

# O'TOOLE PUTS AXE TO AUSSIE RECORD

**WOODCHOPPING** world champ Laurence O'Toole has proved he's a cut above his rivals, winning a national title at Geelong's Steampacket Gardens at the weekend.

He chopped and sawed his way through four blocks of wood to win the Stihl Timbersports event, pocket \$20,000 prize money and earn the chance to defend his world title in Sweden next month.

From Australia's best-known woodchopping family, the 37-year-old Victorian (pictured) beat 13 other competitors, setting a new Australian record of 1 minute 6.84 seconds.

Tasmanian Kody Steers finished 4.54 seconds behind O'Toole.

"I worked really hard for this competition, starting

training back in January specifically for this event, so it's great to come away with the win," O'Toole said.

"I was aiming to break the

Australian record and am super happy to have achieved that today. I'm looking forward to representing Australia in Sweden next month."

Described as "extreme sport", the timbersport event is

a battle of strength and technique, pitting competitors against each other in knockout rounds featuring four cutting disciplines: the underhand chop, standing block chop, single buck saw and the Stihl stock saw.



Picture: ALAN BARBER

## EIGHT KILLED IN EIGHT WEEKS

EIGHT men have been shot dead in Melbourne in as many weeks, with the killer of the latest slaying still on the run.

A 41-year-old Carnegie man found by two members of the public at an inner-city park on Friday night is the latest victim in what police believe was a targeted attack.

Police yesterday confirmed two firearms were found at Fawcner Park, South Yarra, following the death but would not confirm if they were connected to the shooting or if they were found by children, as has been reported.

"There's no evidence to suggest it was a random shooting," Senior Sergeant Andrew Brady said. "We want to reassure the public that Victoria Police is working towards successfully resolving this investigation."

Police have not confirmed whether they had identified any suspects and could not say what type of gun was used.

Eight men have died in six shootings since March 1 and charges have been laid for only three of the attacks.

On March 1, Ben Togiai, 30, was killed and two others injured in a shooting at a Kensington boxing match.

Abdullah El Nasher, 27, and Mikhael Myko, 25, are charged.

Two days later on March 3 Mitat Rasimi, aged in his 50s, died after crashing his car into a pole at Dandenong, but police believe gunshots he received earlier caused his death. An arrest is yet to be made.

On March 4, two men — Ali Ali, 28, and Deniz Hasan, 40 — died after being shot at Meadow Heights. Norden Wilio, 23, has been charged over their deaths.

Paguir Pan, 19, on March 12 was charged with the shooting murder of Winis Apet at Springvale.

Earlier this month, two men were shot at the Love Machine nightclub. Security guard Aaron Khalid Osmani, 37, was killed in the attack, while Richard Arow, 28, died days later in hospital. No arrests have yet been made.

# Business owner heaps praise on Northern Futures Fury at funding cut

**TAMARA McDONALD**

A LOCAL business owner is "gobsmacked" by the funding cut facing Northern Futures.

Rick Hall is the owner and managing director of Barrier Group, which has been an industry partner of Northern Futures for seven years.

Barrier Group designs and manufactures various safety products like bollards and speed humps.

"I can vouch for the benefits that come from the tireless work and personal commitment of the staff of Northern Futures," Mr Hall said.

"They are a small team that give themselves over completely to meeting the needs of their clients, and to supporting their industry partners.

"They are truly a special breed of human."

"(As) hundreds of millions of dollars in promises are being thrown around by political parties of all persuasions, I find myself gobsmacked that we can't find what would be a pitance to support an organisation running on the smell of an oily rag and the passion and generosity of its small but dedicated team."

The Geelong Advertiser last

week revealed Northern Futures was facing a state government funding cut when a contract with The Gordon TAFE's Skilling the Bay program ends later this year.

Northern Futures boss Lyn Morgan has said the service could be forced to shed staff as a result.

Mr Hall said the people who go through a Northern Futures program came from the proud northern suburbs, and most had backgrounds where generational unemployment was the norm.

"Northern Futures staff don't just work with the client,

but the clients' families and immediate social networks to engage their support and help break down resistance," he said.

Mr Hall said that over the years the Barrier Group had taken on multiple placements from Northern Futures, which in some instances had been life-changing.

"Then there are the benefits to my own workforce who may have been a little reluctant but through shared successes have grown to be accepting and supportive, all of us are better for the experience," Mr Hall said.

"The Northern Futures

model is one where all parties are engaged, the client, the clients network, the industry partner, the Northern suburbs and ultimately the broader Geelong community.

"By getting behind them all of us can be winners."

Corio Labor MP Richard Marles, founded the initiative with state counterpart, Lara MP John Eren, more than 10 years ago.

Mr Marles this week told the Addy he and Mr Eren would continue to work with the service and all tiers of government to resolve the issues Northern Futures was facing.

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