

# Balonne Bulletin

THE NEWSLETTER OF BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL

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Balonne Shire Councillors and senior staff attended the recent citizenship ceremony, including (from left) Mayor Samantha O'Toole, Cr Bill Winks, Cr Rod Avery, Director of Community & Environmental Services Digby Whyte, Natalia Safronova and Phillip Stacey, Cr Scott Scriven and Deputy Mayor Richard Lomman.

## Dirranbandi baker Balonne's newest Aussie

Natalia Safronova, one of Dirranbandi's best-known residents, has become Balonne Shire's newest Aussie.

Natalia became an Australian citizen in a ceremony at the Balonne Shire Cultural Centre on January 17.

Natalia was born in Russia – in the Ural Mountains, east of Moscow, and a traditional boundary between Europe and Asia.

She completed two university degrees in food technology before

meeting her now husband Phillip Stacey and moving to Australia.

Why Dirranbandi? Well, Phillip owned land in Dirranbandi and, after growing up in the beautiful but bitterly cold snow of the Urals, Natalia relished the sunshine and warmth of western Queensland.

After visiting Australia a couple of times, Natalia migrated nine years ago.

Phillip and Natalia decided to live

in Dirranbandi, feeling the town has everything needed for a comfortable life, all the basic amenities.

However, one thing missing was a bakery.

“With my professional qualifications as a food technologist, I thought, well, one thing I could do was open a bakery, and that's how it came about,” Natalia said.

**To page 3**

# What's On

## 399 Off Road Race

The St George 399 Off Road Race is held over three action-packed days. Following on from the success of the previous years' events, St George will again play host to another year of excitement! Come and be a part of this weekend full of racing.

**WHERE:** St George

**WHEN:** 18-20 March 2022, 9am - 5pm.

## Battle on the Balonne

The Battle on the Balonne Triathlon consists of the following events: Olympic distance -1.5/40/10km (swim/cycle/run) individuals and teams; sprint distance -750/20/5 individuals; sprint distance teams 750/20/5; corporate / business, sporting clubs challenge -750/20/5; junior triathlon; and 5km Fun Run.

**WHERE:** Balonne River, St George

**WHEN:** 26-27 March 2022

## St George Polocrosse

See our skilled local and visiting riders in action in the exciting sport of polocrosse.

**WHERE:** St George Showgrounds

**WHEN:** 9-10 April 2022.

## Balonne Campdraft

The campdraft and show conducted by the Balonne Branch of the Australian Stock Horse Society aims to preserve and promote the bloodlines of the Australian Stock Horse. **WHERE:** St George Showgrounds

**WHEN:** 15-17 April 2022

## Dirranbandi Show & Campdraft

An action-packed weekend, with the campdraft kicking off early Friday morning in the main arena, Saturday showcasing sheep, wool, cattle and poultry alongside a full day of competitive yard dog trials, ring events and the second day of campdrafting

**WHERE:** Dirranbandi Showgrounds

**WHEN:** 22-23 April 2022

## Got a story, event or notice?

Tell us! We can include your information in the newsletter.

Phone: 07 4620 8888

Email: [martin.bowerman@](mailto:martin.bowerman@balonne.qld.gov.au)

[balonne.qld.gov.au](http://balonne.qld.gov.au)

# A message from the Mayor

In early February, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he hopes to see the national unemployment rate drop below 4 per cent, which would be its lowest level for many years.

However, in regional Australia, the unemployment rate has reached that level already.

According to figures released by the Regional Australia Institute's (RAI) Chief Economist, Dr Kim Houghton, unemployment in regional Australia dropped to 3.8 per cent in December, while job vacancies rose 36 per cent over the year.

Discussing the RAI research, Dr Houghton said: "In regional Australia, the over-riding issue is not finding jobs, it's finding workers. With full employment in the regions, labour shortages are really starting to bite."

Overall demand for labour is strong, with more than 70,000 jobs available outside the cities.

We are certainly seeing a large number of unfilled job vacancies in the Balonne Shire but that is something we share with other communities across south-western Queensland and beyond.

According to Dr Houghton, extra policy measures are needed to increase the size and capability of the regional workforce, such as boosting regional education and training, as well as fast-tracking suitable housing.

He says that what's needed now is investment in the availability of quality post-school training and learning across regional Australia, as recommended by the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy adopted by the Government in 2020.

Balonne Shire Council certainly believes that education and training are important issues here, and, if you are reading this edition of the *Balonne Bulletin* online, there's a chance you can make your ideas about education and training count.

We have launched a project called Learning Opportunities for Balonne, and engaged the business consulting firm Hall Chadwick to research and document learning opportunities for the Balonne Shire.



Staff from Hall Chadwick will be in St George for a week from Monday, February 28th, specifically to gather ideas from as many people as possible.

To talk to Hall Chadwick staff, anonymously if you wish, make an appointment through the Council by telephoning 4620 8888 or emailing [council@balonne.qld.gov.au](mailto:council@balonne.qld.gov.au)

We will have a report from Hall Chadwick by 30 June this year, and expect this will be a useful tool as we work to improve education and training outcomes in Balonne Shire and fill the high number of job vacancies in the region.

This month, the St George Cotton Growers Association is marking the 50th anniversary of its establishment and construction of the Beardmore irrigation scheme, facilitating the beginning of the modern cotton industry in our region.

That highly efficient water system has seen the Balonne Shire become a key production region for the Australian cotton industry.

For our Shire, last season's record cotton crop has helped generate economic recovery from years of drought, and there are hopes for another terrific crop this season.

I want to congratulate the Association on their 50-year anniversary, and I think it's wonderful their awards dinner on March 4 will be one of the first major functions to be held in our renovated Cultural Centre.

*Samantha O'Toole*

And so, eight years ago, a new business opened in the town: the Dirranbandi Bakery.

Natalia was careful to bake popular Australian bakery items like lamingtons, Anzac biscuits, pies, vanilla slice and other traditional local fare, not wanting to focus on Russian baked goods.

However, the most popular item in the bakery is Natalia's authentic Russian pryanick, a gingerbread-type treat made with lots of honey and spices.

It is particularly popular with travellers, including caravanners making months-long trips from southern States, attracted initially by the delicious aroma but also loving the fact this sweet bread has a long shelf life and it can last as long as their journey (or at least until it's all been eaten). Tourists buy it by the bagful.

Natalia said she is proud and pleased to live in Australia and finally wanted to make the time to become an Australian citizen.

And the community is clearly very pleased to have Natalia here in Balonne, judging by the "Likes" and comments that greeted the news of her citizenship ceremony on the Council Facebook page.

By the way, for more information on the Dirranbandi Bakery, go to: <https://www.stgeorgeregion.com.au/listing/dirranbandi-bakery/>



Guests at the citizenship ceremony celebrated with a cake that, for once, Natalia didn't have to bake.



Natalia and Phillip with Natalia's prized Australian citizenship certificate, presented by Mayor Samantha O'Toole.

# Plans for greener, cooler streets

Residents of St George will notice work commencing soon in Victoria Street to help make this a greener, cooler street with more gardens and trees and more seating.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said Council will be carrying out a landscape upgrade in Victoria Street, between Grey and Henry Streets, and the work is expected to be completed by May.

"The work is being funded by the Federal Government through a grant from the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program," Mayor O'Toole said.

Features will include:

- a greener, cooler, street with more gardens and trees that will be integrated with seating;
- three safer crossing areas; and
- arbours with a range of plants.

"Later, we hope to extend this design along other Victoria Street blocks and also down Henry Street.

"In combination with businesses freshening their shop fronts under another Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program grant, and with the new library Hub, this work will really increase the area's street appeal."

## MEDIAN



*Libidibia ferax*  
LEOPARD TREE

## STREET/FOOTPATH



*Lagerstroemia indica*  
CREPE MYRTLE



*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*  
TUCKEROO

## LOW SHRUBS/GRASSES <1m



*Westringia fruticosa* 'Blue Gem'  
COAST ROSEMARY



*Rhaphiolepis indica* 'Snow Maiden'  
INDIAN HAWTHORN



*Dianella* 'Little Jess'  
DIANELLA

## GROUNDCOVERS



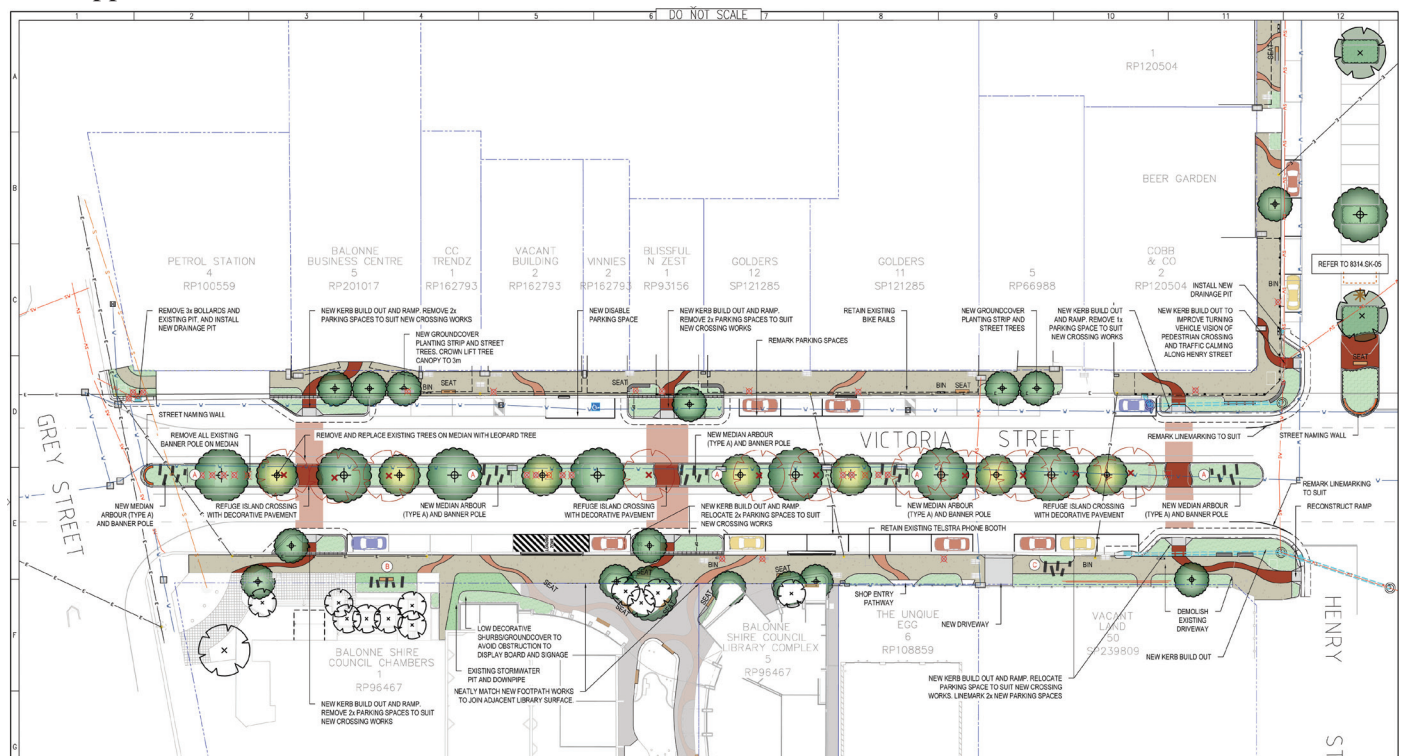
*Rhagodia spinescens* 'Aussie Flat Bush'  
SALTBUSH



*Calandrinia balonensis*  
BROAD-LEAVED PARAKEELYA



*Gazania tomentosa*  
SILVER LEAF GAZANIA



Top: A variety of shady trees and colourful plants will be considered for the greening project.

Above: This is the plan for making Victoria Street, between Grey and Henry Streets, cooler, greener and more pedestrian-friendly.



Transfer of Federal Government grant funding from the cancelled Dirran Dip project will see the money spent here at the Rail and River Precinct instead.

## Good news for Dirran project

Good news for Dirranbandi: the Federal Government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) has approved reallocation of grant funds earmarked for the Dirran Dip project to the Rail and River Precinct.

The Dirran Dip could not be constructed to the preferred design within the budget allocated.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha

O'Toole said that, based on discussions with key community groups in Dirranbandi, Council proposed a range of projects to be undertaken in the Rail and River Precinct in accordance with the community-endorsed and Council-adopted master plan.

"There were concerns the grant funds would have to be returned to the Department when the Dirran Dip project couldn't go ahead," Mayor O'Toole said.

"However, an approach to the responsible Minister, the Minister for Resources and Water, Keith Pitt, has

resulted in support for the Council and community position, which is terrific news.

"The transfer of the funding will provide a significant boost to the Rail and River Precinct, help attract and retain tourists in Dirran, add to the range of community infrastructure available for locals to enjoy, and go a long way towards full implementation of the master plan."

Note: There will be more details about the planned extra work on the Dirranbandi Rail and River Precinct in the next edition of the *Balonne Bulletin*.



# WE ARE HIRING!

ADMINISTRATION OFFICER - GOVERNANCE

GRANTS OFFICER

AND COMING SOON...

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



Visit [www.balonne.qld.gov.au](http://www.balonne.qld.gov.au) or scan the QR code to download the application forms

[WWW.BALONNE.QLD.GOV.AU](http://WWW.BALONNE.QLD.GOV.AU)



# ANNUAL KERBSIDE COLLECTION

- St George
- Bollon
- Dirranbandi
- Thallon

14  
MARCH  
2022

- Please separate your steel and green-waste piles
- Please keep green-waste to 250L and/or manageable lengths
- Watch your item weight - it will be lifted by just two people
- Got an oversized item? (e.g car bodies) call Council 4620 8888



# Chamber of Commerce seeking members

The St George and District Chamber of Commerce is seeking new members amongst business owners and operators in the area.

Retiring Chamber President John Travers said it has been operating as a member-based, not-for-profit incorporated association since 2003.

The aim of the Chamber of Commerce is to support the growth and profitability of businesses and to advocate for improving the trading environment in St George and surrounding region.

The Chamber's purpose is to provide strong leadership and advocacy for the business community in the St George region.

It does this by gathering and disseminating information, developing extensive relationships, facilitating business development opportunities and organising regular networking events for members.

The Chamber's objectives are to:

- build and maintain a broad membership representing all industry sectors;
- provide strong advocacy by developing and maintaining strong relationships with members and key stakeholders, including all levels of government;
- source and disseminate relevant information to members and key stakeholders;
- facilitation of programs and activities to encourage business growth and development; and
- facilitate or manage promotional activities, including events that benefit businesses in the St George region.

The Chamber of Commerce meets every second Wednesday of the month at 12 Noon at The Hub in Victoria Street. (Members can also join meetings online.)

For more information, email the Chamber on [admin@stgeorgecoc.org.au](mailto:admin@stgeorgecoc.org.au)

## Planning for an eventful 2022

Get ready for an eventful year in the Balonne Shire in 2022.

Whether your tastes lean towards music, culture or arts, or a family-friendly local show or a food and wine extravaganza or an all-action campdraft, car rally or other great sporting event, you will find it in the Balonne this year.

For an up-to-date event listing, see: [www.stgeorgeregion.com.au/whats-on](http://www.stgeorgeregion.com.au/whats-on)

If you are hosting or running an event in the region this year, contact the friendly staff at the Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre on [vic@balonne.qld.gov.au](mailto:vic@balonne.qld.gov.au) and let us help you spread the word.



Retiring President John Travers has been recognised with lifetime membership of the Chamber of Commerce, presented by Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole and Vice-President Garnet Radford.



Members of the St George and District Chamber of Commerce recently inspected the new library-education-business Hub ...



... and gathered in the Cultural Centre to convene one of their regular "Business After Hours" meetings.

# UPDATES

## Roadworks

BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL | LONERGAN PROJECT SERVICES

## Local Roads

### **Bollon Crew**

- Mulga Downs Road 15 days
- Byra Road 7 days
- Mitchell-Bollon Road resheeting 4 days TIDS

### **Dirranbandi Crew**

- Jakelwar Goodooga South 15 days
- Loughnan Downs Road 2 days
- Habnary Road 2 days

All this work has been delayed by heavy rain at the time of printing this edition of the *Balonne Bulletin*, so no starting dates have been included here.

- Koomalah Road 11 days
- Nulky Road 6 days

### **St George Crew 1**

- Ballangarry Road 15 days
- Dunkerry Road 6 days
- Littleton Road 9 days

### **St George Crew 2**

- RMPC Flood Works
- TMR Works

## Thuraggi Road sealing delayed



The sealing of Thuraggi Road in St George has been delayed by wet weather.

Preparatory work has already been carried out and the final work was planned to be completed by February 25 but the recent wet weather forced postponement.

To protect the road surface and vehicles, Thuraggi Road is expected to be closed (except to residents living along the road) for at least a few days while the bitumen is laid.

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

The full 3.8km length of Thuraggi Road – joining the Buchan Bypass to Salmon Road – will be sealed.

As well as the road being sealed, the previous six-metre-wide pavement will be increased to eight metres.

The budget for these roadworks is approximately \$400,000 and is coming from the Federal Government's Roads to Recovery Program.

### **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.