



Some of the existing facilities in the Rail and River Precinct.

Big plans for Dirran Rail and River project

The reallocation of Federal Government funding from the former Dirran Dip project will see significant expansion of the town's Rail and River Precinct.

The Dirran Dip could not be constructed to the preferred design within the budget allocated and the Federal Government has approved transfer of the funds.

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 accor-

dance with the community-endorsed and Council-adopted master plan.

"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."

The Rail and River Precinct is already an important tourist attraction for Dirranbandi and a popular spot with locals for family gatherings and other events.

It stretches along almost the whole length of the south side of the main street, making it an integral part of the centre of town.

However, as the space has been developed, it is the first main point of interest for tourists to stop when they wheel into town.

The further development of designated caravan and long-vehicle parking with clear signage is going to make this area much more accessible and safer for tourists to park, and allow them to explore the area without

To page 3

What's On

St George Polocrosse

See our skilled local and visiting riders in action in the exciting sport of polo-crosse.

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, recognised for its versatility and superior performance amongst work and leisure breeds. The Branches conduct competitions and activities for members in their area and assist in promoting the breed within the horse industry

WHERE: St George Showgrounds

WHEN: 15-17 April 2022

Easter in the Vines

A fun weekend of live music, family entertainment and laughter at Riversands Easter in the Vines. Dance your afternoon away to feature band Memphis Moovers. Bookings required: Go to the website: <https://www.riversandswines.com/easter-vines>

WHERE: Riversands Wines, Whytes Road, St George

WHEN: Saturday-Sunday 16-17 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](mailto:martin.bowerman@balonne.qld.gov.au)

A message from the Mayor

Over coming weeks and months, Balonne residents will see the benefits of a considerable amount of money being spent on projects throughout the Shire.

Of course, it was less than a month ago we saw the official opening of the new Hub building and refurbished Cultural Centre in St George, with Federal Government funding of \$5 million and an additional \$1 million from Council.

And we recently announced offers of 53 grants totalling \$889,000 for business enhancement and energy efficiency throughout Balonne Shire.

Thirty-one projects have been approved for funding for visual enhancement and 22 for energy efficiency, with each of Balonne's seven communities funded for at least one project.

The visual enhancement projects cover things such as façade and building improvements. The energy efficiency projects relate to solar energy, battery storage, energy-efficient lighting, etcetera.

The funding for this work comes from the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program, and is a terrific contribution to the Shire's economy and liveability.

We have all witnessed the positive effects that a program like this has had on Dirranbandi. This project builds on that success and complements other completed, current and proposed projects that Council and our communities are working together to deliver.

Now, a \$1 million project has commenced to extend the riverside pathway in St George from the footbridge at the bottom of Church Street upstream to join McGahan Street on the far side of the showgrounds.

This project is receiving Federal Government funding from the third round of the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

The extra 720 metres of pathway will include a 95-metre-long boardwalk above one of the highest sections of the bank. The Balonne River at St George really is a beautiful back-



drop to our town and extending the walking path will allow everyone to enjoy it even more.

These projects are all putting money into the Balonne economy and helping local businesses, as well as further enhancing the liveability of our communities.

We will also be receiving funding to repair damage to roads and other infrastructure from the recent flooding.

Balonne has been added to the list of Councils able to receive financial assistance for infrastructure repairs from the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

While we would rather not have had this damage in the first place, carrying out repairs with DRFA funds will put extra money into our communities.

Council recently took the decision that we should write to the Ukrainian Embassy in Canberra and Federal Immigration Minister Alex Hawke, welcoming refugees to make a new home in Balonne Shire.

I am sure that, like me, many of you are watching the stories coming out of the Ukraine with horror and a feeling of helplessness.

Offering this humanitarian gesture – an opportunity for displaced families to move to a community that is very welcoming to migrants – is something positive and practical we can do.

Samantha O'Toole

From page 1

walking too far to access the precinct.

Each parking point will have immediate footpath access that will direct tourists into the precinct to discover exciting points of interest and facilities.

It is expected that having this easily accessible parking will further encourage tourists to venture into the town centre through the precinct to shop at local businesses.

The Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) building located within the precinct is also the main information centre for Dirranbandi, and often where tourists go to buy souvenirs and get information on what to do and see while visiting the area.

The upgrades to the precinct will assist the RTC in providing the best service to tourists they can with the new pathways making a more inviting walking track from the RTC through to the "Goods Shed", a historical railway building.

With the upgrade of the parking at the eastern end of the precinct, and the beautification of the garden and walkway area from this carpark into the precinct, tourists will experience a scenic garden walk.

Parking at the western end of the precinct will allow tourists to stop with direct access to amenities, outside the precinct as well as the amenities block in the precinct itself.

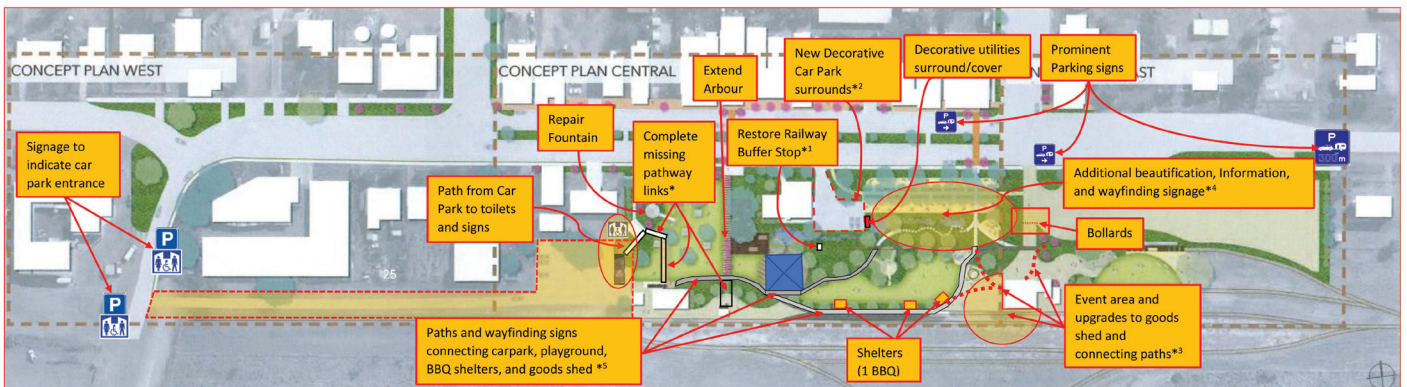
This carpark will have a footpath that is a direct route along the histor-



The Rail and River Precinct takes up much of the southern side of Dirranbandi's main street and is an integral part of the centre of town.

ical part of the precinct, featuring in particular reminders of the railway station and related buildings, with stories of local history.

The ultimate aim is to encourage longer stays, repeat visits and increased tourist revenue for local businesses.



- *Incomplete sections to have the same finish as the paths they are completing.
- *1 Research original design and reconstruct.
- *2 low barriers (sandstone whitestone logs) will make manoeuvring in the car park easier by allowing overhang to the wheels while a car is manoeuvring, Look making staff/authorised personal parking only.
- *3 proposed paths not on Masterplan. Toilet block not included.
- *4 Information signs on park features and artefacts and about Dirranbandi itself. Wayfinding signs for guidance on how to get to park features, amenities, artefacts...
- *5 Add motion detection dimmable solar lights to unlit sections

The plan for an expanded Dirranbandi Rail and River Precinct.

Million-dollar project extending riverside pathway

A million-dollar project has started in St George to extend the existing pathway beside the Balonne River.

Balonne Shire Council Mayor Samantha O'Toole said recently this was sure to be popular with locals and visitors alike.

"People who enjoy a stroll or go water-skiing in St George may have noticed work has commenced on extending our riverfront path," Mayor O'Toole said.

"This is a terrific project that I know will be very popular with our walkers and runners, and will also be another tourist attraction for the town.

"This project is receiving \$1 million from the third round of the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

"The existing footpath – which runs from Jack Taylor Weir to the footbridge adjacent to the boat ramp at the end of Church Street – is being extended further upstream to join up with McGahan Street on the other side of the showgrounds." Mayor O'Toole said the extended pathway will be 720 metres in length and is scheduled to be completed by the end of May.

"It will include a 95-metre-long boardwalk above one of the highest sections of the bank that I expect will provide some beautiful views of the river.

"The boardwalk will have chairs so you can take a break here and spend time enjoying those water views.

"And there will be lights installed along the new section so it can be enjoyed at night as well.

"The Balonne River at St George really is a beautiful backdrop to our town and extending the walking path will allow locals and visitors alike to enjoy it even more."



The new pathway will run from the footbridge at the bottom of Church Street ...



... along the riverbank to McGahan Street, on the far side of the showgrounds.

CUC Balonne is here for our students

You will have read about the Country Universities Centre Balonne campuses being officially opened recently in St George and Dirranbandi.

However, if you are a student or the parent of a student, you may be wondering how the Country Universities Centre (CUC) works in practical terms, and whether or not it's a good option for you.

In this article, I would love to tell you more about the CUC Balonne and see if I can answer some of those questions.

The CUC Balonne is a dedicated study and learning space equipped with modern technology where students can receive local wrap-round support.

Any student studying at any University or Vocational Education Provider can register for free to access the Centre.

CUC Balonne understands that students need the flexibility to ensure that they can balance life-work-study needs and other commitments. CUC Balonne students have fob access to the Centre 5am till midnight, seven days a week.

As the Centre Manager, I am available 8.30am-5pm Monday to Friday to assist with any issues students experience or just have a chat about studies.

CUC Balonne's wrap-round sup-

ports include access to dedicated study spaces, academic support, administrative support, wellbeing support and joining a local learning community.

In CUC Balonne's dedicated study spaces, students can take advantage of modern technology services available right here in the Balonne region.

These include high-speed internet (100mps), desktop computers, BYO spaces, video-conferencing services, and printing and copying services.

Academic support offered includes support for study skills and resources to help achieve academic goals. This may be workshops, academic workshops or connection with a learning skills advisor to help bolster those general academic skills.

The learning community that CUC Balonne offers is a network of fellow students. This allows local students to create a sense of belonging to a higher education environment and connect with like-minded people, and create a network of fellow peers.

Administrative support offered by the CUC Balonne includes assisting with all study administration processes from applying to study through to helping you navigate your online learning portal.

This also includes providing advice on universities and VET provider

courses, assistance with applications and enrolment, assistance with scholarship applications and assistance with university or training providers learning portals.

CUC Balonne understands balancing life with study can be difficult. CUC Balonne provides a range of health & wellbeing services because the student study journey is important.

CUC Balonne can assist with advice managing life-study-work balance, provide a student's first point of contact to raise issues with study, connect students with local services, and connect students with additional study support services, plus all our staff are mental health first aid trained.

It is a safe, welcoming and distraction-free environment that many students have said increases their focus and productivity.

Ultimately, CUC Balonne aims to provide the support our students need to be successful.

If you would like more information, or want to arrange a meeting to talk about CUC Balonne in person, I am here to help. Please just send me your details in an email to alix.greenhill@cucbalonne.edu.au

Alix Greenhill
CUC Balonne Manager



The CUC Balonne campus in St George is housed in the new Hub building on Victoria Street.

We still want to learn from you

Balonne Shire Council have engaged Hall Chadwick QLD (HCQ) to research and document learning opportunities for the Balonne Shire.

The Hall Chadwick team is currently seeking community feedback on existing education and training opportunities and what more could be done.

The HCQ team have recently spent a week in the Balonne Shire talking to people in a face-to-face

conversation style survey and now seeking further input in an on-line anonymous survey.

It is simple and quick to complete and we welcome any input which will help shape the future of the Balonne region.

More information can be found on the Balonne Shire Council website or by contacting Lizzy Squire at Hall Chadwick Queensland on 0422 179 258.



“Mower Man” raking in cash for charity

The Balonne Shire has received a visit from Claude Harvey – also known as the “Mower Man” – who has single-handedly raised \$1.5 million for the Bravehearts charity

Why “Mower Man”? Well, Claude pushes a motor mower through towns and suburbs to encourage people to part with cash for a worthy cause.

Recently, he pushed his aging Victa through Killarney, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Texas, Inglewood, Goondiwindi, St George and Bollon, and, after that, was heading for other towns that included Cunnamulla, Charleville, Roma and Dalby and expects to get back home to the Gold Coast after almost a month on the road.

Luckily, he doesn’t actually walk the whole way these days, after infected barbed wire cuts to one knee laid him up in hospital and have left him with residual pain and swelling.

Child abuse struck close to home for Claude and prompted his decision to raise money for Bravehearts, which works to protect children from harm, especially abuse of one form or another.

The now 77-year-old set out on his quest to raise funds for Bravehearts 16 years ago and is still going strong.

If you missed the chance to drop some cash in Claude’s bucket while he was in our Shire, you can donate online via: <https://fundraise.bravehearts.org.au/claudenthemowermanharvey>



Claude “Mower Man” Harvey has been raking in cash for a good cause.

Balonne offers refuge to Ukrainian families

The Balonne Shire Council has written to Federal Immigration Minister Alex Hawke offering refuge for families escaping the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Families and individuals escaping bombardment of civilians in Ukraine are causing a humanitarian crisis in neighbouring countries in eastern Europe, and some are moving to countries elsewhere round the world, including Australia.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole told Mr Hawke that many Australians had watched the stories coming out of the Ukraine with horror and a feeling of helplessness.

"We appreciate that the Australian Government is assisting with aid to Ukraine and has condemned the actions of Russia and its leadership. As a representative of the Balonne Shire, I am writing today to strongly encourage the Australian Government to throw open our doors and offer

both temporary and permanent asylum to the Ukrainian people.

"By throwing our doors open and providing Ukrainians with a safe refuge to call home. we no longer are helpless but we are offering our hand in friendship to support people when they need it the most.

"The Balonne Shire, based in South West Queensland, is so passionate about the issue our Council has decided to contact your office and express interest in hosting and settling a number of such families in our region. This is a humanitarian gesture and an opportunity for displaced families to move to a community that is very welcoming to migrants.

"Balonne is already a welcoming multicultural community. Migration benefits our Shire and communities within it enormously. We are a prosperous farming community, and we think that our lifestyle and location would provide a mutually

beneficial outcome.

"Like many rural and remote locations, we are suffering a huge worker shortage. We realise that humanitarian settlement doesn't necessarily allow for employment but if the migrants settle long term, there are plenty of permanent jobs in the Balonne Shire in farming and a wide range of other skills, from motor mechanics to computer experts.

"While our average temperatures may be a little higher than those in eastern Europe – and we certainly don't have snow – our landscapes of wheat fields and other crops wouldn't look unfamiliar to anyone who has farmed in the Ukraine.

"We would like to further discuss this issue with your office and understand how we could progress the idea of welcoming Ukrainian refugees to Balonne. I look forward to your response."



April School Holiday


Monday April 4 - Drones
9.30am to 10.30am
Playing with Fire - 1.00pm to 3.30pm

Tuesday April 5 - Lego WeDo 2.0
9.30am to 11.30am
Coding Club - 1.00pm - 3.00pm

Wednesday April 6 - Beethoven
9.30am to 12.00pm
Makey Makey - 1.30pm to 4.30pm

Thursday April 7 - Virtual Reality
9.00am to 5.00pm
Ages 13 and over only

Friday April 8 - First 5 Forever
9.30am to 11.30am
Dora and the lost city of gold
1.00pm to 3.30pm
Bookings are ESSENTIAL and spaces limited.
Contact St George Library on (07) 46208878 to secure your place.
All children under the age of 10 MUST be accompanied by a parent.



COUNCIL'S EDUCATION SURVEY



Our team are seeking community feedback on current education and training opportunities and what more could be done.

Council have engaged Hall Chadwick QLD (HCQ) to research and document learning opportunities for our Shire.

The survey is confidential, simple and quick to complete and we welcome any input which will help shape the future of the Balonne region.

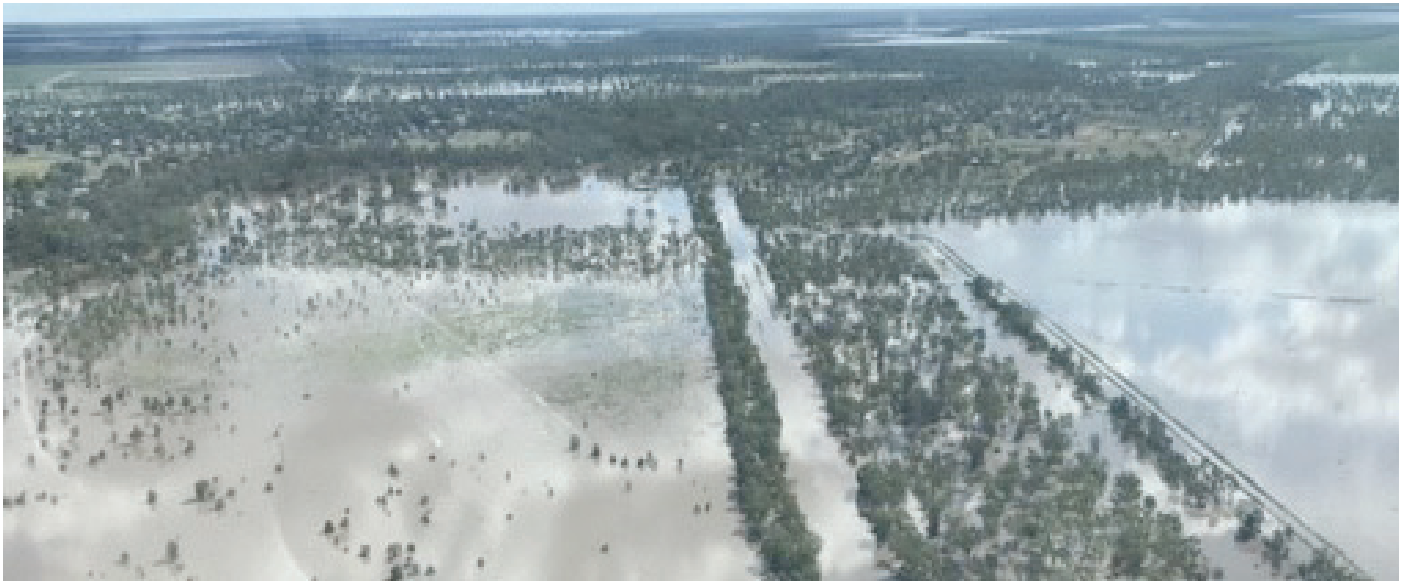
**The survey closes
5 April 2022**

For more information contact Lizzy Squire at Hall Chadwick QLD on 0422 179 258



Scan the QR code to take the survey, or visit our website

Balonne disaster assistance funding welcomed



Inclusion of the Balonne Shire in a Commonwealth-State disaster funding scheme has been welcomed by Mayor Samantha O’Toole.

“Access to disaster funding is vital to the Balonne Shire Council as we look at repairing infrastructure damaged during recent flooding,” Mayor O’Toole said.

“Every one of our seven town communities sits beside a river and, with an extensive network of roads and bridges spread over a wide area, the Council’s income from rates is simply not enough to fund the repairs to infrastructure needed after the floods.”

Maranoa MP and Minister for Ag-

riculture & Northern Australia David Littleproud recently announced the Balonne Shire Council has been added to the list of now 23 Councils activated for jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) assistance in response to the flood event.

This assistance will help Balonne Shire Council conduct counter disaster operations as required, as well as repair the damage to public infrastructure that is being revealed by the receding floodwaters, Mr Littleproud said.

“I certainly welcome the news that the Commonwealth and Queensland

Governments will continue to work together to assist local governments and provide whatever additional assistance is required to help them along the path to recovery,” Mayor O’Toole said.

“Roads and bridges in good condition are obviously essential to the efficient movement of people and produce throughout the more than 30,000 square kilometres of Balonne Shire, and we are working as quickly as possible to repair flood damage.”

Information on disaster assistance can be found on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority’s website at www.qra.qld.gov.au

“If it’s flooded ...”

You know when the authorities say “If it’s flooded forget it”, well, this photograph sent in by one of our readers shows why.

The photograph was taken on the Bruxner Highway, east of Goondiwindi and west of Tenterfield, a road many of our residents would have driven over the years.

It shows one entire span of this concrete bridge has been taken out by floodwaters.

However, imagine driving the highway at night and seeing just centimetres of water flowing above the road level. Would you guess a whole section of bridge and roadway had been taken out? Possibly not.

If it’s flooded ...

