

Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

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SPLASH

Balonne's new water park beats hot summer temps

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, Victoria Street, St George

WHEN: Currently suspended due to Covid-19 and the relocation of the library to the new building in Victoria Street – but watch this space and the Balonne Shire Council Facebook page for updates.

Library Hub Open Day

Come and see the facilities in the new library hub complex next to the Balonne Shire Council chambers in Victoria Street, St George. Learn about the expanded range of books and other library material, the new spaces and opportunities for students in the relocated Country Universities Centre, the business facilities, and more.

WHERE: Library Hub, Victoria Street, St George.

WHEN: Saturday 5 February. (See the Balonne Shire Council Facebook page for times or call 4620 8888.)

Barefoot Bowls Welcome Party

Whether you're brand new to the region, or a lifelong local, Council invites all Balonne Shire residents to attend our Barefoot Bowls Welcome Party. There will be a free BBQ, a cash bar by the Bowls Club, and free green fees, meaning everyone can give barefoot bowls a try. Book online now through Eventbrite! Places are limited to allow for social distancing. For more information, contact our Community Development Team at cdo@balonne.qld.gov.au or on 4620 8888. By the way, please wear flat-soled shoes. (Sorry, there are too many prickles to go completely barefoot.)

WHERE: St George Bowls Club, Cnr Victoria and Roe Streets, St George.

WHEN: Saturday, 19 February. 5.30pm arrival for sign-in, and first roll of a bowl at 6pm

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

Hello, and welcome to the first edition of the *Balonne Bulletin* for 2022.

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas, full of family and friends and good times, and I hope too that 2022 really does bring you the prosperity we always wish for each other at the start of a new year.

This does promise to be a more prosperous year than average for our primary producers in Balonne Shire, thanks to the good rainfall we received in November-December in particular.

Of course, the floods in mid-December caused disruption and inconvenience for many people throughout the Shire, Mungindi especially, with roads cut and some towns isolated for varying periods of time.

However, as communities still largely dependent on what we can grow and graze, the inconvenience of that sort of flooding is far better than the torture of drought.

Floods and other challenges always bring out the best in our communities, and that has been the case again this time, and I want to thank Balonne residents for their patience, good humour and support, and also the emergency staff – both the fulltime professionals and skillful volunteers – for once again helping keep us all safe.

With the possibility of more flooding rain, storms and other events during the rest of summer, remember to always check the Emergency Dashboard on the Balonne Shire Council website for the latest information.

One of my first official duties for 2022 – and a very enjoyable one – was to turn on the water flow through the brand new splash park in St George on January 3.

This will be a terrific recreation facility for families throughout the Balonne Shire and I hope people from all our communities will take the opportunity to visit the splash park on these hot summer days.

Another terrific facility for Balonne families will be the new library hub, nearing completion next door to the Council chambers in Victoria Street.

This is on schedule to open in early



February and we plan to hold a public “open day” when everyone can come and inspect the new complex. The most likely date is Saturday, February 5 but keep an eye on our Facebook page for the latest news.

As we all know only too well, Covid-19 has arrived in the Balonne Shire.

Vaccination remains the best protection against Covid-19 for you, your family, your friends and your community. Please get vaccinated if you still haven't done it, get your booster shot as soon as you are eligible, and book your kids in for a vaccination if they're five or older.

Covid-19 is now affecting so many people that we can all expect, sooner or later, to know someone who has it. As a community, let's look after each other and do what we can to help each other, whether that's leaving an evening meal for someone who is unwell or just making a phone call to see how they're going.

I hope business operators in Balonne – and that includes primary producers – already have a business continuity plan prepared in case they are affected by a case of Covid-19.

Council staff have made personal visits to businesses in all our communities and mailed out information to create your plan – but you can obtain that information again by telephoning the Council on 4620 8888.

Please, stay Covid-safe.

Mayor Samantha O'Toole

New water park

The exciting new splash park at the St George swimming pool is now in full operation, helping Balonne kids beat the heat during these hot summer days.

Mayor Samantha O’Toole flicked the switch to turn on the splash park on Monday, January 3, triggering a flood of children eager to explore the brand new attraction.

After a big first week, teething problems with the filtration system saw the splash park closed for a week but it re-opened on Saturday, January 15.

Luckily, it didn’t affect the 50-metre pool and thermal pool, which continued normal operations.

The re-opening of the splash park coincided with this summer’s hottest spell of weather so far, a few days of maximum temperatures hovering around 40°C – that’s 104°F Fahrenheit on the old scale – so it was perfect timing.

The splash park was keenly anticipated and long-awaited but widespread international transport delays held up delivery of the two water

slides which are a central feature.

The two slides 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 is partially shaded by a sail and has seating areas for families.

The St George swimming pool and splash park are open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1pm till 6pm and on weekdays from 5.30am – 7.30am, 10am – 12 Noon and 3pm – 6pm.

The basic entry fees for the St George Pool are \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children. There is no additional charge for the splash park. (For full details of prices, go to the Balonne Shire Council website: www.balonne.qld.gov.au)

Note: Construction of the splash park was made possible by funding from the State Government’s Works for Queensland (W4Q) program and the Federal Government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (LRCIP).



Federal MP for Maranoa, David Littleproud, was given a tour of the site last year by Balonne Mayor Samantha O’Toole when the splash park was under construction. It was funded by both the Federal and State Governments.



Features of the splash park include 19-metre and 25-metre water slides (right) and a tipping bucket (centre).

December flooding left the Shire awash

Rain and high river flows saw roads cut and towns isolated across the Balonne Shire in December.

While the flows were in many cases good news for irrigators, the water caused disruption and delays for residents and travellers, and has left some road damage in its wake.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole thanked both residents and emergency services crews for their behaviour and actions during the December flooding.

"We owe all our emergency services crews an enormous debt of gratitude for the selfless action they take to keep our communities safe during events like the recent floods," Mayor O'Toole said.

"As Chair of the Local Disaster Management Group, which convened frequently during the flooding period, I am very much aware of the selfless work our fulltime and volunteer emergency services people performed during this time.

"On behalf of the residents of Balonne Shire, I want to say a heartfelt 'Thank you' to each and every one of them. You play an absolutely vital role in our communities across the Balonne Shire.

"I would also like to take this op-

portunity to thank our Council staff who worked over the holiday period helping keep our communities safe and secure during the floods.

"Thank-you too to contractors who really supported us, particularly in Mungindi but also elsewhere in the Shire, reinstating all the vital bits and pieces like electricity and barbecues, and cleaning up public areas, plus the vector control guys. So many people have helped in so many ways."

Mayor O'Toole said she wanted to thank residents for their behaviour during a difficult time.

"I want to thank everyone for their support during the floods, and congratulate our communities for their resilience in the face of inconvenience and disruption at the end of what had already been a tough year.

"In particular, the vast majority of people were sensible and patient when driving on our roads. I know it must seem like a broken record at times, because you hear it over and over again, but the message 'If it's flooded, forget it' is so important in saving lives.

"Despite flooding across a number of roads within the Shire, and on the major highways connecting us with other towns east, west, north and

south at various times, our residents didn't put their lives at risk by driving through high water and forcing emergency crews to risk their lives as well in rescues.

"Thank you to everyone in our Balonne communities for behaving so responsibly and following our flood safety messages."

Heavy falls of rain over a wide area, especially in the Condamine and Balonne River catchments, led to a flood watch across the Balonne Shire in December but with a particular focus on Mungindi.

An enormous volume of water moved down the Barwon and Weir Rivers, and the flooding peaked at 7.95 metres on Saturday, December 11. It remained above "major" flood level (7.2m) for several days.

Balonne Shire crews had put heavy equipment in place and sealed off the town levy before floodwaters arrived, and then monitored the barrier to make sure it wasn't breached.

Emergency services teams from both Queensland and New South Wales, including the NSW SES North-West Region crews, ensured isolated residents received essential supplies.

At St George, flooding peaked on December 15 at 10.3 metres but fortu-



At the height of the flood in St George, water surged over Jack Taylor Weir – but, fortunately, below the height of the bridge. (This photo was taken from the bow of an SES boat.)

nately that was below the roadway on Andrew Nixon Bridge, which stands at 10.7 metres, and access remained open to the western side of the Balonne River.

Dirranbandi was isolated by flooding, with the Balonne Minor River going above “major” flood level, and roads closed by water included the Castlereagh Highway between Dirranbandi and St George and between Dirranbandi and Hebel, the Bollon-Dirranbandi Road and Whyenbah Road.

At Hebel, the Bokhara River rose to “major” flood level (over 2m) and the Castlereagh Highway to Dirranbandi was closed by significant flooding, which also resulted in damage to the road surface.

At Bollon, the Balonne Highway was closed by flood water at Wallam Creek, on the eastern edge of town, on December 10-11, and the Bollon-Dirranbandi Road was also closed.

Other major roads that were closed by flooding in the region in early December included the Moonie Highway (at several locations, including the Loudoun Bridge near Dalby), the Barwon Highway at Goondiwindi, the Carnarvon Highway at Surat and the Mitchell-St George Road at Dunkeld.

With numerous roads flooded throughout the Shire, this of course means road surfaces have been damaged in several locations.

Council staff have assessed the damage and repairs will be carried out as soon as possible. In the meantime, please be patient: our staff will get this work done just as quickly as they can.

Emergency news

With the possibility of more flooding rain, storms and other events during the rest of summer, remember to always check the Emergency Dashboard on the Balonne Shire Council website for the latest information

It pulls together everything you need to know, including:

- emergency news;
- road conditions;
- weather warnings;
- power outages; and
- emergency contacts.

Go to: <https://emergency.balonne.qld.gov.au/>



At Mungindi, flood waters as far as the eye could see.



The Mungindi-Talwood Road also went under.



Vast quantities of water flowing downstream at Warkon Choke, near Surat.

House on the move at library complex

If you drive down Victoria Street in St George, you will notice construction of the library hub is making great progress, and expansion of the footprint for the new complex recently necessitated removal of a house from the site.

The house has gone to make way for expansion of the cultural centre as part of the hub project.

The building was transferred in one piece on to a low-loader trailer and driven – very carefully – through the streets of St George and out of town to a new location.

The library hub is on track for completion in coming weeks and a public “open day” is being planned for the first week of February. (Keep an eye on the Balonne Shire Council Face-book page for more details.)

The new library will have an expanded collection of books and other items, increasing from 8,000 to more than 13,000/

It will also be far more than simply a library. This will also be a business hub, with a range of interactive technology, meeting rooms and more.

It will also house the Country Universities Centre, which will relocate from its present location in a building off Grey Street, behind the Balonne Shire Council administrative centre, offering expanded opportunities for tertiary students.



Stumped and out: the house (centre) hits the road ...



... and travels through the streets of St George.



The library hub is nearing completion and should be open in early February.

A warm welcome to Balonne's newest Aussies

Congratulations to Balonne's newest Aussies: Canh Pham Ti, Cait Fitzpatrick Keane and Aidan Keane.

Canh, Cait and Aiden made their Australian citizenship pledge in a ceremony presided over by Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole and attended by friends and loved ones on December 16.

Mayor O'Toole said she was pleased to welcome three new Aussies into the Balonne community.

"It is a true privilege for Council to officiate citizenship ceremonies for our residents," she said.

"These are always happy occasions and conducting citizenship ceremonies is certainly one of the roles in being Shire Mayor that I most enjoy.

"Balonne communities are very welcoming to people who want to join us, wherever in the world they came from.

"Like so many businesses in Australia, and especially farming and horticulture businesses in regional Australia, the Balonne Shire relies on an international workforce to help us grow and prosper, and we very much welcome new residents."



Mayor Samantha O'Toole celebrating with our three newest Aussies.

Pool cameras

There have been some very disappointing acts of vandalism and mis-



use of the St George swimming pool during the holidays.

As a result, Council has installed cameras throughout the pool area and in future anyone visiting the St George swimming pool outside normal opening hours will be able to be identified.

The Police have been informed about the recent incidents and they are investigating.

If you have any information about vandalism at the swimming pool, please pass the details to Policelink by calling 131 444.

Annual Report

Printed copies of the 2020-21 Annual Report are now available at the office in St George and at Balonne Shire Council libraries.

Only limited copies of the printed version are available but, should you miss out, an electronic version of the Annual Report can be read on the Council website.



UPDATES

BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL | LONERGAN PROJECT SERVICES



Local Roads

Bollon Crew

- Runnymede Rd - 28 days
- Fernlee Rd - 28 days

St George Crew 1

Thuraggi Road Upgrade - 30 days

- Noondoo-Thallon Rd intersection

upgrade - 30 days

St George Crew 2

- Carnarvon Hwy RMPC shoulder re-sheeting - 15 days

Dirranbandi Crew

- Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd - 20 days

Disaster Recovery

Teelba Rd

- Expected completion: January

Hoolavale Rd

- Expected completion: January

Inspections are being carried out to assess damage caused by the December 2021 flood event.



Roads impacted by flooding in December are being assessed throughout the Shire.

Completed roads

- Cashelvale Rd
- Whyenbah Rd
- Munro Rd
- McDonald Rd
- Ian Paul Rd
- Nulky Rd
- Tamingey Rd
- Koomalah Rd
- Thompsons Rd
- Ula Ula Rd
- Castlereagh Hwy
- Runnymede Rd
- Dalkeith Rd
- Woolerbilla Rd
- Mulga Downs Rd
- Dingadee Rd
- Habnary Rd
- Kilcummin Rd
- Ramalis Rd
- Eumerella South Rd
- Davirton Rd
- Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (north)

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.

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.