

MURRAY Matters

OCTOBER 2022

murray river
council

*Your council
news & updates*

Unsealed roads maintenance program: share your thoughts.

During our Community Strategic Plan consultation in early 2022, there were many suggestions provided relating to unsealed roads which required repair, upgrade, increased maintenance or sealing.

These suggestions have been considered and we are now seeking further information from residents and road users to assist us in refining our unsealed road maintenance program for the next 10 years.

In addition to our face-to-face consultation sessions that have taken place over the last couple of months, we also have an online tool where people can lodge their suggestions. This is as easy as highlighting the area on the online map and listing your thoughts.

We know weather has been an issue of late, but this is a tool to help us plan and prepare for the longer term. Why not take a look?

Head to yoursay.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au



Who do you know that deserves an Australia Day Award?

It's never too early to think about Australia Day!

You can now nominate a person or group for our 2023 Australia Day Awards.

The awards are a great platform to recognise the amazing efforts of individuals or groups in your community.

You can nominate in the following categories:

- Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Sportsperson of the Year
- Young Sportsperson of the Year
- Community Event of the Year
- Community Group of the Year
- Arts/Cultural Award (person or group)

The nomination process is simple- you just need to tell us why they deserve an award. Easy!

Head to our website to nominate. But get in quick as nominations close on November 14.

TOP NEWS *inside*

- Message from the Mayor
- Scores on Doors update
- Spotlight on Library Services
- Local Government Awards
- Council meeting dates
- Fire hazard reduction
- Water saving tips for spring
- 1253 hours of support

From the Mayor's desk...

If you live anywhere near a river (and most of us do), you will have noticed that they are running fairly high, and still rising. All the major dams are full or close to full, and above-average rain is forecast through to November. On top of that, there has been a bigger-than-usual snow season, ensuring a large snow melt contribution to the waterways.

All of which adds up to the high likelihood of at least moderate flooding in our footprint in the late spring or early summer. In anticipation of this, Council has undertaken an audit of our flood management systems and equipment, particularly in the towns of Moulamein and Moama, where the effects of floods are most acutely felt.

One of the earliest places to be flooded is the Barmah Millewa Forest along the so-called Barmah choke, upstream and downstream of Picnic Point near Mathoura. While this is to be expected, the timing, extent and duration of flooding events there have a significant impact on the health of the forest.

That section of the river is called "The Choke" for a good reason: it represents a stretch of river whose carrying capacity is greatly diminished compared to elsewhere. And more than that, the Choke's capacity has been falling steadily in recent years, due mostly to a build-up of sand in the bed of the river there.

This lowered capacity of the river threatens the surrounding forest because of the inevitable increase and duration of flooding events, unseasonal flooding and the destruction of environmental and cultural assets.

While planning is underway to restore the lost capacity of the Choke, those plans will take at least 10 years to implement. In the meantime there is the opportunity to utilise existing waterways to bypass the Choke, via the irrigation system that sources water from Lake Mulwala. That system uses over 3,000km of channels to deliver water to irrigators, but importantly, has the ability to discharge water back into creeks and rivers. These streams then flow back into the Murray well below the Choke.

I recently had the opportunity to visit an example of this "channel to creek escape" system at the property of Councillor Dennis Gleeson, near Wakool. It works beautifully, and breathes life back into the network of small creeks and waterways, while contributing to the management of the Barmah Choke challenge.

Cr Chris Bilkey
MAYOR

Council meeting dates

Get your diaries out as these are the council meeting dates for the coming year. Most are in Moama at the council chambers, or you can livestream via our website. Meetings now commence at 1pm. We'll also be taking a few meetings on the road again- with the first one next month in Moulamein.

22 Nov 2022 – Moulamein	18 April 2023
13 December	23 May 2023
24 January 2023	27 June 2023
28 February 2023	25 July 2023 – Mathoura
28 March 2023 – Barham	22 August 2023



Fire Hazard Spring-tervention

Follow-up inspections of properties across the region relating to Fire Hazard Prevention are now kicking off.

If you have received a letter asking you to reduce the amount of vegetation on your block, please ensure you get this sorted as soon as possible. Whilst there has been a lot of rain to keep the area damp, this also causes a lot of growing! This needs to be clear before hot weather sets in.

Let's get clearing!

Check-out our development checklists

The planning system in New South Wales can at times seem overwhelming and complex, so our staff have developed some checklists to help you get all the right documentation in order before you lodge an application online.

Head to the Planning and Building section on our website to find out more.

Grab your FREE compost

After just one month of our FOGO service, almost 98 tonnes of FOGO had been diverted from landfill! And that number continues to rise...

Another benefit of utilising the FOGO service is the result at the end: COMPOST!

All FOGO collected via Council's kerbside waste collection is transported via our contractor to the Biomix composting facility in Stanhope. After around 12 weeks the composting process is complete, and we have a natural, environmentally friendly fertiliser and soil conditioner.

And now you can access it too...with bags now available at most of our waste facilities. Biomix compost is nutritionally dense and can be used in many home gardens to improve the health of your plants, veggie patches and even your lawns.

So next time you are at one of our waste facilities, ask about picking up a free bag of Biomix compost. Your garden will love you for it!



Local Government Awards success

Council is leading the way in community initiatives, being recognised for innovation and reporting at the 2022 NSW Local Government Week Awards.



One of the big winners at the event, Murray River Council took home three RH Dougherty Awards; Winner of 'Innovation in Special Events' (for Moama Lights), Winner of 'Reporting to Your Community' (Cemetery digitisation project) and a Highly Commended for 'Excellence in Communication' (Advocacy efforts: 'Turn the border green' campaign.)

Mayor, Cr Chris Bilkey said it's a great achievement for the council to be so well regarded in the industry.

"It takes a team effort, a great culture, and a can-do attitude to achieve these things, so we are very proud of the whole council team on this achievement."

Council also recently took home the award for excellence in risk management. Announced at the Statewide Mutual Risk Management Excellence Awards, council took out the Strategic/Enterprise Risk Initiative Award for regional councils.

The award recognised the council's efforts in organisational decision-making and management planning through the implementation of an Accountabilities Framework; an outcomes-based tool that defines our purpose, aligns the 1200 accountabilities we have as an organisation, and provides a tool to measure progress.

"This really is a credit to our staff for all the time and effort they put in to make these ongoing improvements," Cr Bilkey added.

ON THE ROAD:

Updates on a few of our project-based road works on the agenda:

- We've just completed the sealing of **Gilmour Road**, Moama
- We're in the initial planning stages of widening and reconstruction works along **North Barham Road**
- The widening and reconstruction of **Bunnaloo Road at Mathoura** is on the agenda, with project planning documentation in progress
- We've got plans to re-sheet **Lower Thule Road**
- **Speewa Road** is also on the agenda for widening and reconstruction works.

TIP: If you're interested in what our works team has been doing from month-to-month, we produce a **Monthly Operating Report** that goes to our monthly council meetings. You can find this report in the meeting agenda on the 'council meetings' section of our website.

1253 hours of social support



Our Community Services Team is proud to offer a range of services to community members across the region. From transport support for all ages through to a number of services designed to support older people to remain independent.

Did you know, in an average month our community services team delivers:

1253 hours of social support

This includes individual 1:1 support, wellness checks, chair-based exercise classes, group activities in our centres as well as outings.

1102 transport trips

We provide transport to people of all ages who have no other transport available. This can be to access medical appointments or to enable access to shopping or other services.

65 hours of home maintenance

While we don't provide ongoing gardening maintenance we can assist with a one-off safety clean up, such as cutting shrubs away from pathways. We also provide gutter cleans, general repairs such as sticking doors, fly screens or problems with plumbing.

173 meals

These include frozen meals delivered to your door as well as meals provided to you at one of our group settings.

To access our services visit our website or ask to speak to a member of the team on 1300 087 004.





Scores on Doors: a 5-star program

When it comes to Scores on Doors ratings from Murray River Council, five stars is as good as it gets.

And several business owners have been busy putting up their very own five-star rating certificates over the last two months for excellence in food hygiene and safety!

The ratings have been awarded during the first round of food outlet inspections under the Scores on Doors program. Council's team expects more top scores as the inspections continue across the area.

The State Government initiative is aimed at letting residents and diners see how well local food businesses are complying with food hygiene and safety requirements. The rating system of Excellent (5 stars), Very Good (4 stars) and Good (3 stars), all represent various levels of compliance with the Food Standards Code.

Our Environmental Health Coordinator inspects businesses and rates their hygiene and food safety standards, taking into account things such as food temperature control, food prepared in advance of service, food handler hygiene, cleaning and pest control.

The program introduction is still in its early stages at Murray River Council and will continue to be rolled out across the area.

Spring spraying



Our Biosecurity Team have been out and about conducting weed spraying activities along roadside shoulders, bike tracks and around townships over the last 2 months. This is an important part of their work schedule ever year heading into spring.

A big thank you to everyone for being mindful of our team when they were working near the roads...and thanks to those of you who even gave them a wave!

Service SPOTLIGHT: Our Libraries

The old saying goes that council is all about 'roads, rates and rubbish'...but we think there needs to be the fourth 'r' as well...READING!

Our library services are continuing to expand right across the area and are an important area of service to the community.

We have dedicated library staff and plenty of resources at your fingertips...so call in and say hi!



Our libraries have heaps on offer...

Our libraries are located in Barham, Moulamein and Mathoura as well as our mobile library which visits Wakool, Murray Downs and Tooleybuc.

We are a member of the Swan Hill Regional Library network which offers an extensive catalogue of books and services free of charge to its members.

Library members have 24/7 access to the library catalogue, along with a range of resources both online and in our libraries, including books, audio-books, dvds, games, magazines, information, computer access and free wifi.

And there's activities to join in too..

Our libraries offer more than just words on the page, there's plenty of social activities to get involved in too.

Touch base with your local library to find out more.

Barham Crafty Tuesdays Lego Friday "Book chat" group: 1st and 3rd Tuesday	Moulamein Friday Games day Storytime: Every 2nd Tuesday Book club: 1st Tuesday
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Mathoura
 Did you know you can hire the meeting room for clubs and groups to gather? There's access to full kitchen with urn, whiteboard and projector.

WATER SAVING TIPS

25-50% of your water use is outdoors...

It's spring, which means we're only a few months away from the really hot weather! While it's important to be water conscious throughout the year, the hotter periods require a bit more attention when it comes to water use...for both water conservation and your bills!

Here's a few tips to help this Spring.



TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Watering your garden in the early morning or evening reduces water loss through evaporation.

Don't put the sprinkler on if it's too windy.

Put your finger into the soil and if it is moist below the surface you don't need to water.

Check the weather forecast. If there's rain due, let the rain do your watering for you!



TUNE UP YOUR SYSTEM

Inspect irrigation systems and check for leaks and broken or clogged sprinkler heads- just one broken head can cause a lot of water loss.

Check your taps regularly for signs or sounds of leaks. A tap dripping at a rate of 1 drip per second loses over 12,000 litres/yr. Replacing a broken garden tap is generally easy and inexpensive.

TIP: To check your home for leaks, turn off every tap and appliance that uses water, then read your water meter. Wait an hour and read again. If the meter has ticked over, something's leaking.



MULCHING PLANTS IS KEY

As well as reducing evaporation and water run-off, good quality mulch will also provide nutrients to the plants and restrict weed growth.



LEAVE IT LONG

Raise your lawn mower blade. Longer grass promotes deeper root growth, resulting in a more drought-resistant lawn, reduced evaporation, and fewer weeds.



STEP ON IT

Grass doesn't always need water just because it's hot outside. Step on the lawn, and if the grass springs back, it doesn't need water!

When you do water, a good soaking every now and then is preferable to frequent, light watering.



GET THE RIGHT TOOLS

Use good quality hose fittings - such as nozzles or trigger sprayers - that won't leak or break and waste water.

An easy way to save time while conserving water is by using a tap timer. Once set to a specific length of time, it can be left unattended and will automatically turn off, so you can get on with your day without accidentally over watering your lawn....and pushing up your water bill! Be sure you check your timer regularly in case of leaks and don't turn on the tap too hard.

Find out more handy water saving tips at our website.



FIGHT THE BITE!

With the warmer weather beginning we are starting to see mosquitos out and about again. Mosquitos are not only annoying, they can also carry diseases such as Japanese encephalitis.

To avoid mosquito bites and prevent infection:

- cover up while outside with loose, light-coloured clothing and covered footwear
- avoid being outdoors at dawn and dusk (where possible!)
- apply insect repellent on exposed skin that contains DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- use insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units and mosquito coils to repel mosquitos
- cover openings such as windows and doors with insect screens
- remove water-holding containers outside your house where mosquitoes can breed



More info at:

www.health.nsw.gov.au

Ban on single-use plastics

The NSW Government is banning certain single-use plastic items. To learn more about the bans and what they mean for you, visit: www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/plastics-ban

From November 1:



Single-use plastic plates and bowls



Single-use plastic straws stirrers and cutlery



Expanded polystyrene foodware

Paying rates via BPAY? Be sure to check the details.

If you use BPAY to pay for water, rates or other accounts sent to you by council, be sure to check the **customer reference number** next to the BPAY section on the account.

If you pay the bill that references the water account number but you actually mean to pay your rates, the water account will go into credit but your rates will **appear unpaid**.

The customer reference numbers are different for each account, so don't just select Murray River Council from your billing list without checking the customer reference number first.



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