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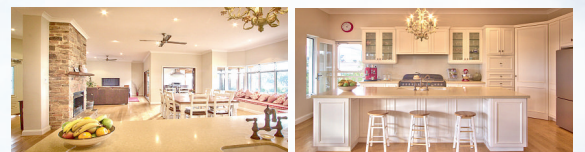


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2019 AVON DESCENT ADVERTISING FEATURE



LONG HISTORY: The Avon Descent is one of Western Australia's longest-running sporting events. Source: Avondescent.com.au



SETTING THE SCENE: The popular firework finale on the river closes the Festival.

Get to the Avon River Festival

FUN FOR FAMILIES

THE Shire of Northam is set to host the annual Avon River Festival on Friday.

The Festival welcomes the Avon Descent, the biggest event on the regional calendar attracting more than 600 competitors.

Well suited to families, the Avon River Festival has attractions and activities for all age groups.

There will be live performances from local musicians, a street parade, roving performances and rides.

Sideshow alley will entertain the young at heart with a host of showbags and games.

There will be market stalls and food vendors offering local produce, arts and crafts.

The popular firework finale on the river closes the Festival and sets the scene for the start of the Avon Descent the following day.

The Festival will open in Minson Avenue at 4pm, with the Street Parade in Fitzgerald Street at 6pm.

The firework finale will commence at 8.30pm.

Please note there will be some road closures and this is a pet and alcohol-free event.

How did it all begin?

BY MARY CHENG

THE Avon Descent is a full two-day race in a powerboat, kayak, ski or stand up paddle, as part of a single, double or a relay team.

It is one of WA's most iconic and longest-running major sporting and community events. But how did it all begin?

In 1972, the Northam Tourist Committee evaluated the possibility of a powerboat and canoe race from Northam to Perth along the Avon River.

Four men successfully completed a test run, which proved that a race was possible.

This catalysed the planning phase for a race that involved powerboats and a wide range of paddling classes. The race was prepared as a two-day event with competitors racing in a time-tri-

alled car rally style.

The inaugural Avon Descent race took place on July 21 and 22, 1973. There were 54 entries and 23 of them finished, covering 134km of the Avon and Swan Rivers.

In August 2000, *UWA News* reported a couple of university students, who designed, built and drove a powerboat by the name of Daytrader HQ. The powerboat was part of an engineering project with which they attempted to race through the Avon Descent's infamous Extracts Weir.

The Extracts Weir was originally 914.4cm deep but because of the silt brought down by the river over the years, it has become shallower, making the rocks protrude through the water a lot more.

Through the rough waters, the university racers finished second in the 8 HP standard category and won the novice

category as well. This was a remarkable achievement for the first time racers.

One person who has contributed a lot to this iconic event is Kim Epton. Kim was a member of the Power Dinghy Racing Club and was directly responsible for the creation of three major power dinghy races in WA.

This led to the Power Dinghy Racing Club being the power craft club representative for the Avon Descent. Kim's contributions were recognised in 2013 as he was awarded the title of a Legend of the Avon Descent.

So what significance does the Avon Descent have in WA? Kim states that the Avon Descent has been a part of the fabric of WA life over the past 45 years.

"It is the only sporting event (football grand finals and cricket test matches included) to be on the front

page of all six WA newspapers (in 1986)."

The event largely depends on a number of factors not necessarily within the control of the organisers, such as the amount of rainfall in the season. While the impact of the Avon Descent has faded over the past few years because of these factors, Kim believes that it is still an event that inspires awe. Kim shared a memory from back in the early days:

"I recall in 1976 the water level was so low that the race started from Posselts Ford and the day one finish was at Walyunga. The overnight stop was at the Ellenbrook Speedway. The race starter leaned back into the big dead tree that is still at Posselts and started each of the grids by firing a shotgun."

"In 1979, as a result of low water, the section from Katrine to West Toodyay

was deleted and craft were transported between these locations by their respective support crews. An administrative and logistical nightmare. The Cobbler Pool Campsite at the end of day one became a mini-city with many thousands of people camping there (estimates up to 10,000)."

"With the advent of better cars and improved roads, most paddlers choose to go home and then return early in the morning for the race start. However, for powerboaters, the overnight camp at the Avon Descent remains one of the highlights of the annual racing calendar."

The course hasn't changed much over the past four decades, apart from the finish locations, so racers are still able to experience what the course was like back in the day.

Avondescent.com.au



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Shire reaps event rewards

BY ELIZA WYNN

AHEAD of this weekend's Avon Descent, the Shire of Northam president has encouraged businesses to take advantage of the extra foot traffic in town.

The 2019 Avon Descent will kick off in Northam on Saturday morning before making its way through Toodyay and Bayswater.

Shire president Christ Antonio said although the race was only in Northam for a matter of hours, benefits were there.

"It is an important event not only for the Shire but for the state," Mr Antonio said.

"It's great to see the local involvement in the Avon River Festival and the street parade on the Friday night.

"This year the Bilya Koort Boodja Centre will be open for those who are around to have a look through and learn about our local Indigenous culture.

"A lot of the benefits are the flow-on effects.

"I'd like to think for every dollar spent we would make \$5 in return over time.

"A lot of businesses can



RACE WEEKEND: Shire of Northam president Chris Antonio has welcomed the 2019 Avon Descent. Photo: Eliza Wynn.

benefit from having the event in town."

Mr Antonio said community involvement had shaped the history of the event.

"The Avon Descent is WA's second longest running

sporting event, running since 1973," he said.

"I know the committee is working towards the 50th anniversary in the coming years.

"What the committee has

done has encouraged younger competitors to take part and have created different distances in the course.

"They are thinking of the future of the event."

The president wished all



BIG RACE: The 2019 Avon Descent will leave Northam at 7.45am on Saturday morning. Photo: Eliza Wynn.

competitors good luck for the big race, particularly the local teams who had fallen short the year prior.

"Last year I was waiting all day to hand out the medals to our two local teams but 2km from the finish line they both broke down," he said.

"Hopefully, this year I can be there at the end this year to give them their medals.

"It is pretty special when you have locals involved."

In the lead-up to the event the Department of Transport (DoT) has advised river users to take extra care as the event takes place.

DoT waterways safety management director

Chris Mather said the Avon Descent could impact river users.

"DoT encourages people to check the scheduled activity for the waterway they plan to use and when on the water take extra precautions particularly when operating close to blind bends and within narrow channels," Mr Mather said.

"High speed power race vessels are exempted from the usual speed limits during approved events and may approach other users without warning.

"Swimming where events are scheduled is discouraged."

Community support helps the homeless

BY ELIZA WYNN

Continued from Page 1.

"The problem we have, and one that we are working on with the Wheatbelt Mental Health team, is that whilst we can house many of the homeless in those properties, we can't house a large majority of those who come in due to severe mental health and substance abuse issues," she said.

"That is something we are looking at in the Wheatbelt. It would be in partnership with the other agencies in town."

Ms Jones said despite the challenges, Share and Care had seen some great successes from their programs.

"We had a young 17-year-old who came to us - homeless," she said.

"She hadn't showered in a week, hadn't eaten much, she wasn't attending school.

"We ended up putting her into our accommodation where she would be safe.

"She is now at school, grades are approving, attends psychologist appointments, has started saving money.

"Our homemaker program has been teaching her how

to cook, how to keep house, shopping on a budget, personal hygiene.

"For me, what is really vital is that we break the cycles, that we show people that there are some really exciting opportunities and wonderful stuff out there that you can be doing."

Share and Care homelessness services program manager Ashleigh Jones said there was a section of the homeless community that was often overlooked.

"A big part of homelessness that people don't realise is that there are a lot of

people that will couch surf," she said.

"They are hidden numbers because they are not on the street and people won't see them."

The program manager said the community could help support locals who had found themselves without a place to live by reporting any activity to Share and Care.

"If you see someone who is living rough, who may be in a vacant house or sleeping in a public place let us know and we can offer them any help they may need," Miss Jones said.



HOME ASSISTANCE: Share and Care operations manager Sarah Menschelyi and homelessness services program manager Ashleigh Jones. Photo: Eliza Wynn.

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2019 AVON DESCENT ADVERTISING FEATURE

Fun and fabulous food by the water

EXPERIENCE one of the biggest, fun-filled events on Toodyay's calendar.

The 15th annual Toodyay International Food Festival and Family Fun Day will combine a spectacular view of the Avon Descent race with delicious food and free all-day family entertainment at Stirling & Duidgee Park on Saturday from 10am-3pm.

You can wander your way through dozens of food stalls taking in the aromas of an incredible range of mouth-watering international cuisine.

A licensed area will offer boutique beer, wine and cider.

The main stage will come to life with a diverse range of musical and cultural performances for your enjoyment.

The free entertainment line-up will kick off at 10am with the Jarrah Celts, followed by amazing Japanese Drumming, a cooking demonstration and tastings from 2019 *MasterChef* contestant Kyle Lyons, the awesome *A Boy Named Cash* show starring Monty Cotton from *The Voice* and finished



BOTTOMS UP: Combine views of the Avon Descent with delicious food at the 15th annual Toodyay International Food Festival and Family Fun Day. **Photo: Liz Packwood.**

“

A foodie's heaven awaits.

off with the reggae sounds of 4 Degrees South Band.

Watch out for roving magician Robbie T in the crowd.

Kids of all ages have been catered for with free activities running throughout the day at Duidgee Park including a bouncy castle, disco dome, the outlandish antics of Pirateman Michael, face painting, balloon twisting, a climbing wall, a petting zoo and much more.

For more information or the full program like the Toodyay International Food Festival Facebook page, go to the website www.toodyayiff.wixsite.com/home or call the Toodyay Visitors Centre on 9574 9380. This community event is proudly sponsored by Lotterywest, the Shire of Toodyay, Toodyay & Districts Bendigo Bank, Toodyay Op Shop and the Freemasons Hotel.

Excitement builds for Avon Descent

THE Nationals WA team is excited to witness all the action of one of Australia's most iconic races as the 2019 Avon Descent takes place on August 3 and 4.

Local member for Central Wheatbelt Mia Davies said she looked forward to seeing canoeists, kayakers, ski paddlers and powerboat crews take off from Northam on Saturday morning.

"It's always great to be part of the excitement in Northam at the start of what is one of the world's great white water challenges," Ms Davies said.

"I know the paddlers and crews have been training very hard and the 2019 event is set to be a memorable one."

Recent rainfall has delivered good river conditions for the course, which winds down the Avon River through the historic farming regions of Northam and Toodyay, to the Swan Valley wineries and eventually into the waters of the Swan River, with the racing concluding at Riverside Gardens, Bayswater on Sunday afternoon.



ALL SMILES: Mia Davies, local member for Central Wheatbelt, and the rest of the National WA team are excited about the 2019 Avon Descent.

“

Regional Western Australia is full of untapped potential when it comes to tourism.

Local member for Central Wheatbelt, MIA DAVIES

"Events like the Avon Descent deliver important benefits for local communities, are vital for tourism and they help local economies grow," Ms Davies said.

"Regional Western Australia is full of untapped potential when it comes to tourism and this event showcases the magnificent land-

scape Avon Valley and the people that make this a great place to live," Ms Davies said.

The Nationals WA congratulate event organisers, competitors and supporters involved in the Avon Descent 2019.

For more information go to www.nationalswa.com or find them on Facebook.

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Be safe around the railway this Avon Descent



With our freight rail network running through the heart of the Avon Valley, Arc Infrastructure is proud to continue a 30 year partnership to support the Avon Descent.

Trains continue to operate as normal over the Avon Descent weekend; please be extra vigilant around the railway.

Safety is our priority. Please remember:

- Speed limit on Rail Access Road is 20km/h
- Rail Access Road is one way ONLY (except emergency vehicles)
- Overtaking on Rail Access Road NOT permitted
- Vehicles are NOT to be stationary in the middle of the Rail Access Road
- Follow instructions from Arc Infrastructure employees
- Obey stop signs at level crossings
- Display Valley Event Sticker clearly on windscreen.



arcinfra.com

TA5391834

OPINION

avonadvocate.com.au/comment

OPINION BY MONIKA WINARNITA & IRENE BLACKBERRY

Who will care for our older Australians?



ABOUT 23 per cent of Australia's population is over 60. That figure is estimated to rise to 25 per cent over the next two decades, when one in five Australians will be aged at least 80.

The demand for quality aged care has never been greater.

The problem is that caring for our older population is demanding both physically and emotionally - and many workers end up "burnt out", taking periods of time off, or leaving the industry all together.

This is particularly the case with older female workers who are unable to cope with the physical demands of caring.

As a result, the industry is suffering a major shortage of workers.

A 2011 study reported that nearly 40 per cent of vacancies for registered aged care

nurses took more than a month to fill.

Rural and regional services find it particularly hard to recruit employees, let alone retain them long term.

The migrant workforce is often touted as a solution. While in the short term this appeals, it does come with its own challenges.

The current Aged Care Royal Commission is receiving submissions on an observed lack of skills in aged care delivery, including gaps in communication, language and cultural understanding, to name a few.

There is also the question of how the employment of entry-level workers - many of whom are migrants - is regulated, and whether appropriate standards are in place.

Australia's new aged care standards, which came into effect this month, offer some hope for better care for our seniors.

But we also need to do more to support

aged care workers - particularly the female migrants who make up such a large proportion of our aged care workforce.

At La Trobe University we are exploring what makes female migrant aged care workers stay in the industry long-term, and the types of training, resources and supports they need to deliver high-quality care.

Whether it's more culturally aware managers, clearer policies and procedures, or a local community that makes them feel valued and supported, we want to know what would help.

We are seeking input from female migrant aged care workers on their experiences in and out of the workplace.

Dr Monika Winarnita is a researcher in humanities and social science, and Professor Irene Blackberry is a researcher in rural ageing.

YOUR GUIDE TO THE 2019 AVON DESCENT

THIS year's Avon Descent is fast approaching. Whether you are in Northam, Toodyay or closer to Perth there is no shortage of action and family friendly events over the two-day event.

Kicking off on Friday, August 2 competitors will gather in Northam to complete registrations before the Shire of Northam Avon River Festival.

SHIRE OF NORTHAM AVON RIVER FESTIVAL

Date: Friday, August 2

Time: 4.00pm - 9.00pm

Where: Minson Avenue, Northam

Celebrate the excitement of the start of the world's greatest white water event at the Avon River Festival. This year's highlights include: Huge fireworks display on the Avon River, stage show featuring a variety of local talent, family fun zone, rides for all the family, sideshow alley and roving entertainment, community street parade, markets for avid shoppers and local food venues. For more information call the Northam Visitor Centre on (08) 9622 2100 or visit www.facebook.com/visitsnortham

The big race down the Avon starts at 8am on Saturday, August 3 before making its way to Toodyay for the end of day one and the Toodyay International Food Festival.

TOODYAY INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL & FAMILY FUN DAY

Date: Saturday, August 3

Time: 10.00am - 3.00pm

Where: Stirling Park & Duidgee Park, Toodyay

Tempt your taste buds with dozens of mouth-watering international cuisine stalls as the main stage comes to life with a range of performances inspired from around the globe. Kids of all ages have been catered for with free activities running throughout the day. For more information call (08) 9574 9380 or visit <http://toodyayiff.wixsite.com/home>.



Your guide to the 2019 Avon Descent.

Day two of the race begins in Toodyay down to the finish line in Bayswater.

AVON DESCENT FESTIVAL - CITY OF SWAN

Date: Sunday, August 4

Time: 10.00am - 3.00pm

Where: Lilac Hill, Caversham

Prime riverside vantage point for enthusiasts of all ages to take in the excitement of the Avon Descent race. The City of Swan's Avon Descent Festival is back bigger and better than ever! Offering fun for young and old including The Vintage Collective Markets, food truck pop up, massive kids fun zone, on stage acts and much more- all at our prime riverside vantage point. For more information and announcements, head to the City of Swan Events Facebook page.

BASSO'S COMMUNITY GATHERING TOWN OF BASSENDEAN

Date: Sunday, August 4

Time: 11.00am - 2.00pm

Where: Point Reserve, Bassendean

The Town of Bassendean invites families to view the Avon Descent from the banks of beautiful Point Reserve. Pack a picnic and head down from 11:00am to enjoy free activities including a free sausage sizzle and giant games. For more information, call (08) 9377 8000 or visit www.bassendean.wa.gov.au

AVON DESCENT FAMILY FUN DAY CITY OF BELMONT

Date: Sunday, August 4

Time: 11.30am - 2.30pm

Where: Garvey Park, Ascot

Enjoy live race commentary on the banks of the beautiful Swan River. There will be free children's activities, giveaways, discounted helicopter rides and much more! For more information call (08) 9477 7248 or visit www.belmont.wa.gov.au

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SPORT

Pitts dices up the field



GOOD CAUSE: Sponsor Andrew Quin, Bronwyn Dunn from Comfort Quilts, Shirley Smythe, winner Ron Pitts and Adrian Rebane. **Photo: Supplied.**

NORTHAM GOLF CLUB

BY DON BATES

LAST Saturday's competition at the Northam Golf Club was a stableford event sponsored by Quins Gourmet Butchers; however it was also a fundraiser for the sponsor's favourite charity "Comfort Quilts against Cancer".

Not quite a butchers picnic but a large group of golfers assembled on the day, lined

up like snags on a barbecue ready to play, some would sizzle but most would go cold and be discarded from the winner's table.

Once again the octogenarian Ron Pitts has made mince meat of the other golfers on the day, returning to the clubhouse with a great score of 37 points to win the trophy.

Pitts has won six of the 11 events held this year and deserves his title at the Club as

'the Legend'.

Pitts defeated Matt Woods and Andrew Quin both with 37 points, on a countback.

Best Lady golfer on the day Shirley Smythe 32 points.

Best visiting golfer Adrian Rebane 28 points.

NOVELTY WINNERS ON THE DAY

Nearest the pins:

No. 6 Steve Dinka;
No. 9 Peter Bray;
No. 12 Kevin Smith;

No. 14 Ron Pitts;

Best third shots:

No. 3 Peter Bray;
No. 5 Matt Woods;
No. 18 Kevin Smith.

Apart from a great day of golf the Club raised more than \$570 for the Comfort Quilts against Cancer charity.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday - Scroungers;
Saturday, August 3 -
Monthly Mug (timesheet).

■ If your sports club has news they'd like to share with the community we'd love to hear from you.

■ Just go to our website www.avonadvocate.com.au and follow the links under the Community tab to 'Send Us Your News', or email contributed content journalist Shannon Lawson on shannon.lawson@autcommunitymedia.com.au.

Road safety for Avon Descent

AVON DESCENT

AS THOUSANDS converge on the Avon Valley on the weekend of August 3 and 4 for the 2019 Avon Descent, Arc Infrastructure is reminding participants, spectators and the wider community to be safe and vigilant around the railway.

The transport manager said the rail network will remain open and operate as normal over the Avon Descent weekend.

Arc Infrastructure network operations specialist Graham Sack said the safety of competitors, support crews, spectators and rail industry employees was of critical importance.

"It is imperative that when crossing the railway by foot or in a vehicle, people only cross at designated crossings and adhere to stop signs and safety restrictions," Mr Sack said.

"Our commitment to rail safety remains as strong as ever and we look forward to working with community partners and race officials for another safe and busy weekend.

"We are proud of our ongoing relationship with the Avon Descent and look forward to continuing to support the safe delivery of an iconic event. We wish all the competitors good luck."

— ELIZA WYNN

Injury ends AFL hopeful's colts season



SEASON BLOW: Deven Robertson will not be heading to Melbourne in October for the nationals AFL draft combine due to a season-ending injury. **Photo: Supplied.**

AFL

A STANDOUT performance in the NAB AFL Under 18 Championships has seen Northam footy product Deven Robertson named as one of 16 Western Australian players heading to the national AFL draft combine, but the youngster will have to miss the call-up due to injury.

Held over four days in October, Robertson was due to travel to Melbourne to prove himself worthy of a draft pick, but it has since been reported that a shoulder injury he sustained in the championship finals will need surgery in the coming weeks.

Prospects needed to be nominated by at least four clubs to head to the national Combine, with state combine lists set to be revealed in coming weeks.

The star midfielder has been in contention to be taken as a top-10 pick when the AFL draft is held in No-

vember, after taking out the Larke Medal as the carnival's best player while captaining Western Australia to their first victory in a decade.

His performances across the four games were outstanding, as he averaged a staggering 30 disposals and was among WA's best players in each contest.

In the final against Vic Metro he amassed 28 disposals, six clearances and eight tackles in an inspiring effort, which was phenomenally his lowest numbers of the campaign as he broke into 30 disposals in each of the remaining games.

Since finishing the national championships in style, Robertson has been named the skipper of the All Australian line-up, alongside five other WA teammates.

Robertson grew up in Northam playing his junior footy with Saints, before moving to Perth to attend boarding school.

SPORT

NEWS
Night Hoops success leads to 2019 return

PAGE 7



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Descent pacing



BIG NIGHT OF PACING: Burwood Park will light up on Saturday, August 3 with its next meet which will coincide with the 2019 Avon Descent. **Photos: Jodie Hallows.**

BY ALAN PARKER

THE 2019 Avon Descent will get under way at 8am on Saturday, August 3 when the first power boats will leave on a 52 kilometre trip down the Avon River for the overnight stay in Toodyay.

The Northam Harness Racing Club will hold a race-meeting on Saturday night at Burwood Park overlooking the Avon River for

those sports fans not wanting to brave the elements at a campsite along the river.

Mount Helena trainer Ray Williams has proven to be the trainer to follow at Northam this season and his 13 starters at Northam have provided seven winners, three seconds and one third placing for a strike rate of 0.6923. Ray's most prolific winner at Northam this season has been the Northam owned

Dreamy Nights which has won six of its seven starts at Burwood Park and leads the Mike Reed trained Valbonne in the Leading Northam Pacer Award by four points.

Earlier this season Dreamy Nights won the Village Kid Sprint at Northam and when he won on June 1 he brought up Ray William's 50th training win at Burwood Park. Mike Reed has had an outstanding season at Northam

and his 22 starters have won 12 races and with a further six minor placings he is tied with Matthew Scott (62 starters for 11 winners) as the leading trainer at Northam. Both have a total of 58 points which are awarded on the basis of four points for first, two points for second and one point for third.

With just two more meetings at Burwood Park this season after Saturday night's

racing the battle for the leading trainer will be a highlight. Similarly the Leading Driver Award is tight with Shannon Suvaljko leading on 109 points and holding a six point buffer over Chris Voak (103) who is just two points clear of Aldo Cortopassi (101) in third place. In the Club's Leading Junior Driver Award Deni Roberts leads with 51 points from Emily Suvaljko with 50 points.



Trainer Ray Williams.

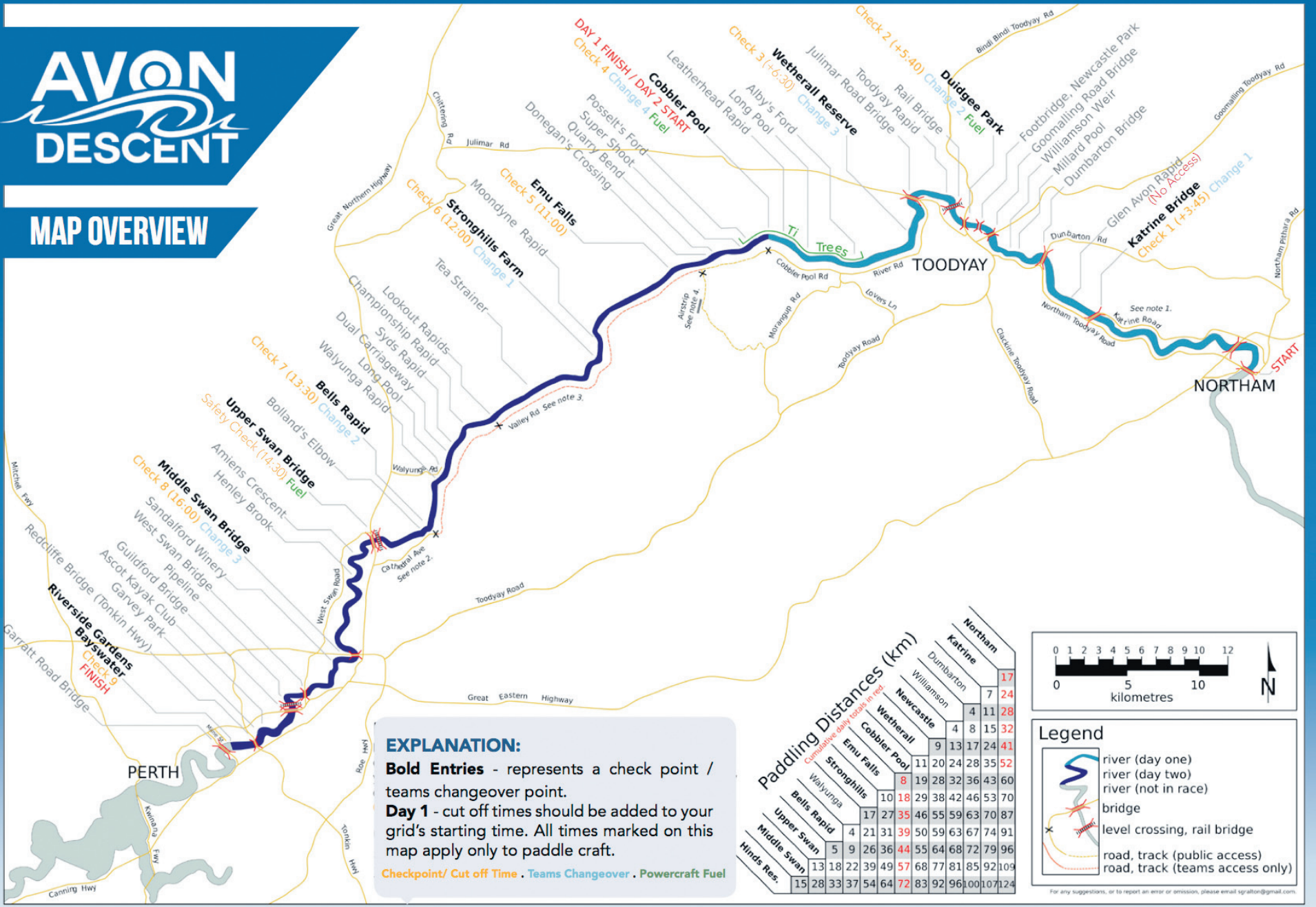


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Toodyay International Food Festival 2019

Saturday 3rd August
 Duidgee & Stirling Park 10am - 3pm

TOODYAY INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL

WITH FREE ALL DAY FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT!



Come and celebrate the 15th annual Toodyay International Food Festival with an array of international cuisine stalls and free all day family entertainment. Check out a cooking demonstration from 2019 MasterChef contestant Kyle Lyons, 'A Boy Named Cash' starring Monty Cotton (The Voice), international inspired music/bands, facepainting, magicians, bouncy castle, disco dome, petting zoo, climbing wall and more!!



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GO FOR AVON RIVER FESTIVAL

BERNARD PARK, NORTHAM

4PM-9PM FRIDAY 2ND AUGUST

- Street Parade from 6pm
- Markets & Food Stalls
- Family Fun Zone
- Sideshow Alley & Rides
- Live Entertainment from Refractory Road & Rumskull
- Fireworks Finale from 8.30pm

Please note that this is a pet, alcohol, and smoke-free event, and that road closures will be in place throughout central Northam

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