

# Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

ISSUE 12 | 26 NOVEMBER 2021

## Shining in silver

### BALONNE SHIRE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE RUNNERS UP AT QUEENSLAND TOURISM AWARDS

Council's sterling Tourism Team is shining even brighter, having claimed Silver at the Queensland Tourism Awards.

Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre (VIC) won the prestigious award for Best Visitor Information Services at the awards, which were held in Brisbane by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council.

The Tourism Team claimed Silver against an impressive and highly competitive field of Visitor Information Centres from across Queensland;

fellow outback operators Longreach VIC won gold.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said she was thrilled to learn Council's team had won.

"This is a wonderful way to recognise our Visitor Information Centre team, who go above and beyond every single day to help every person who visits our Shire," she said.

"Only recently I met an older couple

from Victoria who were assisted by our VIC team. They were looking to return home and needed the appropriate border passes.

"Our team members personally helped them through the process, to ensure they were well-informed and able to return safely.

**READ MORE: PAGE 5**

## St George Region

BOLLON DIRRANBANDI HEBEL MUNGINDI NINDIGULLY THALLON  
QUEENSLAND'S SOUTHERN OUTBACK



DREAM TEAM: (L-R) Balonne Shire Council CEO Matthew Magin and Tourism Manager Kim Wildman accept the silver award at the QTIC Awards. Senior Tourism Services Officer Sandra Lee, Tourism Services Officer Kyra Passman and VIC Voluneer Lola Cuffe.

# 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

## Nindigully Pig Races

The beloved fundraising event returns to Nindigully this month. Enjoy live music, raffles, auctions, fireworks, camping, country hospitality, and of course the adorable racing pigs!

**WHERE:** Nindigully Pub

**WHEN:** 27 November

## Thallon Christmas Tree

Enjoy a uniquely Thallon Christmas experience, as the community gathers to light the town tree. Stay for the heavenly sounds of the Fijian Choir and a BBQ dinner.

**WHERE:** Thallon Park

**WHEN:** 4 December, 6.30pm

## Christmas Carnival and Markets

Back for another bumper year, the Christmas Carnival is a chance to celebrate the festive season with the St George Business Community. Shop local, enjoy free entertainment, and be sure to enter the Mega Draw for your chance to win an amazing prize - you must be there on the day to claim!

*See P5 for more details.*

**WHERE:** St George Showgrounds

**WHEN:** 11 December

## 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)

# A message from the Mayor

Time is running out for everyone in Balonne Shire to fully vaccinate themselves against COVID-19 before this potentially fatal virus inevitably arrives here.

It is expected the Queensland border will open to drive-in visitors from interstate by no later than 17 December, just three weeks away.

Once this happens, I am afraid it is inevitable that someone sooner or later will bring COVID-19 into Balonne and we will see positive cases reported here in our Shire.

Vaccination rates in Balonne have been consistently higher than the State average. The latest figures - released on 16 November - showed at that time 89 per cent of Balonne residents aged 16 or older had received at least one vaccination and 80 per cent were double-vaxxed.

This was obviously ahead of the State average, where around 83 per cent of Queenslanders aged 16 or older had received one dose and 71 per cent were double-vaxxed at that time.

I want to thank our Balonne residents for the way they have stepped forward and rolled up their sleeves, and also acknowledge the terrific work of our local health services.

At the same time, I want to urge those people who have not yet taken the opportunity to get vaccinated to have it done now. This is the best way to protect yourself, your family, your friends and your community from COVID-19.

Our health services, especially the South West Hospital and Health Service, and Goondir Health, have been working so hard to vaccinate as many people as possible.

They have done a terrific job and deserve the thanks and gratitude of the entire community, along with our doctors and pharmacists who are also administering vaccinations.

However, this is your last chance to get double-vaccinated before the



risk of COVID-19 in our community increases significantly after the border is opened. If you haven't already, please get vaccinated now.

To help keep Balonne residents informed about what's happening in the Shire - and there's plenty happening right now - Council is launching news videos about local people and events.

I am sure we are all frustrated there is so little room for local news on the television programs presented to us in south-west Queensland. Well, if you would like more local news on your screens, now there's an opportunity to see video footage of what's happening in our Balonne Shire.

These videos can be viewed on the Balonne Shire Council Youtube channel - search for us, or scan the QR code below - I hope you enjoy them!

*Mayor Samantha O'Toole*



[youtube.com/balonneshirecouncil](https://www.youtube.com/balonneshirecouncil)

## 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





IN REMEMBRANCE: (back row, L-R) Harvey Fewings, Rod Cassidy, Lenore Banks, Pastor Derek Schiller, Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole. (front row, L-R) John Chapman, Brian Babineau, RSL President Trevor Gray, Terry Salmon and guest speaker, President of St George Toastmasters Club, Win Salmon.

# Sacrifice Remembered on 11 November

A Remembrance Day service organised by the St George RSL sub-branch has been well attended by community representatives and school children from St George.

The solemn ceremony on the banks of the Balonne River included prayers, readings and wreath-laying.

A feature of the event was the

sounding of the traditional "Last Post" on trumpet by Luke Todd, a music teacher at St George State School.

As well as returned service personnel from the RSL, it was attended by Balonne Shire Councillors and staff, school children from St George State School, St Patrick's Primary School and St George State High School, and

members of the public.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said it was important to remember the sacrifice of all Australians who had died in conflicts, particularly given the high number of men and women from the south-west Queensland region who had joined the services in times of war.



Music teacher Luke Todd sounded the Last Post.



Remembrance Day brought community representatives from throughout the district to the war memorial in St George.

# Mega draw bringing an early Christmas for Balonne families

The wildly popular St George Christmas Carnival and Markets is set for a grand return to the St George Showgrounds on Saturday 11 December.

Last year's extravaganza was a huge success, even with COVID-19 restrictions at the time; more than 800 people shopped and celebrated with their community.

As a build-up to the big event, the St George and District Chamber of Commerce is encouraging businesses and residents to participate in the "Mega Draw", with thousands of dollars in prizes from participating businesses up for grabs.

Chamber of Commerce President John Travers said the "Mega Draw" is simple, and encourages everyone to buy local this festive season.

"Everyone can support our local businesses this Christmas by making a purchase - for a minimum spend of \$20 at any participating business, you

can receive a ticket and enter your name in the Mega Draw," he said.

"The tickets will be drawn and all prizes awarded at the Christmas Carnival."

Mr Travers said a huge range of purchases will give shoppers an entry, including Buy Balonne Gift Cards.

"Buy Balonne Gift Cards are a great idea for your hard-to-buy-for loved ones - and you can earn tickets to the Mega Draw by purchasing them.

"Buy Balonne Gift Cards are a perfect gift, because they keep on giving when they're used here, supporting local businesses and our communities."



For information and updates, follow St George and District Chamber of Commerce on Facebook: [facebook.com/StGeorgeAndDistrictChamberOfCommerce](https://www.facebook.com/StGeorgeAndDistrictChamberOfCommerce)



BALONNE SHIRE INVITES YOU TO

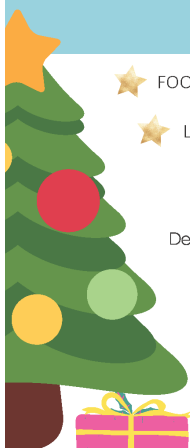
## ST GEORGE CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL

*and markets*

**5PM DECEMBER 11TH 2021  
ST GEORGE SHOWGROUNDS**

- ★ FOOD
- ★ ENTERTAINMENT
- ★ BAR
- ★ LIVE MUSIC
- ★ KIDS ACTIVITIES
- ★ FIREWORKS
- ★ RAFFLE
- ★ AND MORE...

Developed with the support of the Queensland Government in association with the St George & District Chamber of Commerce and Balonne Shire Council



*Merry Christmas*  
from Balonne Shire Council

We wish all Balonne residents a merry Christmas and happy New Year!

Our office will be closed from **4.45pm Wednesday 23 December.**

We will reopen at **8.45am Tuesday 4 January 2022.**

All Council depots will be closed from **Friday 17 December.**



@balonnesc

# Heart truck to keep you healthy

Just because Balonne residents live a long way from a big city, it doesn't mean they can't receive specialist health services.

One of the solutions is to bring mobile specialist services to Balonne and that is what is happening when you see the Heart of Australia HEART 2 truck parked in St George.

The Heart of Australia trucks visit 33 communities across regional Queensland and look after patients from its St George parking spot (at the airport) for about a week at least once a month.

Heart of Australia is a mobile specialist medical service that provides various health services to rural and regional communities aboard their mobile clinics.

Like any medical specialist service, patients need a referral from their general practitioner (GP) to make an appointment and to be eligible for any applicable Medicare rebates.

Specialist doctors and other health professionals provide a range of services in St George including:

- specialist consultations including cardiology,



- endocrinology and geriatric services;
- stress echocardiograms;
- exercise stress testing;
- echocardiograms;
- holter monitoring (a holter monitor is a **type of portable echocardiogram**);
- ambulatory blood-pressure monitoring;
- sleep apnoea testing;
- CPAP (continuous positive air pressure) trials; and
- sleep and respiratory specialist consultations.

If you feel you may benefit from

## Heart of Australia - 2022 Visits

- 4-8 February
- 4-8 March
- 1-5 April
- 29 April - 3 May
- 27-31 May
- 24-28 June

seeing a Heart of Australia specialist, make an appointment with your GP.

Together you can discuss your health concerns and, if your GP agrees, they will send a referral.

For more information, visit: [heartofaustralia.com](http://heartofaustralia.com)

## St George VIC wins Silver

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"I am so incredibly proud of our Visitor Information Centre team for their exceptional efforts, and I thank the QTIC for this well-deserved recognition," Mayor O'Toole said.

"Well done to our Tourism Manager Kim Wildman, and to our Visitor Information Centre staff: Sandra Lee, Kyra Passman, Angela Passman, Olivia Hoolihan, Lucy Sevil, and the team of volunteers."

Judging criteria for the QTIC awards included customer service, business planning, marketing, and team achievements.

For Balonne Shire VIC, these included: two successful tourism campaigns, launching new St George Region branding; producing a new travellers' guide; building a new destination website; and building successful social media accounts for the St George Region brand.



CELEBRATION: Balonne Shire CEO Matthew Magin and Tourism Manager Kim Wildman at the Queensland Tourism Awards.

# Punters celebrate racing's return

This year marked a triumphant return to the track for the St George Jockey Club, finally able to host the beloved Cotton Cup race day.

Previously hampered by COVID-19 restrictions and rain, racegoers were ecstatic to be trackside on 13 November.

Racing jumped off in fine form with Galah Racing's *Buddie Ollie* - ridden by apprentice Sariah Champkin and trained by Wayne Baker - taking first by a large 10.0 margin.

Wide margins were evidently the order of the day. In the namesake Queensland Cotton St George Cup, jockey Gary Geran ran *Palate* to first with a 13.3 lead, recovering quickly after he 'began awkwardly', according to stewards.

Local photographer Laura Rigney captured the memorable social moments from St George's big day.



# ... at rescheduled St George Cup



# Hebel-Goodooga Rd opens for harvest

Hebel-Goodooga Rd has been officially reopened, in a bid to assist grain harvesters moving around the region.

While the Queensland border remains closed, essential workers and border zone residents (with the appropriate border pass) can now enter the Balonne Shire via Hebel-Goodooga Rd in line with the current Queensland Government restrictions.

All vehicles entering Queensland via Hebel-Goodooga Rd will be directed to the Hebel border checkpoint, located at the intersection of Castlereagh Hwy and William St.

Traffic control will remain on nearby Woolerbilla Rd, which is closed to general traffic.

Only local traffic will be permitted to travel Woolerbilla Rd.

The reopening follows recent upgrades to Hebel-Goodooga Rd, which allow for safer and easier heavy vehicle access.

Balonne Shire Council completed these works thanks to funding from the Australian Government NHVR Safety and Productivity Program and the Queensland Government Transport and Infrastructure



GIVE WAY: Oversize machinery is moving around the Shire during grain harvest. Essential harvest workers can now enter Balonne via Hebel-Goodooga Rd.

Development Scheme.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said the reopening is an immense help for local growers and contractors.

"Grain harvest is in full swing, and there is a lot of machinery and harvest workers moving around," she said.

"Council has been assisting growers

in navigating border regulations to ensure harvest workers are COVID-safe, and we are glad this route has opened to allow growers in the southern areas of our Shire to transport grain to depots at Noondoo, Thallon and beyond while remaining on a bitumen road network."

# Youth Councillors are on the job

They are the next generation of leaders in our community.

Balonne Shire's inaugural Youth Council is up and running, and its representatives are already a driving force for positive change.

Yasmin Sullivan, Jack Sullivan, Jess Parks, Matilda Hoolihan, Rylie Mullins, Jaana Downton, Jacob Hiles and Ashanti Thurston are the Youth Council's founding members - selected for their merits, and enthusiasm for their community.

The group is proving to be ambitious and driven in setting their goals for the year ahead.

Already they have a number of exciting projects in the works, including: creating a community garden; refreshing murals at the St George skate park; and raising awareness of COVID-19 protection by encouraging eligible young people to get their vaccine (along with their eligible family members).

At their regular meetings, Youth

Councillors are guided by Balonne Shire Deputy Mayor Richard Lomman and Councillor Bill Winks.

The Councillors are lending their expertise as elected representatives to the group, answering any questions they may have.

But for the most part, they are there to observe as the young people take matters into their own hands.

Deputy Mayor Richard Lomman said he has been impressed with the Youth Councillors' initiative and drive.

"We launched the Youth Council as a way for young people in our community to use their voice, and tell Balonne Shire Council what they would like to improve around the Shire," he said.

"Our Youth Councillors have taken that brief and run with it.

"They are an incredibly confident and switched-on group; I am proud of how well they are working as a team, and bringing some exciting ideas to the table."

Places on the Youth Council remain open for any interested Balonne Shire residents aged 12-25.

Applications are available from Balonne Shire Council (both in-person and online), and from local schools.

Youth Councillors will have a final meeting for the year in December, and then resume in 2022 at the start of the new school year.



STUCK IN: Youth Councillors meet monthly to drive their chosen projects.