



WALGETT SHIRE

'RIVERS, PLAINS AND OPALS' NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2022

FIRST FEMALE MAYOR APPOINTED FOR WALGETT SHIRE



The first meeting of the newly formed Walgett Shire Council was held on 6th January 2022 and the Councillors were officially sworn in.

Congratulations to Councillor Jane Keir who was elected unopposed as Mayor. Jane is the first female mayor in Walgett Shire's history! Jane has a distinguished local government career serving in both councillor and deputy mayor roles previously. Mayor Keir said she was excited and honoured to take on the role as Mayor of Walgett Shire Council in 2022 and thanked her fellow Councillors for electing

her.

Two nominations were received for the position of Deputy Mayor and Councillor Greg Rummery was successful after conducting a ballot.

Priorities for the new Council will include roads, economic development, tourism and completing key infrastructure projects that aim to make Walgett Shire a great place to live, work, visit and invest. We wish our new leadership team well and look forward to working with them to achieve great outcomes for the entire community said General Manager Mike Urquhart.

LOCAL ROADS & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ALLOCATED

Walgett Shire Council has received advice from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communication regarding a grant of \$2,471,230 under the LRCI program. The program aims to assist local economies recover from the Covid-19 pandemic by supporting local business and employment.

Council's General Manager Mike Urquhart said the scope of projects is wide ranging, including construction of roads, reconstruction, rehabilitation re-sheeting, resealing, bridgeworks, drainage, traffic

improvement, CCTV, cycleway footpaths, street lighting, painting of community facilities, landscaping, carparks and playgrounds.

The General Manager tabled a report to the February 22 Council meeting outlining the priority projects developed by Council's Management Executive over the past few months and these include:

- * Rowena Hall Refurbishment - \$60,000
- * Collarenebri Hall Refurbishment - \$250,000
- * Opal Street Footpath/Cycle way Lightning Ridge - \$210,000
- * Carinda Sportsground Fencing - \$40,000
- * Walgett Splash park \$1,000,000
- * Sealing 700metres Miners Road Grawin \$180,000
- * Gravel Re-sheeting unsealed roads -\$731,230

Council were unanimous in approving the funding for the recommended projects.

The General Manager advised the project managers would commence preparing a detailed scope of works for each project with construction to be completed by 30th June 2023.

What's On

APRIL

8th, 9th & 10th April Come By Chance Campdraft	9th April Dinomanacs Lightning Ridge Bowling Club	9th April Walgett Outdoor Community Markets	9th April Great Southern Nights Live Music Lightning Ridge
9th & 10th April Narran Lake Open Day Weekend	15th April Black Opal Bull & Bronc Ride 2022	15 to 17 April Lightning Ridge Easter Festival	18th – 22 April Dharrivaa Walaay Narran Camp

MAY

7th & 8th May 83rd Annual Walgett Show	13th – 15th May Syntropic Farming Workshops The Hungry Spirit Lightning Ridge
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JUNE

4th June Walgett Outdoor Community Markets	12th June Rowena Show & Shine	12th June Rowena Cracker Night
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12th – 15th June Full Moon Dreaming Events The Hungry Spirit Lightning Ridge	18th June PJ O'Brien Memorial Race Day Walgett
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AUSTRALIAN STREET ART AWARDS

The Awards showcase ultimate Australian destinations where visitors can see epic, world-class street and public art that's accessible and enjoyable all year round. Congratulations to Walgett Shire Council and all the artists that have been recognised in this year's awards!

Best External Mural

Silver award: 2 Kool 4 Skool by John Murray Art - find it near Lightning Ridge Visitors Information Centre – LRVIC

Best Mega Mural

Silver award: Jimmy Little water tower mural by Jenny McCracken from Zest Events International and Frank Wright for Walgett Shire Council - find it in Dewhurst Street, Walgett

Best Landmark Sculpture

Silver award: Stanley - The Big Bird by John Murray Art - find it near Castlereagh Highway turn-off, 10 kilometres from Lightning Ridge

WALGETT SHOWGROUNDS TOILETS REFURBISHED



Photos of the finished toilets and a before shot.

In 2021, Council secured grant funding under the Crown Lands 2020-21 Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) program for the refurbishment of the Female amenity block located at the Walgett Showgrounds. The amenity block has been transformed into a modern amenity, providing a renewed space for the community and recreational activities. Despite the challenges brought on by the restrictions in 2021, the project was able to be completed in November 2021.

The renovation works included new fixtures, fittings, signage, painting and a new concrete entry path making it a safe, clean and fit for purpose facility.

"The old amenities block was tired and lacked the modern facilities needed to support the hundreds of users visiting the Showgrounds during large community events" Mr Urquhart said.

The ongoing development and enhancement of Walgett Showgrounds ensures residents and visitors continue to have access to facilities that are in line with Council's infrastructure standards.

Mr Urquhart said, we have so many beautiful recreational areas in our region and keeping them maintained is part in parcel with providing inviting places for all to enjoy.

2022 COUNCIL MEETING DATES

Meetings will be held in the Council Chambers; 77 Fox Street Walgett NSW 2832

Council Meetings are scheduled at 11:00am on the fourth Tuesday of each month, except in January, when meetings may be scheduled, and in February and December, when the meeting will be on the third Tuesday. For a full schedule of upcoming meetings view the timetable below:

Live Streaming of the Council meeting can be accessed via the following Link.

2022 Ordinary Meetings

Apr 26th, May 24th, Jun 28th, Jul 26th, Aug 30th, Sep 27th, Oct 25th, Nov 29th, Dec 20th.

Members of the public wishing to address the Public Forum are requested to fill the form or to contact Council by telephone or in person. Persons not registered to speak will not be able to address Council.

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER



As we progress into the last few months of the 21/22 financial year after another flooding event Council works have stepped into top gear with:

- Awarding of tenders for the Come By Chance Road, Burranbaa and Lorne Roads
- Emergency flood damage repair of roads
- Flood damage permanent restoration of shire roads flood damage continue
- Rehabilitation of the Merrywinebone and Carinda Regional Roads
- Rehabilitation of Fox Street Walgett with new footpath and kerb and gutter
- New footpath and K&G for Herbert Street and Wilson Street Collarenebri
- Works on the Collarenebri Grandstand continue
- Grawin playground is nearing completion
- Kaolin Street Lightning Ridge drainage works
- Lightning Ridge Agate and Kaolin Streets footpath/cyclway to commence
- The Colless Grandstand Walgett is nearing completion after delays with rain and flooding at the facility in early 2022
- New amenities for Apex and Trevallion Parks Walgett scheduled for June 2022
- Amenities for Lions park lightning Ridge
- Investigations for a new Chlorination and cooling tower for Lightning Ridge continue
- Construction of the new Goangra Bridge over the Namoi River is scheduled to commence in the coming months

On the 14th March Councillors and the Management Executive had a full day inspecting roads and projects in the eastern side of the shire:

- Goangra Bridge site
- Hollywood Bridge and replacement of the last wooden bridge in the shire.
- Drainage on shire roads and grading maintenance
- Burren Junction airport and access road. Investigations underway for an all weather emergency strip to be located on a sealed road near village
- Drainage at Burren Junction village
- Merrywinebone Road flood damage and rehabilitation sites
- Drainage at Rowena and hall upgrade needs
- Drainage requirements Pokataroo
- Grawin Bridge site Gwydir highway
- Collarenebri Sportsground, weir, waste facility, showground, cemetery, bore/cooling tower, drainage

I would also like to remind all business houses about the following Council "Main Street Beautification" programs that are currently open to all businesses in Walgett, Collarenebri and Lightning Ridge:

1. Removal of bars from shop windows and doors and installation of appropriate crim safe, or like security doors and window covers. Under this program Council will reimburse to a maximum of \$4,000 per premise upon completion and presentation of receipts.
2. Shop front painting program whereby Council will reimburse the owner to a maximum of \$1,000 per premise toward the purchase of paint. Labour and other costs related to painting the shop fronts is the responsibility of the owner.

Council staff right across the shire are making an outstanding effort to have our roads, bridges, sporting ovals, town entries, parks and gardens in a great condition despite the challenging rain and flooding events.

Michael Urquhart, General Manager

LIGHTNING RIDGE SPORTING PRECINCT



Walgett Shire Council along with the Lightning Ridge Race Club its members have prepared the racetrack in readiness for the Easter Festival race day on Saturday 16th April 2022. The adjacent sporting fields are in perfect condition thanks to Council's dedicated parks and gardens team. The grounds along with a new white picket fence, upgraded canteen/bar and Secretary/Jockeys rooms complement the new \$1.6 million dollar Multi-Purpose Function Centre that will be the centre piece of activities on the day, providing officials and patrons with a first class facility for a day of action packed racing and fun.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Council's Management Executive commenced its community consultation program for Council's new Delivery Program and Operational Plan with a presentation to all staff at a breakfast meeting held at the Walgett Sporting Club. Councillors and the Management Executive have completed a week of community consultation at all towns and villages in the shire with several hundred residents attending the presentations and pop-up community consultation stands.

In addition to this Council has issued a survey inviting all residents and ratepayers to have their say in planning the upcoming Delivery Program 2022/23 to 2024/25 and operational Plan 2022/23. The survey will help identify the community's main priorities and ambitions for the upcoming Council term. The survey is also available on the Council web site and closes on Tuesday 12th April 2022.

GREAT ATTENDANCE AT THE 2022 NEW RESIDENTS EVENTS



Walgett Shire Council together with local Community Groups CWA Walgett Branch, Collarenebri Lions, CWA Collarenebri Branch, RDA Orana and Lightning Ridge Rotary Club hosted three successful New Residents Events in March this year. The events were free social events providing new residents an opportunity to form connections within the community. This year we hosted three events in Walgett, Collarenebri and Lightning Ridge and anyone that moved to the region within the past 12 months was encouraged to come along. Council feels these events are crucial to engage new residents and with over 80 participants across the three events, believe they were a major success. We had people move from Lismore, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne and even as close as Gilgandra. We welcomed new teaching staff, health care providers and opal miners, and have already signed several up as volunteers to community groups such as Rotary and Sing Australia. The idea is that they will link up with businesses, community groups and other new residents to make new connections to ensure they settle in to the community and it quickly starts to feel like home. Council also provides all the essential information such as employment agencies, real estate, local schools and important contact details to make the transition that much smoother. If you're a new resident to our Shire and missed out on one of our events please email tourism@walgett.nsw.gov.au or phone 02 6828 6139 for your welcome pack.



COLLARENEBRI LIBRARY OPENING



On Saturday 26th March 2022 Walgett Shire Council officially opened its new Collarenebri library which is located in the Masons Store Wilson Street Collarenebri. Walgett Senior Librarian Cath Hiscox has worked tirelessly to establish the new library after the CWA building which housed the former library was sold. The library is very inviting with comfortable lounges for those wanting to sit back with a cuppa and do some reading. Mrs. Hiscox advised the book collection would be increased in the coming weeks when more books were available. General Manager Mike Urquhart said on behalf of Walgett Shire Council and the Collarenebri community we would like to sincerely thank Peter and Janette Mason for making the space available to the community. The library is opened daily from 9.30am to 12.30pm. Pictured is Peter Mason, Councillor Jasen Ramien, Senior Librarian Cath Hiscox, Shelby Seaton and General Manager Mike Urquhart at the official cake cutting.



TOUR DE OROC EVENING A SUCCESS

The green was full and the battle fierce as the Walgett Community went head to head for a bowls fundraiser on Tuesday night. Around 30 people participated in the round robin tournament to raise funds for the 2022 Tour de OROC Ride. Locals, teachers, businesses and many other supporters came together to raise funds for Macquarie Home Stay with an evening on the Bowling Green. Across the 10 teams there was a diverse mix of avid bowlers, novices and amateur players all of whom suddenly found their competitive streak for the night! The winning team consisted of Chris Clemson, David Campbell and Dan Gale who each won \$100 fuel voucher from Woodhams Petroleum. Second Place went to a last minute inclusion after one team failed to arrive Ben Broatch, Scott Campbell and Virron Mauby who each took home a \$50 voucher to GJ Williams Butchery in Walgett. Our third place getters were made up of Rob & Prue Hutchinson and Bridgette Fitzgerald of Complete Rural Conveyancing who walked away with \$25 each courtesy of Walgett Home Hardware and we couldn't let our wooden spooners Barry, Colin and Henry McKenzie leave empty handed so they took home a box of choccies each to help soften the blow! The final prize went to our best dressed team in James Duncan, Rod Mace and Jimmy Currey with their zany matching outfits. While the teams were hashing it out on the green our Guests of Honour the 30 Tour de OROC Riders and support crew were taking a well-deserved rest after a massive 185km ride from Armatree to Walgett. They met with Council Staff and Councillors with Cindy and Sporto Staff doing a fantastic job ensuring they were fed and watered after a big day. Michael Hughes Transport got them safely back to their accommodation at The Barwon Inn for a good night sleep and I have it on good authority that they were up and moving by dawn as they took on Day 3 of the ride heading to Bourke just a quick 224km!

KOOKABURRA COURT



General Manager Mike Urquhart said Walgett Shire Council was deeply disappointed with Whiddon Groups closure of Walgetts aged care facility Kookaburra Court at the end of March 2022.

Kookaburra Court has been a well-managed and maintained aged care facility that has been home for many elderly residents of Walgett Shire over the past 30 years, with Whiddon Group having managed the facility for the past 13 1/2 years. Whiddon Group last year did signal to the community that closure was imminent should resident numbers not improve as the facility was losing a quarter of a million dollars annually. This has no doubt been a difficult decision for the Whiddon Group executive, a closure that has far reaching consequences for affected residents, their families, staff, their families and the greater Walgett business houses that supported Kookaburra Court in some way.

Perhaps the diminishing demand for aged care in Walgett can be best described as collateral damage, fallout from the Royal Commission into Aged Care report, the pandemic and increased Government care subsidy packages to assist the elderly to remain in their homes.

The General Manager said Council would support Whiddon Group where possible with its winding up of the facility and its move for the Kookaburra Court property and building to be retained as an asset for the greater Walgett community.

LIGHTNING RIDGE EASTER FESTIVAL

Lightning Ridge: 15 -17 April 2022

The town swells with thousands of visitors celebrating Easter, with fun activities and events for the whole family including:

- Lightning Ridge Black Opal Bull and Bronc Ride
- Outback Opal Hunters and mining machinery line-up
- Street Stalls and Carnival
- Annual Miners Rickshaw challenge, strength challenges, famous egg and spoon races
- Lightning Ridge Race Club Horse Races
- Big Dig for over \$15,000 worth of solid opals
- Little Dig for over \$3,500 worth of 'techie' prizes for the kids
- Live entertainment at numerous venues in the Ridge and Grawin
- Fireworks spectacular
- Helicopter scenic flights

Check out the details online: <https://www.walgett.nsw.gov.au/tourism/event/lightning-ridge-easter-festival/>

SOLDIER ON THE MONUMENT TO RETURN



On Thursday 29th July 2021 a long combination vehicle attempted to negotiate a right hand turn from Fox street onto Wee Waa Street, unfortunately things didn't go as planned, the trailer collided with the base of the War Memorial Monument. The soldier that has watched over the towns centre for almost a century was dislodged from the base along with the plinth, the soldier suffered unrepairable damage.

Council's General Manager Mike Urquhart advised a structural engineer from Dubbo had inspected the monument in August 2021, reporting the base and plinth were structurally sound as damage was merely aesthetic in nature. The next step in the restoration process was insurer approval to carry out repair of the secondary plinth and sculpting of the soldier. The General Manger said discussions were had with a number of sculptors and it was decided the renowned sculptor, Carl Valerius be engaged to recreate the soldier on the monument.

Carl Valerius is a nationally recognized sculptor working with bronze, stone and wax and soft materials in between. Carl has no formal qualifications, instead his

artistic life has been derived from skills he has developed for essential survival as a stonemason and builder. His lack of formal training has not prevented him from being an invited guest lecturer at the University of New South Wales. If you have been to Darling Harbour, Sydney you will have seen Carl's work, likewise Canberra's National Museum has his work on permanent display. Other work includes Sir Donald Bradman and the design of the Captain's Walk, Cootamundra Jubilee Park and Bradman's Cottage. His most recent and significant work was produced in 2020, a life size bronze statue of "Bill the Bastard", Australia's greatest warhorse depicted in ABC's Landline. The statue is on display on the Riverina town of Harden-Murrumburrah.

The General Manager said Carl has since completed a mold of the soldier and ordered the marble from Italy. With delays in the supply chain, Carl was unable to meet his original planned unveiling day 25th April 2022, the revised date for completion is now 30th June 2022. An official unveiling event will be arranged for later in the year.

LIGHTNING RIDGE WALGETT REGION VISITORS GUIDE 2022/24

The Lightning Ridge Walgett Region 2022/24 Official Visitors Guide is about to start production. Advertising opportunities in the Official Guide are limited. Everyone that registered their interest previously will be contacted directly to book their space.

The Official 2022/24 Lightning Ridge Walgett Region Visitor Guide is a practical tool designed to provide visitors to the Walgett Shire region with a comprehensive understanding of the things to see and do.

The current Visitor Guide will be having a total overhaul in content and design and we are looking to publish July 2022.

Snapshot of the Benefits:

2year lifespan for your advertising dollar

Direct advertising to consumers with your contact details

Representation in information centres throughout NSW, Qld and Victoria

Ability to use the OVG for your own marketing purposes

Representation at key industry consumer and trade events

Consumers are more likely to pick up one comprehensive brochure versus a variety of brochures when making their holiday plans.

Ability to have the OVG in all accommodation houses thereby advertising to the consumers in the region.

To enquire about advertising in the next Official Visitor Guide or to be provided with the OVG Advertising Proposal including prices and sizing of advertisements, please call (02) 6828 6139 or email tourism@walgett.nsw.gov.au

Booking Deadline: Advertising booking and material - 29th of April 2022

Release date - July 2022





COUNCIL TEAMS CONNECTS WITH COMMUNITY

With COVID restrictions easing across the State, Walgett Shires youth & community development teams have taken the opportunity to roll out some eagerly awaited programs for the community. Through successful funding outcomes Council delivered a series of events across communities which included twelve free pool events (four in each community), entertainment, food and refreshments at the three pools across the Shire in Lightning Ridge, Walgett and Collarenebri. To value add to the "Love where you Live" program residents were offered free coffee as a part of the "Feel Good Friday: initiative aimed at creating opportunities for people to reconnect, socialise and visit their local café / coffee shop building social connectedness. Hundreds of locals and visitors took the opportunity to be involved in at least one of these events which re-established many friends and families across the Shire.

CELEBRATING AUSTRALIA DAY 2022



This year's Australia day Awards were planned to be undertaken at the Collarenebri Bowling Club however COVID guidelines around venue size and attendees changed the event to be held at the Walgett swimming pool, we were all set for a fun filled day when Mother Nature set in and had other plans. After much deliberation and ensuring we provided a COVID safe environment abiding with COVID regulations to keep everyone safe the 2022 Australia Day Citizenship and Awards Ceremony were held at the multi-million-dollar PCYC. Council's Australia Day Ambassador Ms. Susanne Gervay OAM was full of praise and admiration for the welcoming and acceptance received from people across communities that she met during her stay. This year Council had 19 nominations in the following categories: Health Award, Business Award, Volunteer of the Year, Lifetime Achievement Award, Young Citizen of the Year and Citizen of the Year. Congratulations to all nominations and award recipients.

COMING UP EVENTS

Youth week 2022: 'Its up to YOUth' will be held from 4th to 22nd April, huge community fun days and youth focused activities across all communities. Including comedy workshops and performances, Our Jita Korean Troup will be visiting again. Live Music, Big Day Outs and more.

SHIRE CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Successful International Women's days were delivered in our three larger communities across our Shire with celebrations recording over 250 women actively participating in these events. The events provided an opportunity for all women to come together, celebrating and connecting following the recent COVID 19 pandemic which created isolation and limited community gatherings.

Days consisted of guest speakers, fun games, and a diverse array of activities kept the ladies entertained offering that social interaction many have missed. Service providers kindly donated a spectacular variety of gifts and prizes. Council congratulates all women who attended events and look forward to delivering further programs and events focused on and engaging the amazing women in our Shire. Sincere thanks to all the services who supported and hosted these events.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Pool Parties across communities have been delivered to great reception in the three larger communities. The celebrations included free entry, give-aways, games and activities, food and refreshments.

The Shires Community development team, supported by the youth workers in each town offered a great day of fun and opportunities for our residents and visitors to come together and engage in a relaxing, cool environment at each of the community's pools. Vouchers were offered for a series of games, lucky entry and special efforts throughout the day of young people and adults alike.



MEET THE NEW COUNCILORS



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