

# Appeal pays off for brain surgery

By Luke Voogt

Leopold hairdresser Abbey Gasparini underwent vital brain surgery last Wednesday thanks to the Geelong public raising nearly \$90,000 in less than two weeks.

Ella Gasparini said her 22-year-old sister and her family were overwhelmed by the public support.

"We would like to thank everybody from the bottom of our hearts for all the love and donations they have sent through," she said.

"It's going to make her feel so much better."

Renowned brain surgeon Doctor Charlie Teo removed a pineal cyst in Abbey's mid-brain on 24 August.

The cyst had been causing chronic pain and pressing on vital structures, and could have led to severe problems if left untreated.

Ella set up a GoFundMe page on 18 August with Abbey's long-time friends Tara Smith and Sarah Fowler to pay for the surgery.

As of Thursday morning 941 people had raised \$89,369 of the page's goal of \$90,000.

"It's so great that Abby has such good friends and we could make this happen," Ella said.

However there were complications in the surgery, with Dr Teo having to use an alternative approach to get the cyst out, Ella said.

"We are very grateful to him and his team for getting Abbey smoothly through what was a more

challenging operation than all initially anticipated."

"Abbey has been having a pretty rough recovery for a few days now and is in quite a lot of pain and discomfort."

Because the surgery took longer it could end up costing more.

"We just don't know how much," Ella said.

However, Abbey still wants to donate any left-over money from the surgery, she said.

"She knows a few people with a similar condition who she'd like to donate it to."

Uno Dance Club donated \$2185 from a fundraiser on Saturday 27 August while Salon Symmetry and its clients added \$1364 in total on Tuesday.



VITAL SUPPORT: Geelong has raised almost \$90,000 for Leopold hairdresser Abbey Gasparini, right, pictured with friend Sarah Fowler



COMMUNITY SPIRIT: Kylie and Leann Trotter celebrate their win at the Lara Business Award on Wednesday night.

158752 (Luke Voogt)

## Grovedale pair in Jail over burglary

Police have charged a man and a woman over an aggravated burglary at Waurin Ponds on Sunday.

The pair were apprehended in an allegedly stolen car at Grovedale 7am the next day with a substance believed to be ice, police said.

A search of the woman found a credit card allegedly stolen from the Waurin Ponds house.

Police charged the 23-year-old Grovedale man with numerous counts of theft, aggravated burglary, using stolen plates and obtaining property by deception.

The 29-year-old Grovedale woman was charged with theft of a motor car and drug possession.

They were remanded in custody after appearing at Geelong Magistrates' Court on Monday afternoon.

## Great escape link

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When the warden returned they gagged him, tied his hands and walked out of the gaol.

The convicts spent two weeks on the run from Geelong through Bannockburn to Ballarat.

Ms Robinson believed at least one shed the ball and chain at Bannockburn, where it lay buried for more than a century.

Newcomb's Paul Aszenbrenner discovered the rusted artefact while helping excavate at a farm.

The suspected gaol relic emerged hanging from the teeth of a Bobcat, he said.

"It was lucky it caught my eye otherwise it would have been thrown away and buried again."

"I sort of took it home and ... didn't think much more of it."

Four years later Ms Robinson met Mr Aszenbrenner.

She immediately thought of the two escaped convicts when he mentioned his discovery.

"We know that's where they headed," she said.

"It's a great artefact. It just adds to the rich convict history of area."

"Even if the chain didn't belong to them I still think it has to be related back to the gaol somehow."

Mr Aszenbrenner agreed.

"There are not too many other escapees, so it's a pretty darn good chance it was them."

## Pub's sisters-in-law tap in to Lara Business Award win

By Luke Voogt

It was the tale of two sisters-in-law at the Lara Business Award on Wednesday night when Little River Hotel won the top prize.

Owner Kylie Trotter, at the event with pub manager and sister-in-law Leann Trotter, was thrilled at the recognition.

"It's amazing for a little community pub to win when we're up against all of Lara," she said.

Leann said Little River's "sense of community" clinched the win for the pub.

"It's not very big, so we sort of know everybody

and everybody knows us."

Kylie admitted she was shocked to win and nervous ahead of her acceptance speech.

"Behind the bar I can talk to anyone but, with a microphone, nope!"

Although in-laws, the pair had a great relationship in the workplace, Kylie said.

"Leann deserves a gold medal for working with me and another for marrying my brother."

Leann said she loved her job and its "team environment".

"If our customers are having fun, we're having fun."

The award's other contenders congratulated

the pair, with some sly suggestions the pub should hold an open bar to celebrate.

Kylie praised the other nominees and the hotel's staff.

Lara District Community Bank chairman Andrew Hilliard said the awards recognised the "unheralded good" local businesses do for the community.

"When you go to other businesses awards all they talk about is profit margins and growth. This award is about community growth."

The Geelong Indy is a sponsor of the Lara Business Award.

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