when you belong to one of Australia's biggest banks, good things happen with your banking too.

Feel good about who you bank with.

Find out more. Call 4842 1700 or search Bendigo Bank Braidwood.



SUPPORTING OUR FUTURE: 2025 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM RESULTS

Our commitment to supporting local students through our Scholarship Program continues to make a profound impact. The 2025 scholarship interviews were successfully conducted in February, with a total of 18 applicants from Braidwood, Bungendore, and Crookwell.

Selection Process and Committee

This year's Advisory Committee comprised Connie, Di, and Dale, who dedicated their time to carefully reviewing applications. Their expertise and dedication ensured a fair and thorough selection process.

Scholarship Recipients

The Board is pleased to announce the following scholarship awards for 2025:

Braidwood Recipients (University)

- Nelson – Political Science, ANU
- Isabella – Biomedical Engineering, ANU
- Jacob – Social Science, University of Wollongong
- Adelaide – Paramedicine, Charles Sturt University Bathurst

Bungendore Recipients (University)

- Chloe – Medical Studies, University of NSW Wagga Campus
- Charlotte – Health-Medical Studies, ANU
- Lachlan – Creative Arts, University of NSW Wollongong Campus
- Meg – Health & Physical Education, University of Canberra
- Claire – Politics & Science (Psychology) & International Relations & Politics, University of Canberra

Bungendore Recipients (TAFE)

- Lachlan – Engineering & Related Technologies Diploma, Southern Cross University
- Telara-Ann – School-Based Education Support, Goulburn TAFE

Bursary Award

- Sam – Mining Engineering, University of NSW Wollongong Campus

Program Highlights & Acknowledgements

The Scholarship Program remains a vital initiative in fostering educational opportunities for our local students. Each recipient will receive continued funding for 2026, subject to academic progress.

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated staff, Advisory Committee members, and Board Directors for their ongoing support in making this program a success.

We are proud to be investing in the future of our young leaders and look forward to seeing them thrive in their chosen fields.

MEDIA RELEASE: BENDIGO BANK MARCH ECONOMIC UPDATE

David Robertson, Bendigo Bank's Chief Economist



Key takeaways:

- May firms for next cash rate cut
- Employment growth powers ahead
- US tariffs in force, global outlook increasingly opaque.

Following the RBA's February cash rate cut, anticipation is now building over when it will make its next move. With deliberations set against an increasingly complex global backdrop, Bendigo Bank's Chief Economist David Robertson outlines what's next for rates, labour markets and geopolitics.

Two more rate cuts on the horizon – but don't be fooled by April

With the RBA's easing cycle now underway, and with underlying inflation continuing to moderate, more interest rate cuts are likely this year, Mr Robertson said.

"Market pricing now matches our forecast of two more rate cuts, taking the cash rate down to around 3.6% by year-end," he said.

However, homeowners may need to wait a little for the next cut.

"We continue to expect a relatively shallow easing cycle, and agree with the RBA that it would be foolish to rely on an April 1 cut (when they next meet), however the next quarterly CPI data out on April 30 should reveal more evidence that inflation is slowing, allowing a second rate cut on May 20," Mr Robertson said.

"Our base case forecasts centre on a steady improvement in GDP growth in 2025 and cost of living pressures subsiding as inflation moderates, further helped by RBA rate cuts and last year's tax cuts, but the global backdrop remains as unpredictable as ever."

US tariffs now in force, global outlook increasingly opaque

US tariffs on trade with Canada, Mexico and China have just commenced, and beyond the uncertainty of what other tariffs will be imposed (and whether Australia will be exempted from them) the geopolitical landscape is remarkably complex and fast-moving, Mr Robertson said.

"Any global forecasts need to consider upside and downside scenarios, including the indirect impact of trade tensions on our largest trade partner China," Mr Robertson said.

"Chinese fiscal support and targeted stimulus measures have proved successful so far and more policy support is expected, while exchange rates are also likely to play their part in offsetting tariffs.

"But the further down the horizon we look, the more opaque the outlook becomes, and stock markets are also looking more cautious as the broader impact of tariffs takes shape."

The RBA's easing cycle: It's complicated

Mr Robertson said there are three key complications for the RBA in continuing its easing cycle (which will greatly influence the markets through the year):

The recent pick-up in retail sales, up another 0.3% in January as consumers become more confident about the outlook

Ongoing public spending at a state and federal level, ahead of impending elections

The resilience of labour markets, with employment growth still powering ahead.

"As the RBA minutes noted, the strongest case for not cutting rates last month was continued tightness in labour markets although the minutes also noted that 'there was possibly more capacity in the labour markets than previously judged'," Mr Robertson said.

"So, while we continue to forecast a slightly higher unemployment rate, this may not be a pre-requisite to the two more cuts we expect later this year."

House prices strengthen

There have been some recent signs of strength in the housing market, Mr Robertson said.

"Residential property prices rebounded by 0.3% in February, no doubt helped by the rate cut, but more importantly rental costs and construction costs for new dwellings have decelerated noticeably, again consistent with our expectation of a shallow RBA easing cycle this year," Mr Robertson said.

TALK TO US TODAY

Community Bank Braidwood

95 Wallace Street Braidwood NSW 2622

T 4842 1700

Community Bank Bungendore

1/33 Ellendon Street Bungendore NSW 2621

T 6238 0547

We are open:

9.30am – 4.00pm Monday to Friday

Staff

Carmen Byrne

Karen Cairns

Jess D'Arcy

Helen Farley

Nick Fry

Martin Glover

Jayde Hardwick

Sally Harrison

Dale Husking

Melinda O'Dea

Craig Pettit

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LENDING UPDATE

MELINDA O'DEA, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

When interest rates decrease, we do see an increase in lending enquiries. This is triggered by lower repayments and increased borrowing power. We have outlined some common lending questions and answers following the February interest rate cut:

How will the rate cut affect my repayments and how much will I save?

All major lenders and banks have officially agreed to pass on the rate cut, meaning that mortgage holders who are currently on a variable interest rate should have received a 0.25 reduction to their interest rate. This will mean that you will save some cash on your monthly interest repayments.

The amount saved will depend on your current interest rate and loan size. As an example, on a loan of \$1,000,000 over a 30-year loan term at a variable interest rate of 6.00 per cent, you will save about \$160 per month with the 0.25 rate cut.

How will the rate cut help boost my borrowing power?

Rate cuts mean more borrowing power because when interest rates decrease, the monthly loan repayments become smaller, allowing individuals to qualify for a larger loan amount as a larger portion of their income can be allocated towards debt servicing, effectively increasing their borrowing capacity.

Will home values rise?

Lower interest rates make buying more attractive by increasing affordability and borrowing power, which leads to overall better buyer sentiment. This historically results in more buyers in the market and can drive housing values higher. For those looking to purchase property, particularly for first home buyers we recommend focusing on getting your pre-approval sorted from now and securing a place before the prices start to climb.

Our local lending specialists are available to provide insights on how these changes could benefit you or your clients. Feel free to reach out for further discussion.

Community Bank Braidwood:

Melinda O'Dea on 0411 384 522 or Jayde Hardwick on (02) 4842 1700

Community Bank Bungendore:

Dale Husking and Sally Harrison on (02) 6238 0547

NEW TRACTOR A GAME-CHANGER FOR BRAIDWOOD CENTRAL SCHOOL

by Susi Pluess

Braidwood Central School's agricultural program has received a major boost, thanks to a \$31,500 grant from the Community Bank Braidwood towards the purchase of a brand-new school tractor.

The total cost of the tractor was \$49,000, with the school contributing \$10,000 and the Braidwood Central School P&C providing an additional \$7,500. This significant investment replaces the school's existing tractor, which, at more than 15 years old, was struggling with wear, tear and growing safety concerns.

Nick Fry, Community Engagement Manager, emphasised:

"The Community Bank realises the importance of supporting the youth in the district and this project certainly is vital to those students that wish to pursue a future in agriculture."

The new tractor will support students from Years 9 to 12 studying Stage 5/6 Agriculture and undertaking the Primary Industries VET course, which includes the requirement to demonstrate competency in tractor operation and maintenance.

Head Teacher Jill Kuchel explained the importance of the upgrade:

"The tractor is absolutely essential for a lot of parts of our agricultural program. Students need a safe, reliable machine to complete their course requirements, and this one is top of its class. Not only will our senior students benefit, but our Year 9 and 10 ag students will now also be able to gain hands-on experience."

But the impact goes well beyond the school gates. Braidwood Central School plays an active role in the s355 Braidwood Common Committee, managing a local sheep herd on community land. The new tractor will be used to maintain the common, support weed control and slashing, and enable a variety of community projects.

"This isn't just a tractor for the school," Jill said. "It's a resource that benefits the whole community. We're incredibly grateful to the Community Bank for making it possible."

This isn't the first time the Community Bank Braidwood has partnered with the school. Over the years, the bank has supported the development of a school commercial kitchen and contributed funding for the school bus—both of which have had lasting impacts on student learning and opportunity.

"The partnership with the Community Bank has been amazing," Jill said. "From hospitality and catering courses to excursions across the state, their support has helped our students access real-world experiences and life skills that they wouldn't otherwise have."

For students who don't come from farming backgrounds, access to modern agricultural machinery at school is invaluable.

"This is the only opportunity many of our students have to learn to operate farm equipment," Jill noted. "It's practical, it's hands-on, and it gives them skills they can use in future careers."

Principal Adam Zanco also praised the bank's contribution:

"I have never experienced anything like the funding the Community Bank provided. It is exceptional. What a great partnership—and how beneficial for the students to have a local business contribute this kind of money to boost fundraising efforts."

The new tractor is already making a difference on the ground—and in the lives of the students it serves. It is a strong example of what can be achieved when schools and community-focused businesses work together to invest in local youth and their futures.

