



## Council Working to Build Resilient Road Infrastructure

Unseasonal heavy rain and flooding events in our region have resulted in extensive damage and repeated road closures to major State roads across the Balonne Shire. Numerous local roads have also been affected.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O’Toole said it is critical that the resilience of these vulnerable State roads be improved, helping our communities maintain connectedness and reduce hardship during and after natural disaster events.

“We are acutely aware of the serious impact these road closures have had on our communities, industries and businesses who rely on these vital public assets,” she said.

“Council has been tirelessly working with Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to work through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) process and associated works as quickly as possible.”

“I have been resolute in advocating for a positive outcome for the Betterment applications for the Castlereagh Highway between Dirranbandi and Hebel, meeting with a range of government ministers, senior department staff, the Director General of TMR and the CEO of QRA on multiple occasions.”

“I am extremely confident that we will see a good result from our hard work and advocacy. While the process will

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# What's On

## **BOLLON QCWA CHRISTMAS TREE**

BBQ dinner, multi draw raffles, bar available. Santa coming for a visit too.

**WHEN:** Sat 3 Dec, 5pm to 11pm

**WHERE:** Walter Austin Park, Bollon

## **THALLON CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK**

BBQ dinner, Carols, QCWA Raffle, bar available. Special Guest SANTA arrives at 6pm.

**WHEN:** Sat 3 Dec, 6pm to 10:30pm

**WHERE:** Town Park, Pine St, Thallon

## **THALLON COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

Raffles, bring a gift to receive a gift, entry cost \$10 per person. Limited seats available, call Ann on 4625 9131 or Liz on 0428 259 299 to book your seat.

**WHEN:** Mon 5 Dec, from 11:30am

**WHERE:** QCWA Building, Thallon

## **CAROLS ON THE BALONNE**

BBQ, drinks and dessert available for purchase.

**WHEN:** Tues 7 Dec, from 6:30pm

**WHERE:** The Amphitheatre, St George

## **NINDIGULLY CHRISTMAS TREE & SOCIAL TENNIS**

Bring a plate of finger food, salad or sweets, Santa may pop in for a visit! RSVP for catering.

**WHEN:** Fri 9 Dec, from 6pm

**WHERE:** Nindigully Sports Club

## **DIRRANBANDI CHRISTMAS IN THE SHOWGROUNDS**

Live music, street science experiments, Santa, lolly drop, jumping castle, kids games, spin & win, ham raffles, market stalls, BBQ and bar.

**WHEN:** Fri 9 Dec, 5pm till late

**WHERE:** Dirranbandi Showgrounds

## **BOLLON SENIORS CHRISTMAS PARTY LUNCHEON**

Please RSVP to Sophie on 4625 5450 by 5 December

**WHEN:** Wed 14 Dec, from 11:30am

**WHERE:** Bollon Pub

## **ST GEORGE CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL**

Markets, food stalls, kids rides, live entertainment and thousands of dollars in prizes and giveaways.

**WHEN:** Fri 16 Dec, 4:30pm to 7:30pm

**WHERE:** The Hub, Victoria St, St George

## **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](mailto:media@balonne.qld.gov.au)

**2** Balonne Bulletin

# A message from the Mayor

As we find ourselves racing to the end of another year, I find myself reflecting on the year that was 2022. For Council, it has been a year of wins and losses, challenges and celebrations.

Our region has been repeatedly hit with extended periods of rain and flooding events, which has put an enormous amount of pressure on the State and local road networks running through our Shire. We know that constant road closures have had an enormous impact on our communities, industries, and businesses.

I want to reassure you that I, and our Council team, have been working tirelessly with the State Government to secure the required funding to address road impacts due to flooding. Whilst I am confident of a positive outcome from our advocacy efforts, these processes do take time to work through. We will continue advocating and working with the Queensland and Australian Government to ensure they are delivering long term solutions, rebuilding our roads to better withstand and minimise the impact of any future natural disasters.

On a more positive note, we have had some wins for education and learning opportunities in our Shire. We are working closely with Education Queensland to ensure we are getting the best educational outcomes for our shire. Education Queensland has committed to significantly increasing support to both the St George State High School and St George State Primary School including new positions such as the Lead Principal and additional Deputy Principals. These additional resources and the advertising of the substantial Principal position should further support students, family and community in 2023, assisting in better community partnerships in the future.

Still on education, Council have taken out four awards and been acknowledged as a national leader for partnering and collaborating with Country Universities Centre, the St George and District Chamber of Commerce and the broader community, to create The Hub in St George. These awards highlight the achievements of our team in growing educational opportunities within the region and for the community to 'grow its own' into the future. I have no doubt that this is just the beginning of many more great outcomes for us in this space.

Of course, there will be challenges in the



year ahead. Once again, we are bracing ourselves for the potential of further water licence buybacks in the Murray Darling Basin. Since 2016 we have been urging the Australian Government to work with our agricultural industries on developing sustainable measures that deliver water efficiencies while protecting our local economy, local employment and education capacity in our region.

We will continue to work with the Australian Government to achieve the best outcome for our region and the sustainability of our river system.

There are so many people in our shire who give and work tirelessly to keep us all healthy, safe, supported and protected. For these people I want to express my deep gratitude for all the work they do and hope they can find time to rest and recharge before the end of the year.

Christmas means different things for each of us, for me it is a time to focus on the importance of family, friends and our community. I hope we will all have an opportunity to enjoy the things that are important to us and bring us joy over the Christmas break.

This is also a time to consider our broader community. If, like me, you have any last-minute Christmas shopping to do, I encourage you to buy from and support our local businesses. If you have the capacity to, I encourage you to think about those in our community who may not have family and friends around or who may need a little extra support.

For anyone travelling over the break, please travel safely and take extra care during this busy time on our roads.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

*Samantha O'Toole*



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take a little longer than we would all like, I am asking our residents and ratepayers to please be patient and bear with us as we work hard to ensure long term solutions are funded and this essential road is rebuilt to better withstand and minimise the impact of future natural disasters.”

Betterment Funding Arrangements have now been submitted by TMR to complete a long-term upgrade to identified sections of the Castlereagh Highway between Dirranbandi and Hebel. TMR aim to release tenders for the work in March, Council will be one of many entities to submit a tender for this work. TMR have indicated that work should

begin in the new financial year.

“While Council is limited by the fact that this is a State owned and controlled road, we will continue to advocate and work with TMR, the Queensland Government and the Australian Government to ensure this road is fixed as a matter of priority,” concluded Mayor O’Toole.

Service requests for State controlled roads, including Castlereagh Highway, can be raised directly with TMR via email to [SouthWest.Office@tmr.qld.gov.au](mailto:SouthWest.Office@tmr.qld.gov.au). Queries and requests for further information can also be directed to Balonne Shire Council on 07 4620 8888.

# MDBA Chief Announces Major Water Shortfall

Murray-Darling Basin Authority chief executive Andrew McConville addressed the National Rural Press Club at the end November, stating that the government had “no choice” but to start planning how to make up for the anticipated 190 to 315 gigalitre shortfall of its water recovery target.

Balonne Shire Council Mayor Samantha O’Toole is warning against considering water licence buybacks.

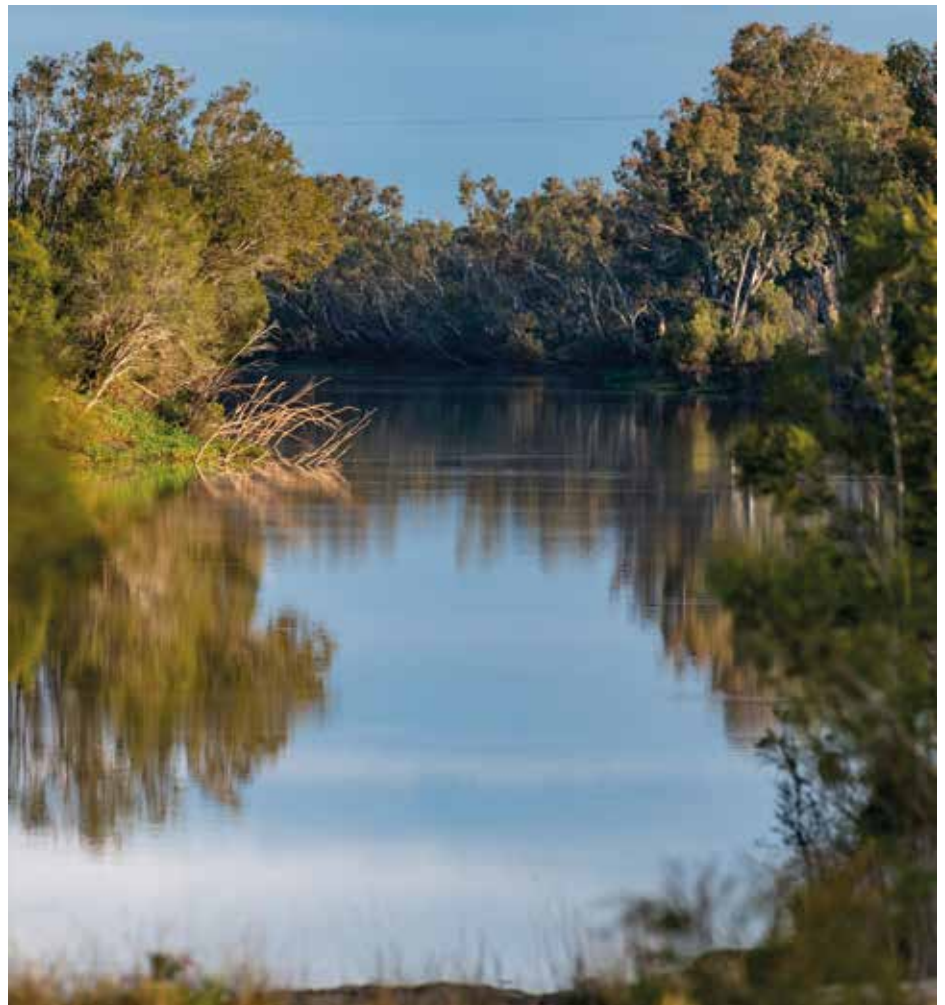
“Our river system is the lifeblood of our rural community, it is vital that we achieve a balance between the ongoing sustainability of our communities, our industries and the environment,” she said.

“Since 2016, we have been actively advocating for the Australian Government to work with our nationally significant agricultural sector to help achieve long-term sustainable water efficiency measures that do not cause significant impacts to our rural and remote community.”

The Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) Northern Basin Review, released in 2016, confirmed that water buybacks undertaken in the Balonne Shire have had enormous and devastating impacts on the sustainability and viability of our nationally significant agricultural industry, associated rural industries and employment in our Shire.

The MDBA Review stated that Dirranbandi lost an estimated 27% of its irrigation area and more than 15% of agriculture and non-agriculture private sector jobs since water buybacks commenced. School enrolments dropped by 50% in the five years prior to that report being released.

The report also clearly demonstrat-



ed that businesses operating in the Balonne Shire were under significant stress as a result of buybacks. In St George, jobs in agriculture dropped by more than 15% and non-agriculture private sector jobs were down more than 20%.

“We recognise the efforts of the Australian Government in acknowledging and attempting to address some of the issues created by water buybacks. However, based on the modelling conducted as part of the MDBA report, it is abundantly clear

that farms within our Shire cannot sustain any further buybacks without further aggravating the significant social and economic disruption already endured by our communities,” said Mayor O’Toole.

“We cannot sustain and will not support any further water buybacks in any way.”

Balonne Shire Council will continue to work with the Australian Government to achieve the best outcome for the region and the sustainability of the river system.

# Christmas Carnivals and Events to light up Balonne

Balonne Shire is set to come alive with Christmas Spirit over this festive season.

With markets, food stalls, kids rides, live entertainment and thousands of dollars in prizes and giveaways, there will be something for everyone with a huge range of Christmas carnivals and events happening across the Balonne Shire.

Balonne Shire Mayor, Samantha O'Toole, said it is wonderful to see our communities getting into the Christmas spirit.

"It's great to see so many of our towns, organisations and local businesses contributing time and money towards a huge range of Christmas events in our shire, I'd urge anyone wanting to get into the Christmas spirit to get involved and get behind these fantastic events," Mayor O'Toole said.

"This is a wonderful time of year to come together as a community at events that bring everyone so much joy."

"I would like to particularly thank the tireless efforts of the local community groups and volunteers that bring these events together."

With the flood levels starting to drop on our roadways, we are delighted to hear that Santa himself will be making an appearance at many of the events scheduled to take place this month.

If you're keen to get involved, attend or support one of the many Christmas events happening this year, check out the What's On section page three for more details.



# Balonne Officially a Small Business Friendly Town

Small businesses in the Balonne region are set to benefit from a new Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) commitment made by Balonne Shire Council.

Balonne Shire Council Mayor Samantha O'Toole said it's vital Council provides the support it can especially in light of the recent natural disaster

events.

"Small business is the heart of regional communities. They are the people who live and work here. They create employment opportunities, provide essential goods and services, and play a critical role in the social fabric of the region," Mayor O'Toole said.

Balonne Shire Council Mayor Samantha O'Toole, and Balonne Shire Council CEO Matthew Magin co-signed the SBFC charter with Queensland Small Business Commissioner Maree Adshead and Minister for Employment and Small Business Di Farmer.

The SBFC Program has been developed by the Small Business Commissioner and aims to recognise and encourage councils to actively support small businesses. There are currently 37 SBFC across Queensland who have signed the SBFC charter and pledging the following to their small business communities:

- communicate and engage
- raise small businesses profile and capability
- support resilience and recovery
- simplify administration and regulation (red tape reduction)
- ensure fair procurement and prompt payment terms
- promote place-based activities.

Find out more about the Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) Program at [www.business.qld.gov.au/qsbfc](http://www.business.qld.gov.au/qsbfc).



Balonne Shire Council Mayor Samantha O'Toole with Queensland Small Business Commissioner Maree Adshead and Minister for Employment and Small Business Di Farmer.



# Balonne Leads Nation in Creating Regional Education Opportunities

After receiving numerous local and State awards, Balonne Shire Council has now taken out a National award at the 2022 Local Government Professionals National Federation Awards for their collaboration to create 'The Hub' in St George.

'The Hub' facility provides regional students with the opportunity to follow higher learning opportunities via dedicated study and learning spaces, free access to high-speed internet, modern technology and general academic support.

This prestigious award celebrates the successful collaboration between Balonne Shire Council, Country Universities Centre and the St George and District Chamber of Commerce.

Balonne Shire Mayor, Samantha O'Toole, expressed her appreciation for the award which recognises Council's vision to grow educational opportunities within the region and for the community to 'grow its own' into the future.

The Hub is continuing to exceed targets and expectations with over 75 students now using the facility, proving the community need for a supported educational experience," she said.

"This award is an acknowledgement of the work Council is doing to support hard working students across Balonne to achieve their goals and use their skills and knowledge in their own hometown."



Alix Greenhill, Centre Manager of The Hub; Matthew Magin, Chair - Country Universities Centre Balonne.



**ST GEORGE COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL**  
*and markets*  
**Friday**  
**16th December 2022**  
**4.30pm to 7.30pm**

Mega Draw    Santa arrives at 5pm  
 Late Night Shopping    Markets  
 Food Stalls    Face Painting  
 Children Activities    Raffles  
 Entertainment by Andersonlane  
 & Fijian Gospel Choir  
 Announcement of the Winner of the  
 Tinsel Trail Competition

**at the Hub**

For all enquiries email  
[admin@stgeorgecoc.org.au](mailto:admin@stgeorgecoc.org.au) or call  
 Samantha Cott on 0437 062 823

Friday  
 9th  
 December  
 2022  
 5 pm till late

**Christmas in the Showgrounds**

**COME & JOIN US**  
 Hosted by the Dirranbandi Show Society

Proudly Sponsored By:

Australian Rural Leadership Foundation  
 Future Drought Fund  
 Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**Care Balonne**  
 CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

**TRACC** | Tackling Regional Adversity through Connected Communities

**STREET SCIENCE - HANDS ON EXPERIMENTS**    **SANTA LOLLY DROP JUMPING CASTLE KIDS GAMES**    **SPIN & WIN HAM RAFFLES MARKET STALLS BBQ & BAR**

**LIVE MUSIC "MISSING LINK"**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
 MEGAN DESHON - 07 46250969 / 0428 250977  
 SECRETARY@DIRRANBANDISHOW.COM.AU

The Combined Churches of  
 St George present

**The Carols on the Balonne**

Tuesday, 6 December 2022  
 St George Amphitheatre  
 BBQ - 6:00pm | Carols - 6:30pm

**BBQ, drinks and dessert available for purchase**

**THALLON'S COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

**CELEBRATIONS AT THE QCWA BUILDING**

**ENTRY COST: \$10 per Person**  
**MONDAY, 5TH OF DECEMBER FROM 11.30AM**

**RAFFLES ON THE DAY**  
 BRING A GIFT TO RECEIVE A GIFT  
 (Value of \$10 - \$15)

**Limited seats available.**  
**Book your seat now.**  
 For more information & to RSVP contact

Ann Perse 4625 9131  
 Liz Hill 0428 259 299

**Care Balonne**  
 CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

**CWA**

**QCWA**



# Balonne Shire Council Welcomes New Councillor



BSC Mayor and Councillors welcome Councillor Alex Benn with wife, Dr Karen Benn (absent: Cr Avery)

Alex Benn was officially sworn in as a councillor at Balonne Shire Council on Thursday 10 November, after being elected unopposed, as declared by the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ).

Councillor Benn has filled the vacancy created after former Councillor Ian Todd resigned in September 2022, following more than five years in the role.

The ECQ declared the result on Wednesday 2 November 2022. Alex Benn was declared the elected candidate after the ECQ received one candidate nomination for the by-election, which was due to be held later this month. He is excited to take on the role of representing his community.

“It is an honour to serve the people of the Balonne Shire. I am looking forward to working with the Council team and residents to support the Council ethos of welcoming, connected and innovative communities, where economies are strong, and opportunities are abundant.” Councillor Benn said.

Mayor Samantha O’Toole was delighted to welcome Councillor Benn to the Balonne Shire team.

“I would like to congratulate Councillor Benn on the result,” said Mayor O’Toole.

“We are looking forward to working with him, hearing new perspectives and learning more about the aspirations he has for our communities and residents.”

Councillor Benn attended his first council meeting on 17 November 2022. He will serve as councillor until the next election which will be held in March 2024.

## New Remote Cameras Help Monitor Floods

Council has installed a range of remote access cameras in 36 strategic locations across the Shire’s waterways to deliver real-time monitoring of flood levels at roadways throughout the region.

Each Camera is fully self-contained and run from solar power linked to the Balonne Shire Emergency Dashboard and feeding information back to Council’s Infrastructure team.

Each location has different requirements including some that also activate Flood Warning Lighting to alert both Council and local traffic. The three types of cameras, Tilting Mast cameras, Local Flood Warning Signs and Tower camera sites.

Each Camera is fully self-contained and run from solar power linked to the Balonne Shire Emergency Dashboard and feeding information back to Council’s Infrastructure team.



Deputy Mayor Richard Lomman Councillor Alex Benn and Mayor Samantha O’Toole





## Opening hours over Christmas

### **Balonne Shire Council's administration office in St George**

**CLOSED** Mon 26 Dec 2022 to Mon 2 Jan 2023 **RE-OPENING** Tues 3 Jan 2023

### **St George Visitor Information Centre**

**CLOSED** 25 and 26 Dec 2022 and 1 Jan 2023 **RE-OPENING** Mon 2 Jan 2023

**OPEN** 27 to 31 Dec inclusive between 9am and 12pm

### **St George and Dirranbandi Libraries**

**CLOSED** Sat 24 Dec 2022 **RE-OPENING** Tues 3 Jan 2023

### **Thallon and Hebel Libraries**

**CLOSED** Wed 28 Dec 2022 **RE-OPENING** Wed 4 Jan 2023

### **Bollon Library**

**CLOSED** Wed 28 Dec and Fri 30 December **RE-OPENING** Wed 4 Jan 2023

### **St George Depot**

**CLOSED** Tues 20 Dec to Tues 3 Jan **RE-OPENING** Wed 4 Jan 2023

For any emergency situation, call Council's after-hours service 24/7 on (07) 4620 8888.

The Dashboard provides alerts and up to date information on road closures and weather conditions.



To opt into the alerts, visit:  
<http://emergency.balonne.qld.gov.au>