

Our Visitor Information Centre is a winner



WELCOME: Kyra Passman and Sandra Lee are team leaders at the award-winning Visitor Information Centre

Sharing friendly smiles and unsurpassed customer experiences is all in a day's work for the staff and volunteers at the Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre.

Now that extra care for travellers has won the team a prestigious award: the *Tripadvisor Travellers'*

Choice Award 2021.

The *Travellers' Choice Award* celebrates attractions which consistently deliver fantastic experiences to travellers around the globe; each winner has earned positive reviews and ratings on Tripadvisor - the world's largest

travel guidance platform - over the past year.

In a particularly challenging year, the Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre stood out by providing top-notch service and experiences to visitors.

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Introducing Digital Connectivity: an internet revolution for Balonne Shire

The super-fast internet service now "live" across much of the Balonne Shire had been introduced to local communities at events held in St George recently.

Areas already connected include St George to Nindigully to Dirranbandi to Hebel, and around Mungindi, and this means many of our town residents and famers and graziers can now be connected.

Thallon and the area south of

Thallon will follow in the next couple of months, and the area from St George to Bollon will be connected before the end of next year.

Balonne Shire Council hosted events for the public and also members of the Chamber of Commerce in the Country Universities Centre (CUC), and many who could not attend in person joined us online, including a group who gathered at the CUC in Dirranbandi.

The network is being built by a company called Field Solutions Group, or FSG, and Chief Sales Officer Luke Briggs attended the St George events while Chief Operating Officer Philippe Benoliel joined us on the big screen from his office in Sydney.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole spoke at the events, saying it has been "quite a journey" on this project to extend fast internet across

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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

Brush Strokes

The annual art exhibition is back, displaying works from 15 local artists. Enjoy the amazing talents, and be sure to enter the raffle to win a week at a luxury Sunshine Coast unit.

WHERE: The Farmhouse, St George

WHEN: 17-18 September

Hebel Campdraft

Showcasing skilled riders of all ages, this event will not disappoint! Stay the night and experience the Hebel hospitality - camping is available at the Draft.

WHERE: Hebel Rodeo Grounds

WHEN: 25-26 September

St George Sheepdog Trials

Check out a uniquely Australian sport, right here in the Balonne. With more than 140 years of heritage, Sheepdog Trials are keeping bush tradition alive.

WHERE: St George Showgrounds

WHEN: 1-3 October

Dam Buster 250

Get your fix of offroad racing over two action packed days! It's sure to be fun for the whole family.

WHERE: St George

WHEN: 2-3 October

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

From 1am on Monday, September 13, the Queensland Government has reinstated a "border bubble" along the New South Wales border - or at least part of the border.

While the border bubble includes the Moree Plains Shire and local government areas along the border to the east, it does not include the western local government areas of Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett and the Unincorporated Area. For them, the previous restrictions remain in force.

The Queensland Government said it is easing restrictions along some parts of the New South Wales border because the NSW Government recently announced an easing of restrictions for regional New South Wales.

Travel across the border will be for what the Government terms "an essential purpose", though that does include buying food, receiving medical care, and attending school or childcare.

This is good news for our community in Mungindi in particular.

The Government says that Queensland residents will also be able to enter any of the local government areas included in the border bubble without having to follow Stay at Home orders when back in Queensland.

Now, you know that, when it comes to Covid and border travel and lockdowns, the situation is very fluid and can change very quickly.

For the latest information, and to examine whether your potential travel is permitted, please go to the Queensland Government website: www.covid19.qld.gov.au

In this edition of the *Balonne Bulletin*, you will see an article that asks a simple question of both rural and town-based business people: "Are you 'Covid-ready'?"

By "Covid-ready", I mean do you have contingency plans for how your business would continue to operate if a case of Covid-19 was discovered here?

You need to consider the practical



aspects of what Covid cases in Balonne Shire might mean.

Council is happy to talk to operators who want help with their "Covid-ready" plans. We will be contacting business and community organisations to arrange meetings where necessary to help individual operators consider what steps they might take.

On a related topic, if you need to bring harvesters across the border to take off this season's grain crops in the Shire, the time to act is now.

Border restrictions are complex and passes can take some time to organise, so it is important to take the earliest possible action to put arrangements in place.

Finally, I want to appeal to anyone who has not yet been vaccinated against Covid-19: please, go and get it done.

Telephone the South-West Hospital and Health Services to book a vaccination time. The telephone number is 1800 844 886.

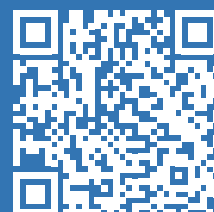
Do it for yourself, your family, your friends and your community.

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



Fast internet rolls out across Balonne

from page 1

the Shire, one of Council's flagship initiatives.

"But now we have arrived. The first sections of the network are live.

"Over \$3 million in government and private funding has been spent. Funding has come from grants – including \$1 million from the Federal Government's Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program and \$1 million from the State Government's Building our Regions Round 4 – with FSG also making a financial contribution, including construction."

Mayor O'Toole said fast internet is critical to the Balonne Shire for:

- businesses to expand or diversify online;
- farmers looking for more efficiencies through AgTech and digital implementation;
- faster streaming services and enhancing liveability across the Shire - attracting and retaining our residents and providing real education opportunities and pathways for our youth;
- enabling Council-community facilities, such as the new Library Hub and Country Universities Centres in St George and Dirranbandi; and
- connecting our communities and our residents to the world.

"I strongly encourage business operators in St George, plus farmers and families, to make contact with Field Solutions Group directly and discover what is available to us now in the world of super-fast internet."



Pleased to see fast internet going live in Balonne Shire: Mayor Samantha O'Toole, Field Solutions Group Chief Sales Officer Luke Briggs and St George Chamber of Commerce President John Travers.



JOINING IN: Field Solutions Group Chief Operating Officer Philippe Benoiel joined the St George event virtually from Sydney, as did a group of residents from the Dirranbandi Area.

Are you COVID-ready? Businesses urged to plan ahead

"Are we 'COVID-ready'?" That's the question Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole wants all business-owners to ask themselves.

"I am urging Balonne businesses to plan for a case of COVID-19 being discovered here and ensure they are 'COVID-ready'," Mayor O'Toole said.

"All our business operators in Balonne Shire – whether they are primary producers on the land or commercial property-owners in our towns – should prepare their 'what if' scenarios.

"All regions of Queensland could be exposed to positive cases of COVID-19 at some time – if not now, then in

coming months, when vaccination rates rise to a certain target level and borders between States inevitably reopen.

"Given that Balonne Shire sits right on the border with New South Wales, where case numbers in the cities and regional centres continue to rise, we are especially vulnerable to someone accidentally bringing COVID-19 north and infecting local residents.

"Please, take this opportunity while we are COVID-free to put firm plans in place so you can ensure the continuity of your business as much as possible in the event of a positive case here."

Mayor O'Toole said business

operators need to consider the practical aspects of what COVID cases in Balonne Shire might mean.

"For example, as a business operator, what would you do if one of your workers tested positive for COVID-19 and was forced to quarantine for 14 days and your other workers were identified as close contacts and also required to quarantine?

"Could your business operate if you and your business partners and manager either caught COVID-19 or were close contacts forced to quarantine?

"If your business has been visited

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Negative results a win for wastewater testing

When it comes to COVID-19 testing, a negative result makes for an outstanding success.

Following the Balonne Shire being added to the statewide program for wastewater surveillance (aimed at detecting viral fragments of COVID-19 in sewage), Council can proudly report both St George and Dirranbandi have each consistently returned negative results.

St George has been a part of the scheme since 22 August, returning four negative tests.

Samples have been taken at Dirranbandi since 5 September and returned two negative results.

Each week a sample from both Council-operated sewage treatment plants is collected and sent to the University of Queensland in Brisbane for testing.

The testing scheme is run by Queensland Health in partnership with UQ; results add to information obtained through clinical (human) testing, and enhance Queensland Health's COVID-19 response.



TOP NOTCH: The Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre has won the *Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Award 2021*.

Balonne Visitor Centre is best of the best

from page 1

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said everyone is chuffed with the Tourism team's win.

"Our staff at the Visitor Information Centre pride themselves on their customer service, and making sure every guest enjoys the best of our wonderful St George Region," she said.

"We are enjoying an influx of domestic travellers who are keen to see their backyard – we're so pleased they are choosing the St George Region and are leaving so many positive reviews on their visit."

The VIC is also looking for an extra person to join their award-winning team; interested persons should visit www.balonne.qld.gov.au for more.

DOG REGISTRATION SURVEY

COMING SOON

Council is about to start the annual Dog Registration Survey

- Team members will go door-to-door during October, checking your dogs are **registered and microchipped**.
- Make sure your registration is up to date.
- Registration and microchipping is mandatory under Queensland Law.
- If your dog is unregistered or has no microchip, an on the spot fine will be issued.

To learn more, contact Council: 07 4620 8888 | council@balonne.qld.gov.au

Is your business COVID-ready?

from page 3

by someone later found to have COVID-19, how do you go about having your premises deep-cleaned to the required standard?

“What would it mean for you if the Balonne Shire was locked down because of a local COVID-19 case?”

“These are the sorts of scenarios all business operators should be thinking about and planning for.”

Mayor O’Toole said there was co-ordinated planning across a number of local organisations and Queensland Government departments, assessing ongoing restrictions on the NSW border, trying to alleviate problems for cross-border or near-border communities like Mungindi and Hebel, and monitoring the COVID-19 situation in southern States.

“The Local Disaster Management Group, or LDMG, is meeting at least twice a week at present to monitor the Covid situation and plan for possible eventualities.

“The LDMG includes representatives from hospital services, the police, emergency services, agriculture departments, ambulance and more – and that can be both sides of the NSW border – along with Council representatives, and, as Mayor, I chair the LDMG.

“If we get a Covid-positive case in the Balonne Shire, we will be in a position to implement a co-ordinated response under the direction of the Queensland Government Health Department.

“However, business operators need to be planning what their contingency plans are for a range of scenarios involving a COVID case in the Shire, in their community or even in their business.”

Mayor O’Toole said Council will be



GET READY: Businesses should consider planning ahead for a ‘what-if’ scenario, should borders reopen and interstate travel resume.

talking to operators to help with their plans.

“We will be contacting business and community organisations to arrange meetings where necessary to help individual operators consider what steps they might take.

“However, as always with events like that, various agencies can assist but it will also require resilience and self-reliance on the part of affected individuals.

“That is why it is so, so important to plan and prepare now, while the Balonne Shire is completely COVID-free.”

Mayor O’Toole said the Council is reviewing its own contingency plans on how to continue operations if an employee was infected with COVID-19 or became a close contact.

“It is essential that Council continue as many of its essential services as possible if COVID was to affect our staff, so, just like primary producers,

shop owners and other local business people, Council has to develop contingency plans.”

Mayor O’Toole said Council representatives will be contacting business and community organisations throughout the Shire but business-owners are also welcome to contact Council for more information on 07 4620 8888.

The Queensland Government also has a continuity template available for businesses - see the QR code below.

The Mayor also renewed her appeal for Balonne residents to get vaccinated.

“We all know the only way to beat COVID-19 in the long run is for as many people as possible to be vaccinated against it.

“If you haven’t been vaccinated yet, please, go and do it. That’s the way to best protect yourself, your family, your friends and your community.”

Business Continuity Planning: help is available

Business owners are welcome to contact Council for more information about getting COVID-ready.

Ph: 07 4620 8888

The Queensland Government also has a continuity template for businesses, available online. Simply scan the QR code for more:

www.publications.qld.gov.au



Need to bring harvesters across the border? Now's the time to act

Farmers in the Balonne Shire needing to make arrangements for harvesting that involve cross-border movements should act now.

Balonne Shire Mayor Samantha O'Toole said recently border restrictions are complex and passes can take some time to organise, so it is important to take the earliest possible action to put arrangements in place.

"This is a Queensland Government area of responsibility but grain harvests are a vital economic contributor to the Balonne Shire – and critical also to our individual farmers of course – and so Council wants to see harvesting proceed as smoothly as possible.

"It has been predicted that high commodity prices and a potential 2.2-million-tonne grain harvest are set to deliver a \$1 billion return to the regional Queensland economy at farm-gate."

Mayor O'Toole said she hoped delays and disruption to harvesting because of Covid restrictions can be minimised.

"Whether farmers are moving their own harvesting equipment from New South Wales or using contract harvesters from interstate, I am

urging everyone to act now to make sure all the necessary plans, protocols and permits are in place.

"This is a complex area. For example, harvest contract crews entering Queensland from a hotspot must have appropriate arrangements in place for isolating after they cross the border, which could be Covid-safe plans if travelling under the Queensland Freight Protocol or quarantine management plans for specialist or essential workers or farmers or agribusiness workers coming from the NSW Border Zone.

"I know the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, or DAF, has been working with other east coast agriculture departments, and Agforce and other grains sector representatives, to facilitate a successful harvest that is undertaken in a Covid-safe way to protect workers and regional communities.

"Please telephone DAF as a matter of urgency to gain a clear understanding of what you will need to do."

Balonne growers and contractors can contact David Hickey, DAF Agricultural Co-ordination Officer: 0427 427 503.

Also, DAF has detailed information online for grain-producing farms and



PREPARE: Those looking to bring in harvest equipment in will need to make border crossing arrangements. *harvest crews to help plan logistics around the grain harvest season.*

Please keep checking the site as information will be updated regularly.



Simply scan the QR code for more information.

Balonne Shire Church Services

Anglican/Lutheran, St George
8.30am, each Sunday.

Bush Disciples, St George
10am, 1st – 4th Sunday.

Church of Christ, Dirranbandi
6pm, 1st and 3rd Sunday.
10am, 2nd and 4th Sunday

Harvest Point, St George
9.30am, each Sunday.

Hebel Catholic Church
10am, 1st Sunday.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Bollon
11am, 4th Sunday.

King's Church, St George
10am, each Sunday.

Riverlife Church, St George
9.30am, each Sunday.

Riverlife Church, Warrawee
10am, 2nd Wednesday.

St Andrew's, St George
9am, each Sunday.

St James Anglican, Mungindi
9am, each Sunday.

St Patrick's, St George
6pm, 1st and 3rd Saturday.
8.30am, all other Sundays.

St George Uniting Church
9am, each Sunday.

St Therese's, Dirranbandi
8am, 1st and 3rd Sunday.

Thallon Catholic Church
10am, 3rd Sunday.

Want to include your Church service or Church group meeting?

Email: media@balonne.qld.gov.au with your Church name, plus the time and location of worship.

Crothers Brothers sell Dirranbandi's *Booligar*

"Booligar" – a property south of Dirranbandi that has been in the hands of four generations of the same family for more than a century-and-a-half – has been sold.

Brothers Donald and Douglas Crothers have sold "Booligar" 157 years after great-grandfather Henry Crothers came to Dirranbandi in 1864 and took up about 4,000 hectares of country on the eastern side of the Narran River. The now 11,254-hectare irrigation and grazing property will be operated by the Hunt family from Mallowa, south-west of Moree, who will run the property in conjunction with the Swain family from Walgett. Douglas Crothers told "Queensland Country Life" newspaper's Mark Phelps the sale was a challenging process and ultimately a very tough decision. "However, we're confident it's the right one for our family," he said. Brooks Crothers - one of founder Henry's 13 children - drew the second block in a land ballot in 1905.

Then, in 1913, he bought a block from the Treweeke family, bringing the property to its current size.

Third-generation owner Tom Crothers had the vision of using irrigation as a way of drought-proofing the livestock operation.

Tom, who bought out his brothers Murray and Charles, built the first storage in the late 1950s, later installing a centre-pivot irrigator.



BROTHERS: Donald (left) and Douglas Crothers are leaving "Booligar" after 157 years of Crothers family ownership.

That first 480-megalitre dam was said to be the largest of its type in Australia at that stage.

Tom's sons, current owners Donald and Douglas, along with their wives Pam and Lorraine, engaged in a buy-out process from 1984 until the mid-1990s.

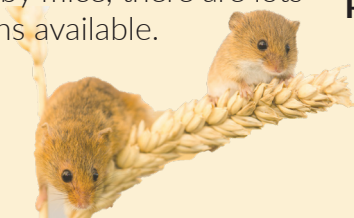
Today, "Booligar" has 687 hectares of

irrigation and 3,600 ha of dryland farming, as well as carrying livestock. They said the big shift towards cotton began in 1996, and ultimately the development of 9,200 megalitres of on-farm water storage.

Elders will be conducting the online "Booligar" clearing sale on AuctionsPlus on September 17-20.

Mice plaguing you? There's lots of useful resources out there

Mice numbers are on the rise, and they'll be marching through the Balonne during harvest. If your home or farm is being impacted by mice, there are lots of solutions available.



House Mouse



Mouse Management



GRDC tips and tactics



NSW DPI



ACTA

UPDATE

BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL | LONERGAN PROJECT SERVICES



Disaster Recovery

Diamond Tank Rd

- Completion: mid-September

Littleton Rd

- Completion: mid-September

Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (south)

- Completion: early October

Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (north)

- Completion: mid-January

Bollon-Dirranbandi Rd

- Completion: early October

Castlereagh Hwy

- Completion: early October

Upcoming Roads

- Cashel Vale Rd
- Dingadee Rd
- Teelba Rd
- Denholm Ln

Council has engaged contractors to deliver these packages of works under the DRFA - Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Completed Roads

- Unity Rd
- Middle Rd
- Whyenbah Rd
- Thomby Rd
- Wagoo Rd
- Cardiff Rd
- Powrunna Rd
- Mourilyan Rd
- Lower Plains Rd
- Narine Rd
- Commissioners Point Rd
- Thuraggi Rd
- Johnston Rd
- Cambo Rd
- Mundalee Rd
- Gunnindaddy Rd
- Corack Rd
- Honeyamah Ln



REPAIR AND MAINTAIN: The Lonergan Project Services crew set up on Jakelwar-Goodooga Rd (north); they are set to finish in January 2022.

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.