

MURRAY Matters

AUGUST 2023



Your council news & updates

In March 2022 we began a process of reviewing our land and properties to ensure we are growing with our communities and investing in the right assets in the right ways. This included buildings, facilities, recreational and open spaces as well as general land. We had direct engagement with users, clubs and groups along with survey-based feedback from users of our park spaces.

This was the first step in our efforts to ensure we are operating at a financially sustainable level: both now and down the track. What we discovered is that there are a number of assets within Council's portfolio that may not be providing value to the community like they once did and that, in many cases, the cost to the ratepayer is outweighing the need.

Furthermore, rate income is well below inflation, so the cost to maintain said assets is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

So, how do we address this?

In short: we need to streamline what assets we are 'investing' in.

In the coming months you will hear more about the choices we need to make to achieve this. This might mean selling-off some assets (like a pocket of unused land), reducing maintenance on others, or consolidating efforts in particular areas to invest in one good space or facility (rather than several).

This process is aimed at improving the value of the services delivered by Council and ensures that assets are well utilised and represent value to the ratepayer. This doesn't mean the smaller populations automatically lose out because of numbers-based usage stats. There has been a lot of planning, conversations, community feedback and fact checking undertaken to make sure these decisions and their outcomes have the best results for our entire community.

You'll hear more about this process soon.

Or, in the meantime, take a look at our Your Say platform to get a more comprehensive history of the process to-date, and what to expect in the future.

www.yoursay.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au



TOP NEWS *inside*

- Message from the Mayor
- Weed spraying
- New landfill cell
- Works pictures

- Community Grants
- Customer Service feedback
- Fire hazard clearing
- New-look accounts

From the Mayor's desk...

I recently looked at the demographic data for our Council area and was struck by a dramatic gap we have in our age groupings.

We have known for a long time that we have a strong representation of older residents – higher than state or national averages. This reflects, in part, the attractiveness of our region as a retirement destination.

More concerning to me was the under-representation of people in the 18 to 30 age group. Why is it so?

The evidence points to two issues.

Firstly, the availability of work opportunities for young people finishing secondary education. It's a situation we are addressing through the attraction of new businesses, large and small, to our towns. Watch this space for some announcements on this subject in the near future.

Secondly, and more importantly, is the need currently for young people seeking further education to move away to get it. Whether it's bachelor degrees, diplomas, professional certifications or post-graduate qualifications, it's hard to complete them at a distance from the traditional institutions that provide them.

That's why we are working to establish in Moama a facility for students to obtain these qualifications without leaving their local communities. In partnership with the Country Universities Centre (CUC) we are looking to set up a study hub here that will enable students to connect to any university in Australia to pursue their qualification from here.

The hub will provide facilities to undertake the studies in a supportive, study-friendly environment with professional assistance and all the necessary IT connectivity. CUC already operates many centres of this type across NSW and beyond, so we are not guinea pigs here. It's a tried and tested model showing a high success rate. Importantly, it has demonstrated that young people who would otherwise not be able to study elsewhere have jumped at the chance to pursue their education dreams close to home.

As this project advances, we will continue to inform you of its status.



Community Grants closing soon

Applications for the latest round of Council's Community Grants Program will be closing on September 15.

The competitive grant round offers individual grants of up to \$3,000.

The program is in place to support our groups and committees to further their ideas or projects, so local community groups or not-for-profit organisations are encouraged to apply.

More information is available at the grants section of our website.

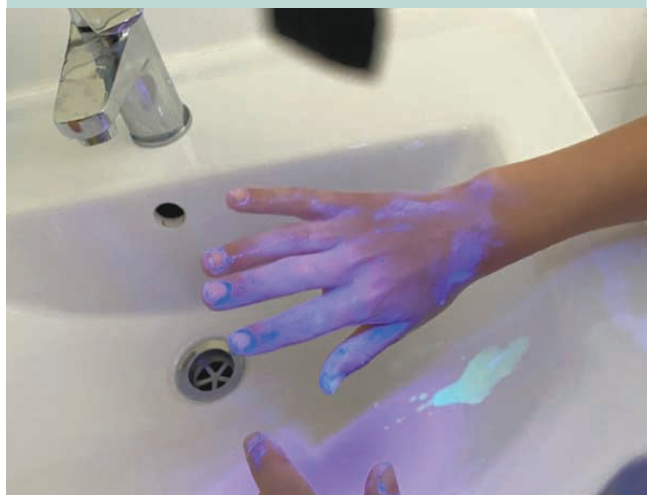
Getting glittery

Our Environmental Health Coordinator, Melissa recently visited local preschools to help educate children about germs, their spread, the importance of handwashing, and proper handwashing techniques. To make the learning experience interactive and engaging, a solution called Glitterbug was utilised, allowing children to visually observe whether they had washed their hands effectively!

The harmless fluorescent dye was applied to hands whilst Mel guided the children through the correct process of handwashing. After the handwashing activity, the children inspected their hands under the 'magic torch'. The Glitterbug solution illuminated any areas that had not been properly washed, showing the presence of residual dye and effectively representing the lingering presence of germs. This visual feedback allowed the children to understand the significance of thorough handwashing and motivated them to improve their technique.

They also used the solution to see just how far invisible germs can spread when they sprayed a pretend sneeze across the room!

The sessions have been a reminder for those both big and small on the importance of proper hygiene!



KEEP FOOD OUT OF THE WASTE BIN



After a recent (anonymous) audit of bins right across the council, we've discovered that we're all pretty good at utilising green bins for our garden organics. BUT...

....30% of the waste in our red bins is still made up of food scraps!

This is waste we can easily keep out of landfill.

If you have a green FOGO (Food Organics, Garden Organics) bin then you're one of around 4200 households that do, and that means you're in a prime position to help make a difference to where your waste goes.

If you don't have a green bin, you can also put your food waste back into your own garden, by adding it to a compost bin or worm farm.

When food waste goes into the red bin it goes into costly landfill, where it is lost as a resource. When it goes into the green bin it's processed into valuable compost which can be used in local gardens, parks and farms.

Every banana peel, apple core and other food scraps that you move out of your red bin and into your green bin is going to make a real difference!



We also discovered that a lot of people are bagging their recycling before putting it in the yellow bin.

Put simply, if your recycling is in a bag, it can't be sorted and will go to landfill.

All your good efforts are quite literally 'wasted'!



Bright things are happening!

We've been finalising our lighting upgrades at ovals and sports courts across the council, which means a lot of our recreation reserves are shining much brighter!

Council was awarded \$946,052 under Round 4 of the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund to undertake recreation reserve lighting improvements across the footprint.

LED lights have been retrofitted to existing towers and power supplies at the main football oval and netball courts in Barham. Mathoura's tennis courts, netball court and the football oval will have new lights retrofitted at its facilities. Both Moulamein and Tooleybuc had major upgrades with new towers, light controls and connectors installed at the ovals along with new lights at the netball courts. And Bunnaloo's tennis courts have also received an update.

All these ongoing improvements will ensure our local recreation reserves remain an integral part of sport and community development in our local area for years to come.



'Voice of Customer' update



Our new customer-call back program is still ticking along... and we've had lots of useful feedback so far. A common theme amongst the feedback suggests we could improve our service by returning phone calls in a more timely manner. And some positive feedback centres on the helpfulness of our staff when giving out information. We'll take on board these comments, and others, and make sure they are fed into ongoing improvements to our processes and procedures.

Not sure what the call-back program is?

As part of the initiative, our customer service officers are touching base with some customers who have made an enquiry or request.

This is a great opportunity for those customers to provide feedback to us and help us identify improvements or more effective ways of doing things.

If you visit us face to face, you can opt-in to be part of the call-back program. And if you call us, you'll be notified of the initiative. So if you get a call from us, please share your thoughts!



Have you seen our EV on the road?

We recently added a new electric vehicle to our fleet which is powered by the charging station installed at our Moama office.

The electric vehicle is used by Council staff needing to travel between our offices and is just one way we can help reduce emissions in the transport space.

We're also continuing to explore opportunities to encourage greater electric vehicle take-up in the local community and are working with industry partners to undertake joint advocacy to help facilitate the installation of more charging stations across the council area.

We've got a new look.

We recently moved to a new billing and processing system to improve our day-to-day business activities.

As part of this, the accounts you receive from us will now have a slightly different layout. The new designs still provide all the information you need like your usage, charge types, how much and where to pay.

But there's some improvements too!

We've also added a new online payment option as another payment alternative. This means you will soon be able to pay securely via our website with your preferred credit card. If online suits you, head to:

www.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au/paynow

Customer reference numbers are also changing, so please review the customer reference number details on your account/ payment slip before making a payment.

This relates to all payment methods including online, BPay, Post Billpay or direct debit.



Fire hazard spring-tervention

The current weather predictions are for a hot and dry (maybe!) year ahead. This, along with the rain to date, is creating the perfect storm for grass and weed growth.

Council will begin fire hazard reduction inspections during September, so we are asking all community members to start looking at and maintaining vegetation from now. And be sure to keep on top of it for the remainder of the Spring and Summer period. Let's get clearing!

New landfill cell at Moama



After 18 months of works, the construction of the new landfill cell in Moama has been completed.

The \$1.9million project included extensive earthworks at the site and construction of the leachate collection component within the cell.

One of Council's most significant projects at the Landfill site in recent years, the new cell – known as 'Cell 5' – provides an airspace capacity of 135,000 cubic meters and has a waste acceptance capacity of 95,000 tonnes.

It's been a big project!

Waste management and the standards set by the EPA have increased dramatically over the past 50 years and continues to do so. Gone are the days where all waste is simply put into a big hole in the ground!

Whilst the new cell is already receiving some waste, council is now progressing towards the final completion of the leachate management system and collection pond, with a temporary system currently in place.

Once fully complete, and based on current waste disposal statistics, it is expected that the cell will service the community for the next 5 years.

But whilst our new cell 5 may have an impressive airspace of 135,000 cubic metres – which is the equivalent of just over 55 Olympic swimming pools – the best outcome for this cell would be that it's never filled!

Increased recycling, composting and utilising green waste services can make a big impact on the volume of waste we all produce and maximise the life of these cells by reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill.

What's in the works?

Our infrastructure crew have been busy over the last few months finalising road works to meet end-of-financial-year deadlines! Here's just a couple of projects that have been taking place...

Balranald Road

Restoration of flood damages.



Cobb Highway / Tataila Road

Completion of Cobb Highway upgrade for Transport for NSW.



Old Barmah Road

Recent monitoring of rising water levels.



Wakool Road

Rehabilitation and sealing works completed at Wakool Road 27-27.7km.

Officer Road

Restoration of flood damages.





We'll be out and about on the roads

Have you met our Biosecurity Team?

Reece, Lance, Tim and Tango are the guys who help control priority weeds across the whole council area. They also tackle weeds on council-owned land such as roadsides, tracks and reserves.

So as we start to count down to Spring, you'll keep seeing this lovely crew out-and-about conducting weed spraying activities along roadside shoulders, bike tracks and around townships.

There will be signage up when they are spraying, but please remember to slow down and overtake with care if you see them while they're out completing these works.

You can even give them a wave to say hi!

Please keep your dogs on a leash

When you take your dog outside your property you must ensure it is always under the effective control of someone over the age of 16. Our furry friends might be cute and cuddly at home, but you never know how they may respond around other dogs. Keeping them on a lead is the best course of action for everyone.



Murray River Council Post Billpay unavailable

We recently moved to a new billing and processing system to issue rates and accounts. Unfortunately, we are having some challenges with the Australia Post payment option and we are working to get this fixed as soon as possible.

This means customers won't be able to pay their Murray River Council account/s by Post Billpay at this time. All other payment options still remain available.

This is only an issue with Murray River Council accounts, not Post Billpay in general.

Apologies for any inconvenience.

We hope to have this rectified very soon.



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