

Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

ISSUE 9 | 15 OCTOBER 2021

Go West? WHERE WILL I LIVE?



A recently-released study reveals housing shortages are holding back growth in western Queensland, including Balonne Shire.

The study describes the housing shortage as “severe”. It has calculated the shortfall in housing across the region at 1,480 dwellings. On top of that, council-supplied housing needs to increase by 296 dwellings, and 248 council-owned dwellings need major refurbishment.

It says the under-investment

in housing in the region is also significant. The level of investment into housing in Western Queensland – calculated on a per-person basis – is less than one-fifth of what is invested in Greater Brisbane.

Over the three years to June 2020, the average value of approved residential building work – whether new home building or renovation work – was a mere \$320 per person across the 22 local government areas (LGAs) in western Queensland.

In Greater Brisbane, the equivalent figure was \$2,675.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) – formed by representatives of 22 councils covering 60 per cent of the land area of Queensland – commissioned the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) to develop the WQAC *Housing Solutions Study – To Build and Grow the Potential of Western Queensland*.

[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.

WHERE: St George Library

WHEN: each Friday, 9.30am

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

Real Rural Women's Leadership

Care Balonne is partnering with *Real Rural Women's Leadership* to run a series of free workshops. Whether you're already leading the charge in your community, or are ready to start that journey, this is an ideal opportunity for learning and growth.

For more, phone: 07 4625 5450

WHERE: Care Balonne

WHEN: 25-26 October

Bollon Multicultural Feast

Cultures from around the world are being celebrated in Bollon. Join the community for a delicious long lunch, complete with music and exciting guest speakers who will share their fabulous personal stories.

WHERE: Bollon Hall

WHEN: 31 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

It is with great sadness we say goodbye to one of the loveliest and kindest members of our community.

Kathy Avery, wife of Councillor Rod Avery, has been taken from us in what can only be described as a real tragedy and way too early for someone who had only recently retired and had wonderful plans to spend quality time with husband Rod, children and grandchildren, as well as travelling the country.

There are many people in all communities who go through life being responsible citizens and living a good life and then there are those people like Kathy who simply struggle to fit in everything they want to do and achieve – not for themselves but for their community.

Kathy, and indeed Rod, have given selflessly to our community as a whole, numerous organisations and professionally through their chosen vocations.

Kathy was universally loved and everyone who met her was immediately drawn to her warmth, kindness and willingness to help anyone in our community irrespective of who they were.



Kathy will be missed literally by everybody in Balonne.

I ask everyone to pause and reflect on a life lived to the fullest, giving so freely of herself to so many, and to give thanks for having had the opportunity to know her and call her your friend.

Goodbye Kathy. We will miss you so much.

Our thoughts and prayers are with your family and friends as they come to terms with your loss and learn to live their lives with you as the beacon on the hill for how they should do so.

*Mayor
Samantha O'Toole*

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Our editions are available online - simply scan the QR code



Applications open for fence funding

Applications are open for \$1.5 million in funding for Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing in the Balonne Shire.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said the funding came from the third round of the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Economic Development Program.

"With this funding, we hope to see another 170 kilometres of exclusion fencing constructed by 30 May next year," Mayor O'Toole said.

"The fencing protects grazing land suited to small stock like sheep and goats, and previous exclusion fencing has already generated economic benefits in the Balonne Shire, helping to rejuvenate the wool and sheep-meat industry and expansion into goat production."

The Mayor said applications for funding are now open and close on Friday, 5 November.

"All rural properties within the Balonne Shire are eligible to apply for funding.

"Funding will be based on a fifty-fifty co-contribution between the landholder and Council, with Council being responsible for the procurement of materials, and labour and construction costs being covered by the landholder.

"Materials costs are capped at \$8,000 per linear kilometre, with landholders required to pay for any additional material costs above that



APPLY NOW: \$1.5 million in grant funding for Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing is now available. To get on board contact Council.

cap.

"Council will make final decisions on successful applications no later than 6 December."

Mayor O'Toole said a representative of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning will be visiting St George for any landholders wanting assistance completing their application.

They will be at the Balonne Shire Council offices in St George on the following days:

Wednesday, 13 October

Thursday, 21 October

Wednesday, 27 October

Wednesday, 3 November

Thursday, 4 November

To apply for funding, landholders need to use the Balonne Shire Council's Vendor Panel Portal.

To access the Portal, please contact Council: 07 4620 8888, or procurement@balonne.qld.gov.au.

Note: This project was funded by the Australian Government under the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

Councils' common cause on COVID-19

A coalition of more than 20 outback Queensland councils are working together to achieve maximum COVID-19 vaccination rates by providing their community with a clear picture of their regions' vaccination uptake.

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) – which includes Balonne Shire Council – has developed and launched a "digital dashboard" that uses Queensland Health data to show vaccination rates for each local government area.

WQAC represents 22 local government areas across 60 per cent of Queensland, which has 46,000 residents eligible for vaccination.

Samantha O'Toole, Balonne Shire Mayor and Chair of the South West

Regional Organisation of Councils, said the region is working together to get the best results.

"If our residents know how many others in their community are getting vaccinated, they will be much more likely to do the right thing themselves, so we are throwing our support behind the vaccination push by encouraging all eligible residents to get vaccinated as soon as practical.

The dashboard also shows the proportion of those who have been fully vaccinated with two doses compared with those who have received the initial injection.

When the WQAC statement was released in late September, vaccination rates in the region ranged from 71 per cent (Blackall-Tambo

Regional Council) down to 43 per cent in other Shires.

The dashboard is available for anyone to access on the WQAC (wqac.com.au), SWQROC (www.swqroc.com.au), RAPAD (rapad.com.au) and NWQROC (nwqroc.com.au) websites.

The WQAC would like to thank and acknowledge the work carried out by Brisbane-based firm GWI Digital, which specialises in sharing data through digital platforms.

Note: The latest figures show Blackall-Tambo's vaccination rate has risen to a little over 80 per cent; 78 per cent of Balonne Shire residents 16-years and older have received at least one vaccination against COVID-19.

New pool operators dive in for summer



Summer swim season is officially here and, with it, an exciting new era at St George Pool.

Council has awarded the lease for management and operations of the facility to St George Aquatics, who are already making the pool a hive of activity for all ages.

Swimming lessons, group fitness and swim squads (for kids and adults) are all back in action, plus the thermal baths remain open.

Even more is on the horizon at the pool, with the children's splash park nearly complete.

A new contact phone is operating for the pool - for all queries, call St George Aquatics on 0499 403 324.

Opening hours, St George Pool:

Weekdays

5.30am-7.30am

10am-12pm

3pm-6pm*

Weekends

1pm-6pm

**Note: The pool will close at 5.30pm each Wednesday to accommodate Swimming Club training.*

OPEN NOW: St George Pool's new operators are jumping right in, extending opening hours and offering a wide range of activities.

Ag ideas served up over advisor brekkie

A well-attended Ag Advisors Breakfast has heard innovative ideas for virtual farm advisory (VFA) services.

Dr John James of Enablers for Change presented the challenges and opportunities of VFA, including the essential gear needed, ways to encourage farmers to use VFA services and tips for running an online meeting.

Dr James attended the St George breakfast "virtually" himself from his home in Tasmania.

Attendees also heard a progress report on the economic benefits of cluster and exclusion fencing from Andrew Perkins of Hall-Chadwick.

The presentations were arranged by ConnectAg - the agricultural innovation brokers of South West Queensland, covering advocacy, facilitation, technology, business planning, training, collaboration, and more.

For more information on ConnectAg events, go to: bit.ly/ConnectAg



NETWORKS AND EGGS: The Ag Advisors Breakfast was held at the Australian Hotel in early October.

Housing study reveals dire shortage

From page 1

The aim of commissioning this first-ever study of housing needs in the region was to understand and quantify issues, and ultimately identify solutions.

The WQAC leaders held a “virtual” meeting online on 6 October (the planned face-to-face meeting in Brisbane was cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns) and agreed the region’s chronic shortage of housing revealed by the study is a “major roadblock” to community, employment and business growth that is only set to worsen.

Samantha O’Toole, Mayor of Balonne Shire and also Chair of the South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, said that housing – along with other infrastructure deficits, such as roads, water, energy and digital connectivity – has emerged as a key barrier to western Queensland fulfilling and growing its economic and social potential.

“We want to ensure we can support our communities and attract new people, business and investment to the region. There are jobs going unfilled in western Queensland due

to a lack of suitable housing.

“With the current environment and more Australians looking to ‘move to more’ in regional Australia, we are in a prime position to capitalise on our many assets.

“The chronic shortage of housing is a major barrier to the success and growth of our communities, employment and businesses,” Mayor O’Toole said.

Tony Rayner, Longreach Mayor and Chair of the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning & Development Board (RAPAD), said sourcing affordable and suitable housing, finance and trades for renovations and works, was proving to be a major roadblock in a region that’s ripe with potential.

“Western Queensland is a great place to live and work and there are many opportunities to kick start or advance careers, business and industry,” Mayor Rayner said.

“While there are still ‘For Sale’ signs in yards across the region, it’s the quantity and quality of available housing that are not keeping pace with market demands and that problem has existed for some time.

“The current COVID-19 environment has further highlighted its significance as well as its adverse impact across our communities and businesses,” Mayor Rayner said.

Jack Bawden, Carpentaria Mayor and Chair of the North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, said the housing situation in the west has a far-reaching impact beyond the region’s boundaries.

“The lack of growth in our region also constrains the growth potential of the State and Nation which relies on the productivity of regions such as Western Queensland to generate wealth for re-distribution. If we’re to keep up our contribution, something needs to change.

“We’re in a great position to tackle this issue with all 22 councils in agreement across two thirds of the State ready to work with all levels of government, the private sector and our communities. And we’ve now got the Housing Study behind us as an important first step that clearly shows what’s going on, identifies possible solutions and opens the door to more input and support so we can get on with the job,” Mayor Bawden said.



MAKING PROGRESS: The St George Splash Park is expected to be completed in time for the Christmas school holidays.

Water park set to splash down before Christmas

The exciting new splash park at the St George Pool is expected to be open for the Christmas school holidays.

Widespread international transport delays have held up delivery of two water slides but these are now in Australia and expected to arrive in St George soon.

The two slides will provide exhilarating water rides launching from a height of three metres and running for 25 metres and 19 metres.

Other water features include a “super soaker” tipping bucket, “sneaky soakers”, a “fun-brella” and spin sprays.

The splash park will be partially shaded and will have seating areas for families.

Updates will be published on Balonne Shire Council’s Facebook page and website.

Officers' vigil honours fallen colleagues



IN MEMORIAM: St George Police pay tribute to Senior Constable Shaunagh Jackson on National Police Remembrance Day.

Beside an everlasting tribute to one of their own, St George Police officers have paid their respects to fallen colleagues this National Police Remembrance Day.

Their solemn twilight vigil was held on 29 September in memory of Police officers who have passed - among them, Senior Constable Shaunagh

Mary Jackson.

This year marks two decades since Senior Constable Jackson's passing.

She had dedicated her life to serving the people of Queensland, and of St George, as a Police officer from 1986 to 2001.

Each year, vigils and services are held across Australia to mark National

Police Remembrance Day.

More than a day to honour and remember those officers who have died in the line of duty, Police also take the opportunity to remember their colleagues whose death did not occur as a consequence of their duty.

National Police Remembrance Day has been observed since 1989.

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

Harvest Point, St George
9.30am, each Sunday.

Hebel Catholic Church
10am, 1st Sunday.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Bollon
11am, 4th Sunday.

King's Church, St George
10am, each Sunday.

Riverlife Church, St George
9.30am, each Sunday.

Riverlife Church, Warrawee
10am, 2nd Wednesday.

St Andrew's, St George
9am, each Sunday.

St James Anglican, Mungindi
9am, each Sunday.

St Patrick's, St George
6pm, 1st and 3rd Saturday.
8.30am, all other Sundays.

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.

Care Balonne serves inspiration at annual Ladies Luncheon

Care Balonne has rolled out the red carpet for more than 160 local women, at the return of their coveted Ladies Luncheon.

Headlined by guest speaker Kim Skubris (broadcast journalist and media expert) the event on 6 October was a welcome opportunity for fellowship and networking.

Ms Skubris shared her inspiring journey in media, and thrilling stories of resilience from over 25 years in TV news covering some of our nation's most significant events.

Her guest spot concluded with an important reminder on shedding self-doubt, being kinder to yourself, and not sweating the small stuff - a timely message leading up to Queensland Mental Health Week (9-17 October).

The Care Balonne Ladies Luncheon was supported by the Queensland Government under the TRAIC (Tackling Regional Adversity Through Integrated Care) program.



GUEST SPEAKER: Kim Skubris on emcee duties at the Care Balonne Luncheon.



UPDATE

BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL | LONERGAN PROJECT SERVICES

Local Roads

Bollon Crew

- Byra Rd - 7 Days
- Mulga Downs Rd and Tambingey Rd - 23 days
- Cashelvale Rd and Woolerina Rd (partial) - 30 days
- Runnymede Rd and Woolerina Rd (final section) - 28 days
- Fernlee Rd and Jhelum Plains Rd - 28 days

Dirranbandi Crew

- Cubbie Rd - 4 days
- Whyenbah Rd - 17 days
- Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd - 30 days

St George Crew 1

- Aerodrome upgrade - 17 days
- Noondoo-Thallon Rd intersection upgrade - 30 days
- Balonne Hwy Truck Pad upgrade - 30 days

St George Crew 2

- Thungaby Rd - 3 days
- Carnarvon Hwy (RMPC works in situ) stabilising - 3 days

Disaster Recovery

Cashelvale Rd

Expected completion: late October

Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (North)

Expected completion: mid-October

Davirton Rd

Expected completion: early October

Castlereagh Hwy

Expected completion: late October

Pine Park Rd

Expected completion: early October

Dingadee Rd

Expected completion: mid-October

Narline Rd

Expected completion: mid-October

Upcoming (mid-late October start):

- Eumerella South Rd
- Ramalis Rd
- Noondoo-Mungindi Rd
- Habnary Rd
- Koomalah Rd
- Dalkeith Rd
- Woolerbilla Rd
- Kilcummin Rd
- Mulga Downs Rd

Completed Roads

- Barwon Hwy, RMPC shoulder resheeting
- Hoolavale Rd
- Kilcummin Rd
- Cardiff Rd
- Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (South)
- Littleton Rd
- Diamond Tank Rd
- Honeymah Ln
- Corack Rd
- Gunnindaddy Rd
- Mundalee Rd
- Cambo Rd
- Johnston Rd
- Thuraggi Rd
- Commissioners Point Rd
- Narine Rd
- Lower Plains Rd
- Mourilyan Rd
- Powrunna Rd
- Cardiff Rd
- Wagoo Rd

When will Council reach my road?

Crews' progress is governed by weather conditions, water availability, emergency repairs, and other factors outside of Council's control. Works can get delayed by rain or machinery breakdowns, or can be pushed to a later date if a site has no available water source.

This update is an approximate guide to Balonne Shire roadworks.

What is Disaster Recovery

Disaster recovery roadworks include: surface correction, gravel re-sheeting, formation grading, concreting and more, to repair damage from the February 2020 severe weather event.

These are proudly funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

What is RMPC?

RMPC (Roads Maintenance Performance Contract) works are routine maintenance on state-owned roads. They are managed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and the work in Balonne Shire is carried out by Council's Road Crews.

What is TIDS?

The Transport Industry Development Scheme is a state government funding program, which provides money to local governments for transport-related initiatives that support state government objectives. Those objectives include: increasing works on the local government transport network, promoting regional development and building a safe and sustainable transport system.