

BALONNE WOMEN ARE BEST IN THE BUSINESS



the Balonne Shire are shining even brighter, after taking out a suite of top prizes at The Greater Downs Women in Business Awards.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole, Liz Hill of Thallon and Sally Rigney of Nindigully each won their respective categories at the awards gala recently, while Nikki Pulfer of Dirranbandi and Kim Wildman of St George received highly commended certifications – a first for the Women in Business Awards. The inclusion of Balonne

Shire women in the awards is another significant first, and Mayor Samantha O'Toole said the considerable representation – and award wins - from the Balonne is something for all residents to celebrate.

READ MORE: PAGE 5



What's On

First 5 Forever

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

WHERE: St George Library **WHEN:** each Friday, 9.30am

COVID-19 Vaccination

South West Hospital and Health Service is on the road protecting our Shire from COVID-19.

WHERE: St George Hospital, outreach clinics on rotation **WHEN:** each weekday

Tennis - it's back!

St George Tennis Club is back on the court this season, with regular fixtures returning in July. All prospective players will need to register their interest by 8 July.

Simply contact club orgainsers Peter (0428 258 601) or Debbie (0488 042 951).

WHERE: Rowden Park Tennis

Courts

WHEN: games start 15 July

St George JRL 50 years

Prepare for a trip down memory lane!
St George JRL is celebrating their golden anniversary in style with a reunion dinner and plenty of footy games across a jam-packed weekend.

WHERE: Rowden Park, St George JRL clubhouse **WHEN:** 24-25 July

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

On 24 June Balonne Shire Council released our budget for the 2021-22 financial year. Of course, one of the main points of interest in a Council budget is always what's happening to rates. How much are they going up?

Well, in 2021-22 our general rates revenue will increase just 2.05 per cent compared to the 2019-20 financial year - the last time Council raised rates.

You will remember that rates were frozen in 2021-21 - there was no increase at all - because of the impact of COVID-19 on Balonne Shire communities.

Also, Council has carefully considered its rating strategy to reduce the impact on those ratepayers - mostly primary producers - who have received significant land valuation increases from the State Government.

Council will apply a 10 per cent limit across all rate categories, so that no ratepayer will see more than a 10 per cent increase in rates reflecting their higher property value.

In Council we are very focused on trying to keep any increases in rates or charges to an absolute minimum.

There are details of the Balonne Shire 2021-22 budget in a special four-page section of this *Balonne Bulletin*, and more information is available on Council's website.

Something exciting is also happening for young people in our Shire.

Youth Council is starting up, and applications are now open to all young people aged 12-25. Youth Council is a chance for them to have their voices heard and really make a difference.



There's more helpful information in this edition, and also on Council's website.

Our people have been achieving great things, and we are proud to say they have won some wonderful awards in recent weeks.

Firstly, congratulations to four outstanding women from the Balonne who were recognised at the Greater Downs Women in Business Awards.

Liz Hill of Thallon and Sally Rigney of Nindigully won their categories at the awards gala, while Nikki Pulfer of Dirranbandi and Kim Wildman of St George received highly commended certificates.

Balonne Shire Council has also won an award for Best Creative Campaign at the Local Government Association of Queensland Awards for Excellence - for those not in governemnt, that is a big deal!

The winning entry was our St George *Matesong*, a social media promotion devised by Council's hard-working Tourism Manager Kim Wildman and well-known local journalist Sally Rigney.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole

St George Library Hub reaches a major milestone in construction

Work on the landmark new St George Library Hub has reached a key milestone.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole and Councillor Rod Avery have turned the ceremonial first sod on the project after demolition of the old buildings on the site was completed recently.

"The demolition work all went smoothly and now we have a clean site for construction to begin on the new Library Hub," Mayor O'Toole said.

"This is an exciting event for the region. The new Library will include a business and learning hub, and provide a wonderful new facility for the people of the Balonne Shire.

'This will be a wonderful resource for everyone, and Council is very proud to see this new complex begin taking shape."

Mayor O'Toole said it was expected the new complex would be completed and ready for use by the end of the year.

"The aim of redeveloping the St George Library – adjacent to the Balonne Shire Council



LET'S GO: Mayor Samantha O'Toole and Cr Rod Avery launch construction of the St George Library Hub with St Hilliers Site Manager Ryan Canning.

offices in Victoria Street – is to create a vibrant 'hub', integrating the library and cultural centre and offering a greater breadth of programs and activities.

"This 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 the current central location in Victoria Street."

Demolition works for the St George Library Hub were carried out by Burke Industries Pty Ltd of Toowoomba.

St Hilliers Pty Ltd is responsible for construction of the St George Library Hub; building design is by Fulton Trotter Architects, and Complete Urban Pty Ltd is managing the project on behalf of Balonne Shire Council.

Balonne, hotspots named Vaccines for

COVID-19 vaccines are rolling out across the Balonne Shire through South West Hospital and Health Service.

St George Hospital is set up as our region's vaccination hub, and the freindly vaxx team is on the road each week to run outreach clinics at other towns.

The location of outreach clinics will be changing week to week, and South West Hospital is announcing the

schedule via its Facebook page. Residents aged 16-59 are

recommended to book ahead for a Pfizer vaccine with South West HHS; those aged 60+ can book an AstraZeneca vaccine through either South West HHS or their local GP.

This week the Queensland Government has made many changes to travel requirements and border closures.

As of 24 June 2021, the state

border is closed to a number of Local Government Areas across New South Wales including the Greater Sydney, Central Coast, Blue Mountains, and Shellharbour regions.

There are many LGA's in these regions, so checking the latest from Queensland Health is vital before travelling.

From 1am Friday 25 June there are no declared hotspots in Victoria or Greater Melbourne.

Water funding in the pipeline a welcome win from QLD budget

Balonne Shire Council has welcomed funding for water security infrastructure in the **Queensland Government** budget, tabled on 15 June.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole said the \$70 million slated to fund water security infrastructure for Councils throughout Oueensland under the **Building Better Regions Fund** (round 6) is very much needed.

"The Local Government Association of Queensland has calculated there are pipes bursting on average every 80 minutes in Queensland's rural towns," she said.

"Obviously there needs to be ongoing funding to address this critical water infrastructure issue."

Mayor O'Toole was, however, disappointed that the Western Roads Upgrade Program was not reinstated despite advocacy for the program by the LGAQ.

"However, the Commonwealth Government has committed to investing \$4.6 billion over the next 10 years on its Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) program, and the State Government is required to match 20 per cent of this funding.

"Council understands this may be why the Queensland Government has not reinstated the Western Roads Upgrade Program."

Investment in ROSI from the Queensland Government will be \$27.37 million in the 2021-22 financial year, and anoher \$29.5 million after that.

Mayor O'Toole welcomed



WATER WIN: Funding for water security infrastructure is a bonus for rural Councils in this year's State Government budget.

\$100 million for Queensland Councils to continue the highly successful Works for Queensland program, but an expected decline in the future may put jobs at risk.

Funding for the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme will remain at \$70 million a year - a figure which has not increased since 2015.

"We support the continued lobbying by the LGAQ to have the State Government increase funding for TIDS to \$100 million by 2024.

Continued funding for the Queensland Drought Assistance and Reform Package of up to \$71.4 million over the next four years to support drought affected communities is also very welcome.

Mayor O'Toole said State and Federal Government grants are an important source of revenue for regional Councils.

"In Balonne Shire, rates make up less than one third of Council's revenue; grants are

vital in allowing us to provide the services our residents need.

"In the current 2020-21 financial year, Council is conducting road resealing programs utilising the Queensland Government's TIDS funding, and Commonwealth Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding.

"The overall Infrastructure Roads capital budget for 2020-21 is \$3.78 million, with \$2.6 million funded through Federal and State programs. "Under Works for

Queensland, Balonne Shire will receive a further \$1.18 million in funding over three years. Projects approved include rural land projects and a housing strategy.

"These figures demonstrate the level of funding in the Queensland Government Budget for local government has major implications for Councils throughout the State, especially rural Councils like Balonne."

Mayoral Budget Statement

This year, our Budget 2021-22 will realise a number of multiyear projects and completion of the \$53 million disaster repair works package from the February 2020 flood event.

The budget continues to build on the work over a number of years to realise our vision to have connected, innovative communities, where economies are strong, and opportunities are abundant.

I am extremely proud of the work our Council has done in this term and the last to bring a range of new opportunities, projects and infrastructure to our Shire.

The last 18 months has been challenging, to say the least, with the February 2020 flood event, COVID-19 restrictions and a March 2021 flood event.

Despite these challenges, Council has progressed and will complete the following projects in 2021-22:

- Digital Connectivity Project that will enhance internet connectivity and improve communications across the Shire;
- Delivery of a range of Wild Dog exclusion fencing projects;
- The St George
 Aerodrome Industrial Hangar
 General Aviation Area;
- The Dirranbandi Dip (Thermal Baths) through the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program;
- The Mungindi River Foreshore project;
 - Construction of the new

St George Library Hub;

- The Bollon Skate Park;
- The St George Splash Park at the swimming pool;
- Over \$53 million in flood recovery works arising from the February 2020 flood event; and
- **Increased Roads** Maintenance Performance Contract works to service our State road network. Many of the funding opportunities have had a life of two to three years and continue to provide opportunity and support for local business, landholders and contractors to work with council to deliver the projects. Council has always had a fiscal responsibility to deliver a budget that works toward financial sustainability. The 2021-22 budget is challenged by the delivery of our major projects that will require sound cash flow management. Revenue has been assessed for all projects that are completed over multiple years to determine whether they are significantly specific to recognise the revenue received as expenditure occurs. To this end Council will experience an operating deficit of \$12.17 million for 2021-22, due in part to 40 per cent of the \$53 million in flood recovery monies being received in 2020-21, or scheduled to be received in the 2022-23 financial year.

It is required by the accounting

standard to



recognise revenue in the year it is received and not the year it is expended.

The Budget for 2021-22 is conservative with a focus on delivering on funded programs, flood recovery works and business as usual. The good news is that we will be able to deliver over \$16 million in capital projects with over \$9.45 million of this funded by grant programs.

For operational projects (excluding flood recovery works) Council will expend \$1.33 million with grant funding of \$2.25 million.

In the long term there continues to be a risk of reduced grant funding and therefore Council continues to work hard to explore ways to raise our own revenue without increasing the burden on our ratepayers.

Our accreditation with the Department of Transport and Main Roads is set to commence in 2021-22 and provide opportunity for an increase in road contract works, which provide revenue to Council from both in and outside the Shire.

Rates and Charges

Council's general rate revenue represents approximately 30 per cent of Council's total revenue and is insufficient for long-term financial sustainability.

A rating strategy adopted by Council at its meeting on 17 June 2021 provides details of its strategy to simplify the rate model.

Council has carefully considered its rating strategy to reduce the impact on ratepayers with significant land valuations following the 2021-22 valuations.

Council will apply a 10 per cent limitation across all rate categories so that no ratepayer will experience more than a 10 per cent increase in rates.

Council will continue to offer a discount of 10 per cent over a period of 30 days.

Two new residential categories have been introduced, amalgamating categories 1, 2 and 3 into two new categories 4A and 4B.

The two new categories base rates from a valuation of less than \$15,000 for residential properties (4A) and \$15,001 and over including rural residential (4B) as opposed to land size.

The budget includes an increase of water, sewer and cleansing charges of 2 per cent across the board for all properties (except Mungindi).

Overall Council's general rate revenue will increase no more than 2.05 per cent from 2019-20 (Noting there was no increase in rates or utility charges in 2020-21 financial

year due to COVID-19). When setting the rates, Council has:

- evaluated and determined the range of services provided to the community, for example waste management, local roads, suburban and rural care:
- decided how much money is needed to fund services and infrastructure;
- established how much funding it can expect to receive from the Federal and State Governments and other income sources:
- determined how much money is required from rates and charges to cover the balance of expenditures;
- decided on the best mix of rates and charges to provide services to the community; and
- considered the economic conditions impacting the Shire.

In summary, the following rate strategies will minimise the impact on individual landholders:

- No more than 2.05 per cent increase in rate revenue across all rating categories;
- Continuation of the seven-year rating strategy to achieve a single rural rate by 2025-26;
- A 2 per cent increase for water, waste, and sewerage utility charges (excluding Mungindi);
- A limitation of 10 per cent on all general rates under Section 116 of the Local Government Regulation 2012;
- Council will continue to issue two (2) six-monthly rates notices;

- Council will offer a 30day discount period for the August and February levies;
- Council will continue to deliver a waste collection service offering recycling services and landfill; and
- Pensioners will continue to receive a maximum concession of \$170 per annum for qualifying properties.

Council recognises the responsibility it is charged with and has concentrated on creating a budget that can deliver essential services to our communities, whilst keeping rate increases to a minimum.

Budget Highlights

Our capital budget for 2021-22 is \$16 million, of which \$9.45 million is funded by grant revenue through State and Federal Government initiatives.

Roads: Construction and Maintenance

Our team will continue to conduct re-seal programs utilising Transport and Infrastructure Development Scheme funds (Queensland Government) and Roads to Recovery funding (Australian Government).

The overall Infrastructure Roads capital budget for 2020-21 is \$3.78 million with \$2.6 million funded through Federal and State funding.

Flood recovery works continue with over \$53 million in damage repair approved by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.

The Roads Maintenance Performance Contract in 2021-22 will also increase to \$5 million, providing job security

and furhter opportunities for our roads crews.

Digital Connectivity

Council will complete the delivery of the Building our Regions funding program and the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program to improve the digital connectivity across the Shire.

A further project secured by Field Solutions Group will include Bollon in the Regional Connectivity Federally funded project.

Works for Queensland

Balonne Shire will receive a further \$1.18 million in funding under the State Government's Works for Queensland Program over three financial years 2021-24.

Projects approved by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning include a range of rural land projects and a housing strategy.

Tourism and Visitor Services

2020-21 saw a decrease in expenditure for tourism and visitor services due to the Pandemic.

In 2021-22 Council will offer \$60,000 to applicants under its Tourism and Events Donations and Assistance program.

Planning will continue to develop an iconic tourism attraction and/or strategies for future funding opportunities.

The Welcome Mate marketing campaign will continue as we call on Kylie Minogue to come visit our Shire.

Economic Development

Council is hoping to secure additional funding to continue Business Mentoring



ADOPTED: Balonne Shire Council has finalised the 2021-22 budget.

and Economic Development activities into 2021-22.

To date, \$1 million in funding from the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program has supported Economic Development in the Shire, delivering \$500,000 in Business Mentoring and \$492,000 for the Dirranbandi Beautification Scheme.

A recent deputation to Canberra provided the opportunity to brief politicians about the Balonne Shire and promote the issues important to our Shire.

Aerodromes

The \$1 million General Aviation Development funded by a Building Our Regions grant has been delayed, however will be completed by November 2021.

This will see the development of the taxi way and land made available for lease or purchase to build hangars.

Community Development

Council continues to work with Queensland Health to secure the Balonne In-Step

program, and other funding partners.

The Multicultural Development Officer project continues to assist the community to welcome migrants and what services would be required to support them.

Council's community grants and sponsorship program will be maintained at \$60,000, including funding to assist community groups to prepare traffic management plans.

Sport, Recreation, Parks and Gardens

All towns have benefited from the Works for Queensland and Local Roads and Community Infrastructure funding programs with many set to be completed in 2021-22, including the Bollon Skate Park and Splash Park at St George swimming pool.

Council will continue to consult with the community as we plan and program works across the Shire.

The budget 2021-22 will build on the spirit of Christmas

across the Shire with the purchase of additional festive lights that will have the dual purpose of lighting our townships all year round.

Health, Environmental and Rural Services

A range of capital works will be completed across our stock routes and watering points with State Government funds.

Our signature projects for Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing Special Rate Scheme and Murray Darling Basin grants will be finalised.

A funded Cultural Burning project will commence to manage our stock routes in consultation with indigenous stakeholders.

Council will actively seek further funding for exclusion fencing with the aim of achieving 75 per cent of the

Shire fenced.

Water and Sewerage Works

The capital works budget for water projects is \$1.08 million, with \$530,00 funded by State Government grants.

Waste

Funding to implement Council's Solid Waste Strategy, adopted on 27 May 2021 will include engagement of a Waste Officer with the task of continuously improving our landfill facilities and to achieve compliance with **Environmental licensing** requirements.

Conclusion

Council's forecast revenue for 2021-22 is \$53.2 million (excluding capital) and expenditure of \$74.8 million.

Overall, the proposed budget has a significant deficit before capital revenue of \$21.6

million, with an operating deficit after Capital of \$12.17 million.

This being due to the recognition of revenue of approximately 40 per cent of the \$53 million in flood recovery monies received in 2020-21 or scheduled to be received in 2022-23 being recognised in the year they are received - not the year they are expended.

Council is committed to delivering the best outcomes for our community and continues to work hard at a Regional, State and Federal level to represent the interests of our Shire.

I take this opportunity to thank our councillors for their considered approach on this challenging budget.

Thank you also to our executive team and staff who have brought the budget together and continue to work above and beyond to deliver services to our community.

Finally, I want to thank the community for their support, patience and co-operation as we deliver on flood recovery works and projects above our day-to-day operations. Our focus for 2021-22 will be sound cash flow management to deliver the flood recovery works, contract works and grant funded projects.

Council will continue to work with local business and contractors to stimulate the economy, providing support, work, and jobs as we roll out the funding programs.

> Cr Samantha O'Toole **Mayor**



BUDGET COMPLETE: Balonne Shire Councillors and Senior Leadership Group, following adoption of the 2021-22 budget.

Our Matesong is still a winner: team wins Award for Excellence

Remember our toe-tapping, bush-whacking, fun-filled parody, the St George Matesong?

Everyone's favourite tourism video has won big at the Local Government Association of Queensland Awards for Excellence, taking Best Creative Campaign.

Matesong was devised by Balonne Shire Council's hardworking Tourism Manager Kim Wildman, and well known journalist Sally Rigney, who was also part of Councils' team at the time.

The video was originally intended as a fun addition to Council's existing Welcome Mate tourism campaign, aimed at attracting visitors and lifting spirits in the commuity after years of drought.

The fun parody of Tourism Australia's Matesong, which featured pop superstar Kylie Monigue and comedian Adam Hills, was arguably even more successful than the original; it certainly exceeded all expectations, and put Balonne Shire on the map.



WINNING TEAM: Sally Rigney and Kim Wildman of Balonne Shire Council received the LGAQ Award for Excellence - Best Creative Campaign.

The video mobilised the entire Balonne community, not only in supporting the campaign, but getting actively involved as on-screen extras and vocal ambassadors for the region.

Word quickly spread to family, friends, and eventually the world - all via social media.

Our Matesong also received the ultimate accolade when Kylie Minogue herself gave it the seal of approval, sharing the video on her own channels.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole said the public response to *Matesong* - both at the time it was released, and even now has been outstanding, and the latest award win gives it even more deserving recognition.

"I congratulate everyone who was involved in this project," she said.

" Our *Matesong* is filled with joy and shows the best of our Shire. It has been a wonderful success that we can all be so very proud of."

Balonne women win Business Awards

FROM PAGE 1

"To have so many of us representing the Balonne in the Women in Business Awards is a testament to our people," she said.

"Our little group represents a much wider community which has even more driven, entrepreneurial, tenacious and passionate residents who make our towns a little bit better.

"I'm so proud of Sally, Liz,

Nikki and Kim; to be held in the same esteem as these ladies is an honour in itself, because each of them have made so many great achievements."

The Balonne Shire representatives received:

- Sally Rigney: Greater **Downs Woman in Business** of the Year.
- Liz Hill: Community Dedication Award.
 - Mayor Samantha

O'Toole: Mary Wagner

- Nikki Pulfer: Rising Star Award (highly commended).
- Kim Wildman: **Business Adaption and** Ingenuity Award (highly commended)

The highly commended award was introduced in recognition of strong applicants including Ms Wildman and Ms Pulfer.

Drivers take note: Carnarvon Highway speed limit increased

Great news for drivers on the Carnarvon Highway between St George and Surat: the maximum speed limit on this section has been increased to 110 kilometres per hour.

The official changeover date was Thursday 10 June 2021, with the new limit applying to motorists using this section of the highway north of St George from now on.

Department of Transport and Main Roads (Southern Queensland) Regional Director Kym Murphy said a speed limit review had been completed following significant upgrade works on this section of the Carnarvon Highway.

"Between 2017 and 2019, we undertook works at multiple sites between St George and Surat to improve safety on the highway," she said.

"These works opened the door for TMR to complete a speed limit review.

"The review recommendation was then tabled at a Speed management



WATCH THE ROAD: The speed limit on Carnarvon Highway bwteen St George and Surat has been increased, following a long-running series of road upgrades.

Committee meeting where representatives considered the recommendation and endorsed a permanent increase to the speed limit."

That committee included representatives from Queensland Police Service, Maranoa Regional Council, Balonne Shire Council and TMR.

"I urge all motorsits to observe the new speed limit signage and always drive to the conditions," Ms Murphy said.

New speed limite signs have been installed along the stretch of highway.

However, they do not negate the need for drivers to always drive to the road conditions,.

Prior to 10 June 2021, the speed limit on the St George to Surat section of Carnarvon Hwy was posted at 100km/h.

Rural Aid extends mouse plague relief

Australia's leading rural charity, Rural Aid, has announced a \$1 million fund to assist mouse plague affected farmers across the country.

Rural Aid has opened applications for a \$1000 emergency support payment, to assist affected primary producers with recovery.

Rural Aid CEO John Warlters said the plague is a living nightmare for farmers.

"The ongoing mouse plague

is crippling farmers' finances and wreaking havoc with their mental and physical health," Mr Warlters said.

"Farmers have reported decimated hay storages, chewed out machinery and destroyed crops.

"But arguably the most horrific part of this plague is the damage these rodents have caused inside farmers' homes.

"Mice have crept into every crevice of every cupboard.

There isn't a corner of the house they can't be found."

The Rural Aid mouse plague fund will help farmers replace damaged household goods and fodder supplies.

Farmers can assess their eligibility and apply for the financial assistance via Rural Aid's website: www.ruralaid. org.au/mouseplague.

Individuals and businesses can also donate to the cause via the site.



Youth Council

Applications are open!

What's Youth Council?

An opportunity for people aged 12-25 to have their voice heard and make a change.

Want a new park? A new arts or dance group?

This is how you can do it!

You can be active in your community.

Get your application from:

- School Office
- Lifeline
- Big Buddy
- Aboriginal Housing
- Balonne Shire Council
- · Goondir Health

Want to know more?

Call: 07 4620 8888
Email: council@balonne.qld.gov.au
Visit: Balonne Shire Council

You want change? You make it happen!



Balonne Shire Church Services

Anglican/Lutheran, St George 8.30am, each Sunday.

Bush Disciples, St George 10am, 1st - 4th Sunday.

Church of Christ, Dirranbandi 6pm, 1st and 3rd Sunday. 10am, 2nd and 4th Sunday

Hebel Catholic Church 10am, 1st Sunday. Immaculate Heart of Mary, Bollon

11am, 4th Sunday.

Riverlife Church, St George 9.30am, each Sunday.

Riverlife Church, Warrawee 10am, 2nd Wednesday.

St Patrick's, St George 6pm, 1st and 3rd Saturday. 8.30am, 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday. **St Andrew's, St George** 9am, each Sunday.

St George Uniting Church

9am, each Sunday.

St Therese's, Dirranbandi 8am, 1st and 3rd Sunday.

Thallon Catholic Church 10am, 3rd Sunday.

Want to include your Church service or Church group meeting?

Email: media@balonne.qld.gov.au with your Church name, plus the time and location of worship.



<u>Fixtures are Back!!!</u>

Running during school term beginning 15 July 2021

Please contact Peter (0428 258 601) or Debbie (0488 042 951) to register your interest by **8 July 2021**.