

Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

ISSUE 8 | 1 OCTOBER 2021

Key milestone for The Hub

Work on the Balonne Shire's new \$6 million Hub complex in St George has reached a key milestone.

The concrete slab has been poured and walls are now going up, and construction work is on schedule to be completed by the end of the year.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said she is excited to see the building taking shape.

"Since work commenced on this project on the site back in May, a lot of what has been happening was demolition of the old library building and preparation of foundations.

"Now we are seeing work above-ground it's going ahead very quickly.

"People driving down Victoria Street can now really see the new library hub taking shape and I think our shire residents will start to get excited about what's going to be available here."

Site superintendent Catherine Scott said the Hub will be so much more than just a library.

"The grand plan is to establish a really iconic location for community engagement long term," she said.

"We've got the library, including the Country Universities Centre,

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\$3.4 million in federal funding for Balonne

Federal Government funding of \$3.4 million for four projects in Balonne Shire has been welcomed by Mayor Samantha O'Toole.

"This funding is designed as an economic stimulus for small business in Balonne and will translate directly into extra work and jobs in the Shire," Mayor O'Toole said.

"It will be an immediate boost for businesses and communities, and also create longer-term benefits."

The funding has been announced by Minister for Resources and Water Keith Pitt and Minister for Agriculture and Water and Member for Maranoa

David Littleproud under the third round of the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

The projects approved for Balonne Shire Council are:

- Business mentoring for agricultural and horticultural sectors – \$327,000;
- St George CBD Upgrades and Beautification for Victoria Street – \$600,000;
- Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing Stage 2 – \$1.5 million; and
- Balonne Business Improvement Scheme – \$1 million.

"The business mentoring project

will support growers, graziers and other producers in areas where they are hoping to expand, diversify and/or value-add, and capitalise on the opportunities from the agricultural and horticultural sectors through provision of tailored business mentoring services.

"The St George CBD upgrades will enhance Victoria Street to create a more urbanised environment to attract tourists, improve attractiveness and liveability for locals, and create jobs through delivery of the project and increasing commercial capacity

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What's On

First 5 Forever

A weekly session for children aged 0-5 and their parents/guardians, aimed at building strong literacy foundations.

WHERE: St George Library

WHEN: each Friday, 9.30am

St George Sheepdog Trials

Check out a uniquely Australian sport, right here in the Balonne. With more than 140 years of heritage, Sheepdog Trials are keeping bush tradition alive.

WHERE: St George Showgrounds

WHEN: 1-3 October

Dam Buster 250

Get your fix of offroad racing over two action packed days! It's sure to be fun for the whole family.

WHERE: St George

WHEN: 2-3 October

Care Balonne Ladies Luncheon

Get inspired while enjoying a delicious day out with your girlfriends - featuring new guest speaker, Brisbane journalist Kim Skubris.

WHERE: St George Showgrounds

WHEN: 6 October

Get Ready Balonne Markets

Council invites one and all to a fun and free day out to this Emergency Services and Market Day. Enjoy the family fun, demonstrations, locally-made goods, and awesome prizes for all attendees.

WHERE: Rotary Park, St George

WHEN: 16 October

Got a story, event or notice?

Tell us! We can include your information in the newsletter.

Phone: 07 4620 8888

Email: media@balonne.qld.gov.au

A message from the Mayor

I want to talk to you again in this edition of the *Balonne Bulletin* about the COVID-19 pandemic, as it remains the biggest single challenge facing the residents of Balonne Shire and our Council.

First, I want to say "Thank-you" and "Congratulations" to everyone who has helped make the Balonne Shire one of the most-vaccinated local government areas in Queensland.

On a head of population basis, very few shires or cities anywhere in Queensland are ahead of us.

The most recent figures are from Friday, September 17. At that time, amongst Balonne residents 16 years and older, 73 per cent had received at least one vaccination: 57 per cent had had both vaccinations and 16 per cent had had one vaccination.

Of those Balonne residents who identify as Indigenous, 59 per cent had received at least one vaccination: 39 per cent had had both vaccinations and 20 per cent had had one vaccination.

These figures are updated every fortnight and I expect we will find the vaccination totals will have increased significantly when the next figures are released.

However, we cannot be complacent, not for a moment. Balonne Shire sits right on the New South Wales border, and we know there are still lots of COVID-19 cases over there.

We are the front line in the fight against COVID-19 in Queensland.

Also, we need to take this opportunity now – before COVID arrives here – to get our vaccination rates up even higher to protect our communities.

The State branch of the Australian Medical Association has urged Queenslanders to keep coming forward and getting vaccinated, saying it is not a matter of if, but a matter of when Delta takes hold in Queensland.

Let's use this precious time when our communities are COVID-free to get



vaccinated. It will save lives in time to come.

The South-West Hospital and Health Service is running vaccination clinics so, if you haven't done it yet, please give them a call and book an appointment. The telephone number is 1800 844 886.

It's wonderful to see the rate of progress on the new hub being built in Victoria Street in St George.

After a lot of site preparation work that went largely unseen, the complex has now emerged from the ground is growing quickly.

It will house a new 650-square-metre library, Country Universities Centre and facilities to assist business operators (including meeting areas).

This wonderful new hub will have the effect of shrinking distance and boosting services for students, business operators and the broader Balonne community over extended hours.

It will provide resources and services that students and business people might once have had to travel away from the region to find or simply go without.

This is a landmark project for Council and our residents, and will be a wonderful facility for the whole Balonne Shire.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole

Get your Bulletin online!

Can't wait for the post? Be the first to read the Balonne Bulletin each fortnight.

Our editions are available online - simply scan the QR code



Library Hub is on the rise

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business hub and kids' spaces; we've also got additions to the [Cultural Centre] annexe, as well as an art gallery.

"This is a hardworking space to provide services for lots of community groups."

Ms Scott said progress has been most noticeable over the past month, though underground works to prepare the site had been happening for some time.

"We have just come out of ground in the last few weeks, and then the next three months are going to be really exciting to get it through to delivery."

Mayor O'Toole said the library hub will be a game-changer for the Balonne Shire.

"This new library will incorporate contemporary library services, a business and learning hub, the new Country Universities Centre and a cultural centre.

"The project will also create a vibrant precinct, improving both the functionality of the spaces and creating street appeal in this central location in Victoria Street.

The complex will include:

- A new 650-square-metre library building with a forecourt;
- an integrated green-space park area between the library and cultural centre buildings and extending to Klinge Lane;
- a refurbished Cultural Centre façade with a foyer art gallery;
- a staged refurbished annexe with meeting areas and equipped with modern technology.



STRIKING DESIGN: Structural pylons on the Library Hub have been inspired by another well-known structure in St George, the Jack Taylor Weir.

Key features include:

- dedicated space for a business hub and Country Universities Centre with a separate entrance, meeting rooms, hot desks and virtual office;
- business support programs and visiting consultant workspaces;
- spaces for distance education with onsite support and e-programs;
- contemporary library spaces;
- an increased library collection (from 8,000 items to 13,500, in line with State Library per-capita standards);
- a "Maker's Space" (innovation, creativity, 3D printing, agtech and robotics);
- spaces equipped with technology for virtual learning, training and connection;
- conference and workshop facilities in association with the Cultural Centre auditorium;
- training and workshops via virtual connection;
- a quiet study/reading room and work areas;
- teen and junior feature areas;
- a dedicated area for the celebration of local history and cultural representation; and
- a mix of meeting rooms and a kitchenette.

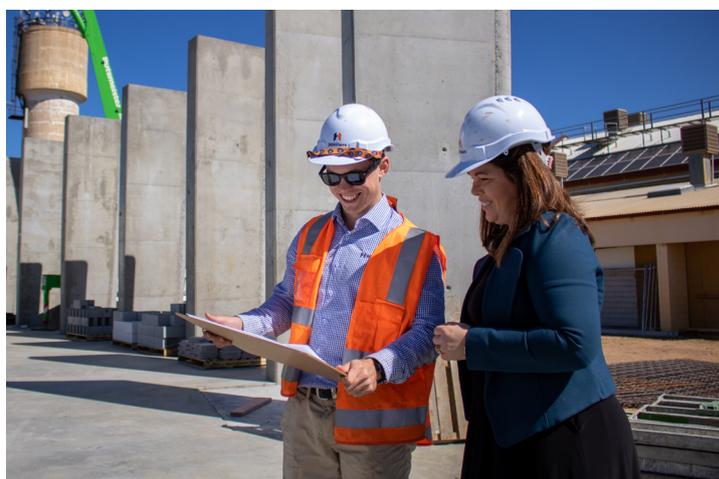
"This wonderful new hub will have the effect of shrinking distance and boosting services for students, business operators and the broader Balonne community over extended hours," Mayor O'Toole said.

"It will provide resources and services that students and business people might once have had to travel away from the region to find or simply go without.

"This new complex will help us further reduce the differences between living in regional Queensland versus living in the city."



MOVING UP: The concrete slab being poured in mid-September. Significant progress has been made since.



INSPECTION: Mayor Samantha O'Toole inspecting the Hub site with Sam Houston from construction firm St Hilliers.

Flying start to Airport upgrade project

Work to provide more hangar space at St George Aerodrome is off to a flying start and on track for completion before the end of the year.

The work includes construction of a taxiway, apron, allotments, access roads, drainage, water, sewerage and electrical components.

Referred to as the St George Aerodrome Subdivision, this project will allow operators to construct hangars and other infrastructure.

Previous community consultation has found demand for hangar space from a range of operators providing aviation services, including aerial spraying, seeding, fire suppression, tourism and general aviation.

The development covers 16,000 square metres, and will deliver new lots for hangar construction, a new hardstand area to service the hangar lots, a taxiway link to the main apron and taxiway to the runway and secure airside access to new tenants.

The St George Aerodrome is owned and operated by Balonne Shire Council.

The Aerodrome services the



BREAKING GROUND: Council and its team of contractors are currently completing earthworks on the St George Aerodrome Subdivision project.

Balonne Shire with twice-weekly flights to and from Brisbane (and Toowoomba).

Outside of the regular passenger flights, emergency services and local agricultural contractors utilise the Aerodrome, bringing benefits to the

wider community.

The St George Aerodrome Subdivision is proudly funded by the Queensland Government's Building our Regions program, creating economic opportunities and jobs in regional Queensland communities.

DOG REGISTRATION SURVEY

COMING SOON

Council is about to start the annual Dog Registration Survey

- Team members will go door-to-door during October, checking your dogs are **registered and microchipped**.
- Make sure your registration is up to date.
- Registration and microchipping is mandatory under Queensland Law.
- If your dog is unregistered or has no microchip, an on the spot fine will be issued.

To learn more, contact Council: 07 4620 8888 | council@balonne.qld.gov.au

Freemasons' tech donation is bringing Men's Shed up to speed

Giving a little is helping a lot at the St George Community Men's Shed.

St George Masonic Centre, Balonne No. 294 has donated new IT equipment to the Men's Shed, which is set to transform the club's behind-the-scenes operations.

Shed President Keith Codrington said the gift of a new computer, printer, wifi modem and camera will help the club move into the digital age and preserve its history, which is passionately documented by club members.

"As well as the general running of the club, the big things for us are storing the photos we take and also having that technology available for our guests who present all kinds of classes to our group," he said.

"We very much enjoy having groups like our local Health teams, local Ambulance, and other groups come around to chat."

St George Community Men's Shed has been operating for 10 years and currently has 18 members.

Their aim is to promote men's health and social connections through a wide range on hands-on pursuits.

Carpentry is a staple for many of the shed's members, but they also offer lathe work, metals and welding, and gardening.

Automotive is the latest addition to the shed's repitorie. Recently the club installed a car hoist, with the aim of attracting new members with a shared interest in vehicles.

"We would love to have more members," Mr Codrington said.



WORKING TOGETHER: St George Community Men's Shed members welcomed Freemasons from Balonne No. 294, who donated new IT equipment.



Men's Shed President Keith Codrington and Freemason Cameron Barker.

"Men of any age and ability are welcome, and there are people here who can lend their experience - they are happy to teach anyone new skills.

"By covering more interests we hope to encourage not only more members, but a younger generation to keep the club going."



Roy Hetherington, 93, is the oldest member of the St George Men's Shed.

St George Community Men's Shed is officially open Monday and Wednesday from 8am-12pm, but it's keen craftsmen are often there after hours, making it a hive of activity throughout the week.

For more information about Men's Shed, visit: mensshed.org

Get your business ready for COVID-19

Balonne Shire Council staff have distributed details about COVID-ready plans, or business continuity plans, to more than 900 farms and other businesses, either by mail or personal visit.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole said it was important for businesses in Balonne - whether they are farming businesses or businesses in town - to have plans in place for how to keep operating when COVID-19 finally

reaches the Shire.

If you are a business operator and have not received a copy, please telephone the Council on 4620 8888 and one will be sent to you.

PREPPING: Environmental Health Officer Di Francisco visits Donna Haslem of The Farmhouse, St George.



Taskforce set to smooth grain harvest

Balonne Shire Council continues to work to help make the movement of harvesting equipment and crews from New South Wales as easy as possible, while observing all the necessary precautions to prevent introduction of COVID-19 across the border.

The latest development is that the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has formed a Grain Harvest Taskforce comprising relevant industry and government representatives to problem-solve issues that may arise as harvest momentum builds from September and continues through to November.

This taskforce includes representatives of Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service, as well as Councils with an interest in the grain harvest.

The Balonne Shire Council is a member of the taskforce.

"The first meeting has already



COMING UP: A taskforce is working to ensure harvesters can cross the border.

been held, and I am certain it will play a valuable role in avoiding and solving problems that could arise with this year's grain harvest," Mayor

Samantha O'Toole said.

"It is a welcome initiative from the State Government."

HIRING NOW



Administration Officer, Casual

Support many departments within Council by providing valuable administrative and customer service. The ideal candidate will be professional, diligent, organised, and have moderate computer skills.

Administration Officer, Creditors

Provide administration and financial services including processing incoming creditors' accounts. Proven experience in accounts payable or two years experience in a similar position is desirable.

Asset Management and GIS Coordinator

Collate asset data and assist the Infrastructure Services department with reporting and analysis. Knowledge and experience in ESRI (ARCGIS) professional and online is a must.

Manager, Transport Infrastructure

Lead the construction and maintenance of Council's roads, drainage (including bridges), plant, fleet and aerodromes. Tertiary qualifications in engineering and experience in a similar role are essential.

Relief Librarian

Relieve Council's Librarians, ensuring Library services remain available to customers. Provide excellent customer service in a professional, ethical, courteous and efficient manner.

Casual Tourism Services Officer

A friendly and enthusiastic people person, the Tourism Services Officer is responsible for assisting with the daily operations of the St George Visitor Information Centre.

APPLY NOW: www.balonne.qld.gov.au

Seasonal workers approved

In what it described as “a first for remote regional areas of Queensland”, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has approved on-farm quarantine arrangements at St George for 34 seasonal workers from Tonga.

In a statement on 23 September, DAF General Manager Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Workers Programme, Peter Donaghy, said the seasonal workers were arriving at a crucial time to harvest significantly sized onion and garlic crops.

“These workers will provide much needed relief and support for growers in this remote region of Queensland,” Mr Donaghy said.

“This is the first time a cohort of seasonal workers has been approved to work in the St George area as the Department works to support the agriculture industry.

“As maintaining public health is a priority, stringent conditions and a strict compliance regime are in place to protect the community.

“Being able to successfully and safely accommodate seasonal workers in remote areas of Queensland is of great importance as we unite and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Mr Donaghy said getting the on-

farm quarantine arrangements for the workers approved was a tribute to the hard work of many people across several organisations.

“Providing the workers required by the agriculture sector while simultaneously keeping the community safe is particularly challenging, especially in remote areas of Queensland,” Mr Donaghy said.

“Representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland Health, the Darling Downs Public Health Unit, the South West Hospital and Health Services, the Federal Government, the Balonne Shire Council, and the approved employer Australian National Pickers Pty Ltd, have worked collaboratively to overcome a number of issues to make on-farm quarantining in St George a reality.

“Learnings from this process will pay further dividends when assessing applications for seasonal workers in other remote parts of Queensland.”

Mr Donaghy said the 34 seasonal workers were arriving as part of the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Workers Program (PLS-SWP).

“The Department has been at the forefront of supporting the agriculture industry since the start of the pandemic

to ensure growers can identify seasonal workforce solutions while keeping Queensland communities safe from COVID-19,” Mr Donaghy said.

“So far, Queensland has successfully brought in 3680 PLS-SWP workers from Pacific Island nations with the lowest risk of COVID-19 transmission to work in the state’s agricultural businesses, with 2294 of those workers having successfully completed on-farm quarantining.

“The Department has further supported the agriculture industry through a range of initiatives including the PickQld initiative, and the Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network Local Solutions initiative.”

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O’Toole said this is wonderful news for the producers in the St George area.

“Balonne Shire Council has been working with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to try to facilitate this arrangement, and we’re so pleased that the Queensland Government and DAF have been able to find a common-sense solution to a critical worker shortage for horticulture farms in our Shire,” Mayor O’Toole said.

“It’s a very welcome outcome.”

Federal funding a welcome boost

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in the town centre.

“Works will include streetscaping, street furniture, landscaping, improved access and natural shade. The enhancements will support and complement the new Hub, currently under construction in Victoria Street.

“The wild dog exclusion fencing project will continue to assist landholders to construct approximately 170 km fencing.

“The Balonne Business Improvement Scheme will support local businesses and promote tourism by improving commercial premises, including exterior façade improvements and efficient energy upgrades.

“Council will advertise the opportunity to participate in this project to all eligible businesses in the Balonne Shire, including the towns of Bollon, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Mungindi, Nindigully, St George and Thallon.”

Balonne cottons on to the water savings

Balonne Shire has been included in a feature segment on the ABC’s *Landline* program about new ways of using water to grow cotton.

The segment by reporter Jon Daly looks at how technology is enabling farmers to tap into a range of revolutionary irrigation systems, potentially helping them to grow more with less while pursuing big water savings.

It went to air on Sunday, 12 September.

To catch up on the story – entitled “Irrigation Revolution: New ways of using water to grow cotton” – look in the “Archives” section of the ABC website:

www.abc.net.au/landline



BALONNE SHIRE COMMUNITY SPORT



Campdrafting returns to Hebel

It's been a long time between runs at Hebel, but after a three year hiatus, a dedicated band of locals have triumphantly returned to the camp.

The town hosted its first Campdraft since 2017 over the weekend - much to the delight of Balonne Shire riders who flocked to the support the event.

Volunteer organisers went above and beyond running a huge 15 event classes across two days, plus a kids' gymkhana - for a truly family-friendly event, thoroughly enjoyed by attendees.

Hebel Campdraft's return was made possible by the local committee and volunteers including president Paul Langley, vice president Kate Treweeke, treasurer Patrick Cross and secretary Shannon Koch.



ALL ACTION: Bill Gordon takes his run at Hebel's first campdraft since 2017.



Jason Southern.



Scott Pfinger.



Ben Hill.



Bryan Southern.



Holly Carrigan.



Jonathan Burrel.