

Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

ISSUE 10 | 29 OCTOBER 2021



GET READY BALONNE

When disaster strikes, will you know what to do? Queensland is the most disaster impacted State in Australia, with almost 90 disaster events in the past decade.

With summer well and truly on the way, now's the time to prepare your household and community to protect what matters most and take the pressure off emergency services.

READ MORE: PAGES 4-5



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

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

Barista Training

Pick up a new skill and open new employment doors at this Basic Barista course, thanks to TAFE Queensland.

WHERE: CUC Balonne, St George

WHEN: 10 November, 9am

St George Cup

Racing is back in the Balonne, with a rescheduled date for the hotly anticipated St George Cup. Enjoy a five race program and all the usual trackside fare.

WHERE: St George Racecourse

WHEN: 13 November

White Card Short Course

Get certified to work on construction sites with this accredited short course, thanks to TAFE Queensland.

WHERE: CUC Balonne, St George

WHEN: 17 November, 9am

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

This week, I am attending the annual conference of the Local Government Association of Queensland.

This is the 125th annual conference of this organisation, founded in 1896, so the fact it has been going for a century-and-a-quarter demonstrates it is performing a valuable service.

The Local Government Association of Queensland, or LGAQ, is the peak body representing the State's 77 Councils, and, among other services, helps provide a voice for local Councils at the State and Federal Government level.

The LGAQ annual conference – this year being held in Mackay – gives Councillors an opportunity to share in the latest innovations for local Councils and also discuss common issues facing Councils across the State.

Specific issues being discussed this week include regional roads and transport, and how to attract a greater level of investment, which is important for continued growth in local government regions, especially western Queensland.

The conference also convenes forums that bring together groups of Councils that share specific issues or geography, such as rural and remote Councils, Councils with mining resources, coastal Councils and Councils from south-east Queensland.

Our own Councillor Robyn Fuhrmeister is one of the hosts for the forum for rural and remote Councils.

One of my first actions at this year's conference was to join the Deputy Premier and Minister for Local Government, Stephen Miles, and a number of other Mayors in encouraging more Queenslanders to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

I was proud to take part in this media conference because of the high level of vaccinations across the Balonne Shire: we have already reached more than 80 per cent double-vaccinations for residents aged 16 and above.



Of Balonne residents who identify as Indigenous, more than 67 per cent are double-vaccinated.

Both of those figures are well above the State average and I want to thank and congratulate everyone in the Balonne Shire who has rolled up their sleeve, and ask anyone not yet vaccinated to do it now.

Get vaccinated for yourself, your family, your friends and your community.

I will report next week on more of the discussions at the LGAQ conference.

Now, I would like to talk to local growers and producers.

If you are a grower or producer looking to expand or diversify your operations, you could be eligible for up to 30 hours of FREE advisory services.

Expressions of interest are now open for Council's latest round of advisory and mentoring services. These can assist in areas such as farm diversification, expansion, digital connectivity, succession planning or agri-tourism.

For more information, check Council's website or contact Council's Economic Development Officer Garnet Radford on 4620 8805.

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



Balonne reaches major vaccination target

Our communities are kicking goals in the race to beat COVID-19.

Balonne Shire has reached the all-important 80 per cent vaccination coverage among eligible people, hitting the mark almost two weeks ahead of a 31 October deadline set out by the Western Queensland Primary Health Network.

To be exact, 80.64 per cent of the Balonne Shire's population is now fully vaccinated; that is 2,816 people out of a total 3,492.

The figure is high enough for the South West Hospital and Health Service to begin scaling back its outreach clinics at Dirranbandi, Mungindi and Bollon, where nearly all residents have rolled up their sleeve for a COVID-19 jab.

Final clinics at the small hospitals are happening through the end of October.

Vaccinations will remain available through the South West Hospital and Health Service at St George Hospital.

St George Pharmacy and St George Medical Centre will also continue to offer COVID-19 vaccines.

All three clinics require an advance booking by phone.

While reaching the 80 per cent milestone is cause for celebration, leaders are still urging more people to get their vaccine.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha

O'Toole said she was encouraged by the community's progress, and hopes to see the numbers rise even further.

"Eighty per cent is a fantastic milestone to reach, particularly in the same week that Queensland announced borders will open again once vaccination targets are met Statewide.

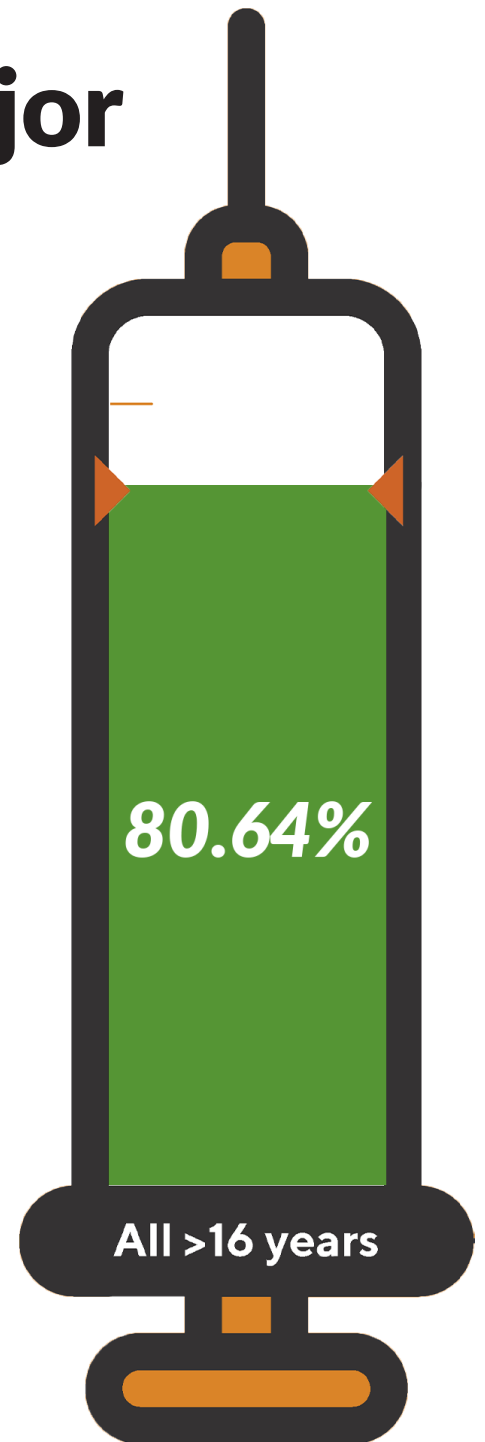
"But when those borders do open, everyone will need to be well-prepared for the direct impact that COVID-19 will have, and that includes getting vaccinated.

"Ideally I would like our Shire to get beyond the 90 per cent fully vaccinated milestone; that's something I believe we are very capable of doing."

Balonne Shire ranks highly among all Western Queensland Local Government Areas in terms of vaccination rates, currently sitting in fourth place behind Blackall-Tambo Regional Council (83.39 per cent), Quilpie Shire Council (81.67 per cent), and Murweh Shire Council (81.07 per cent).

The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils - in conjunction with data technology firm GWI Digital and Queensland Health - has developed an interactive online Vaccine Dashboard to track WQAC Shires' progress.

To learn more, visit: wqac.com.au.



Caltex garage gone from Victoria St

If you have been in St George recently, you may have noticed the former Caltex garage on the corner of Victoria and Henry Streets has been demolished.

This site will be progressively cleaned-up in coming months to ensure no significant quantity of fuel remains in the soil.

It is understood the current owners of the site, Ampol, are considering its future use or sale.



Get Ready market day a huge hit

Hundreds of Balonne families are better prepared for emergencies this summer, following the hugely successful Get Ready Queensland Balonne Markets.

The family fun day, centred around community education and preparing for natural disasters, welcomed over 300 families to Rotary Park in St George earlier this month.

Attendees were able to personally meet emergency services officers and check out the wide range of equipment they use, connect with important service providers, and learn about the importance of getting ready well before a storm, fire or flood event happens.

Market stalls from local vendors were also a huge hit, along with children's activities, and free food and coffee from local sponsors.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole was delighted at the community's interest in being disaster-ready.

"There was such a strong turnout to our market day, and it has been encouraging to see our residents take a strong interest in getting ready for emergencies," she said.

"When everyone does their bit, our community is that much more resilient when it comes to disasters."

Balonne Shire Council thanks



READY FOR ANYTHING: Pete Riley, Brandon Twiner and Chris Oliver of St George Auxiliary Fire Service.

all supporters of the Get Ready Queensland Balonne Markets, including but not limited to:

- St George Auxiliary Fire Service
- Rural Fire Service
- St George SES
- St George Police
- Mani Tribes
- Ergon Energy
- NBN Co
- Field Solutions Group
- Sunwater
- Rotary Club of St George
- St George Lions Club
- Mitre 10 St George
- St George and District Chamber of Commerce
- Care Balonne
- St George Bakery
- Nia Hadenfeldt
- Get Ready Queensland (Queensland Government)
- 20+ local businesses and vendors who held market stalls



St George Lions Club.



Rotary Club of St George served up a sausage sizzle to enthusiastic patrons.



Trent and Elizabeth Challenger of St George Bakery kept the crowd caffienated.



Ben Gardiner, St George SES.

Get Ready for summer: check out the Emergency Dashboard

Storms and floods are always a risk in south-western Queensland during spring and summer, and this year is no exception.

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting higher than average rainfall in south-western Queensland between now and the end of February, so flooding is a real possibility over summer.

The best way to help yourself - and help our emergency services folk - during the coming severe weather season is to make sure you are prepared.

Getting ready for an emergency comes down to three basic steps:

1. prepare a household emergency plan;
2. pack emergency supplies; and
3. check your insurance, so you know you're covered.

It is recommended your emergency supplies should include:

- important documents in a sealed bag or scanned to a USB;
- a torch;
- a first aid kit with essential medicines and scripts;
- non-perishable food and a can opener;
- at least three days' supply of drinking water;
- essential toiletries;
- a battery operated radio;
- spare batteries and power bank; and
- sturdy gloves.

In an emergency, you can get all the latest information from the 'Emergency Dashboard' on the Balonne Shire Council website.

The Emergency Dashboard is Council's central point for sharing public information during a crisis, whether it is a flood, fire, severe storm or any other kind of severe weather event.

It brings together all the official advice, giving you information from reliable sources.

Information you will find there during a crisis can include:

- situational reports;
- road conditions;
- weather warnings;

The screenshot shows the Balonne Shire Council Emergency Dashboard. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the council logo and social media icons. Below that is a menu with categories: Council, Business, Community, Development, Visitors, and Contact Us. The main content area features four large tiles: 'Emergency News' (0), 'Road conditions' (3), 'Weather warnings' (0), and 'Power outages' (1). Each tile includes a small icon and a timestamp. Below these tiles is a red 'Opt-In Alerts' button. The central part of the dashboard is dominated by a large aerial photograph of a river and surrounding land. At the bottom, there's a row of service links: 'Important Links', 'Evacuation Centres', 'River Heights', 'Water Monitoring', 'Emergency Contacts', 'Bushfire Notifications', and 'BoM Radar'. A 'Map Layers' section is also visible, showing options for 'Road status', 'Fire Incidents', and 'Power Outages'. A search bar is located on the right side of the map area.

- power outages;
- evacuation centre details;
- river heights;
- bushfire notifications;
- water monitoring;
- Bureau of Meteorology radar information;
- important social media

updates.

Using the Dashboard, you can also opt-in to receive emergency SMS alerts - simply hit a button and fill in your details.

To view the dashboard, visit: www.emergency.balonne.qld.gov.au

Gravel Pit questions answered

A number of questions have been raised about the use of Council gravel pits. Below are answers to some of the more common questions:

Q. Why are Council gravel pits not being used to source material for roadworks?

To crush material in Council's gravel pits, requirements of the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 need to be met, in addition to the other legislative requirements of gravel pits.

This is additional to the systems Council currently has in place, and adds an additional layer of bureaucracy from the State Government.

Each individual pit is treated as its own quarry site and needs to be compliant to legislation.

Balonne Shire Council (and other Councils) is working with the Local Government Association of Queensland to request the State Government reduce the volume of red tape in this area.

Q. If crushing is the issue, why is material not being crushed on site?

Council is using manufactured gravel that meets the Austroad standard for unsealed pavements, to ensure a consistent quality product is used on site and the additional issues of large oversize rocks in new works are being avoided.

Q. Why is gravel being carted from so far?

Material is being carted from commercial gravel suppliers located in the Balonne Shire that are compliant with the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 and other associated legislation, and that can supply material meeting the quality required.

Q. Gravel trucks are hauling on my road and causing damage; will this be



PROGRESS: Council is building roads in compliance with legislated standards.

fixed?

A. Yes, roads will be fixed as works are completed.

If there are safety concerns or general queries, please don't hesitate to lodge a service request to Council for Council to respond formally to your concerns.

Q. Is this extra cartage causing additional cost to the ratepayer?

A. No, works that Council is currently undertaking are externally funded and extra cartage costs are incorporated into the works.

Q. If cartage cost could be saved, could this be used to further improve the roads?

A. No. Under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements funds can only be used on the approved sections and any savings are returned to the funding body

Q. Why are works stopping and starting and not completing the whole road?

A. Well, that is because the disaster

funding arrangements only fund portions of the road that meet the eligibility criteria.

Sections outside this are not eligible. However, Council is working with the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) crews to ensure works completed with gaps are scheduled into maintenance works to make sure a suitable road is left for road-users.

Q. Will Council use its gravel pits again?

A. Yes, Council is working to reopen its pits and meet legislative requirements to produce a high-quality consistent material for its roads.

Q. How long will it take for Council to start using its pits again?

A. It is expected that Council will be able to reuse its pits again for crushing in the next financial year, especially once current Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements are completed.

CUC connects with high schools

During October, CUC Balonne Centre Manager Alix Greenhill has been visiting high school students in St George and Dirranbandi.

Bringing along a high-tech presentation where students could engage live on mobile devices, Ms Greenhill was able to showcase not only the opportunities and support available through CUC Balonne.

It has proven an opportune time to talk about future careers and study pathways, as the students move through their final term. Ms Greenhill said she was thrilled to meet the students.

"We have had great engagement with school aged students, and it is wonderful to see they have a real curiosity about life after school.



CUC Centre Manager Alix Greenhill on a visit to Dirranbandi State School.

Rugby Union ends season in style

from page 8

finished as runners up, while the ladies made it to the prelims before being pipped at the post; both achievements which were noted with pride at the awards.

The many successes and improvement of all players were celebrated, along with members' sheer dedication to the club - going above and beyond in their support on the sidelines, and in kilometres travelled to play.

ST GEORGE FRILLNECKS 2021 AWARD WINNERS

Most Improved Forward

- Vanessa Beavan
- Jack Watts

Most Improved Back

- Jane Cornish
- Oliver Armstrong

Best Forward

- Isabel Morice
- Tom McDonnell

Best Back

- Alice Rathie
- Nic Perkins

Most Travelled

- April McLaren
- Tim Houston

Supporter of the Year

- Marian Rathie
- Louise Stokes

Spirit of Rugby

- Angus Jamieson

Cougar Award

- Tim Houston

Most Points

- Alice Rathie
- Oliver Armstrong

Player of the Finals

- Reeghyn Beardmore
- Tim Houston

Players' Player

- Olivia Hoolihan
- Tom McDonnell

Holy Grail Award

- Alice Rathie
- Tim Houston

Club Person of the Year

- Ben Gardiner

Life Membership

- Tom Perkins



Olivia Hoolihan and Cameron Knights



Marion Rathie and Cameron Knights.



Louise Stokes and Scott McKechnie.



Alice Rathie and Cameron Knights.



Tom McDonnell and Scott McKechnie.



Scott McKechnie and Tim Houston



Jane Cornish and Cameron Knights.



Tom Sandow and Anna Browning.



Ollie Armstrong and Scott McKechnie.



Isobel Morice and Cameron Knights.

BALONNE SHIRE COMMUNITY SPORT



Frillies celebrate season, raise \$30K

The St George and District Frillnecks have capped off another tremendous Rugby Union season in style at their annual gala evening.

The elegant event was held at the Australian Hotel on Saturday, 9 October.

More than a chance to celebrate their successes on the field, the Frillies opted to use their special night to give back to the community.

In true go big or go home fashion, the club announced a massive \$30,000 donation to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland) as part of the gala formalities.

Much of the donation was raised at the ever-popular Ladies' Day event in July; a landmark date on the Rugby Union calendar for many in St George.

In 2021, the Frillies men's side once again made the grand final and **READ MORE: PAGE 7**



LOOKING SMART: St George Frillnecks men's and women's side officially receive their team jerseys at the club's gala evening.



Rob Johnston and Ben Gardiner.



Angus Jamieson and Scott McKechnie.



Georgia Hoolihan, Claire Armstrong, Alice Rathie and Olivia Hoolihan.