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The Courier

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THIS SHOW IS BONKAS

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. Ghostbusters. Transformers. Aerobic instructors. Yep, you read correctly. They all make an appearance in this new Ballarat Centre of Music and the Arts production.

Story, page 4

Charlie McGinniss, Zenaye McKee, Isla Christie, Anna Hodge, Harriett Murphy, Dana Reynolds, Ella Mulcahy, Ella Harrison, Lily Retallick and Ashton van Raaphorst.
Picture: LACHLAN BENICE

OPEN UP

Police say family violence incidents remain under-reported

BY ROCHELLE KIRKHAM

DESPITE statistical improvements, Ballarat police are convinced family violence is under-reported and remains a major problem for the region.

Victoria Police's next objective is working to further build trust and increase community confidence in

reporting family violence to police.

Ballarat Superintendent Jenny Wilson told *The Courier* she believed family violence remained under-reported in the region, particularly in rural areas and small towns.

"We want people feel safe to come forward, whether that is to the police, or

through a doctor or a health representative," she said.

This focus comes as Crime Statistics Agency data released on Wednesday revealed the number of family violence incidents reported to police in Ballarat has decreased by almost 10 per cent. Data recorded up until the end of the 2018/19 year showed the number of inci-

dents in Ballarat council area had dropped to 1781 from 1913 incidents reported to police in the previous year.

Libby Jewson, WRISC Family Violence Support Executive Officer and chair of the Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee, said this data did not reflect all women's experiences of family violence

because many victims did not make reports to police.

"Many of our clients have not had any police intervention," she said. "That can be for many reasons, often because of safety, their fear and threats made against them by the perpetrator. While there is a drop, the statistics mean there are still 1781 women who called the police

because they felt unsafe."

Ms Jewson said collaboration with police, service providers and the court system in the region was making a meaningful difference to improve responses.

"Police and the courts have an improved understanding of family violence," she said.

Continued page 5