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Day winners
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Water meters
are about to get
smarter | PAGES 8-9

AND MORE...

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Message from the Mayor

Welcome to the first edition of Murray Matters for 2020. This year will be a year of challenge, achievement and change for Murray River Council.

Challenges include the need to equalise our rating system across the footprint by June 30. Our legacy councils, Murray Shire and Wakool Shire, had different rating structures. These differences will be eliminated to create a uniform system with equity across our footprint.

Another challenge will be to complete our Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) by June 30. This document will provide a 20-year map for us to guide our land use planning and zoning. Public consultations on the LSPS will begin very shortly, so be prepared to make your voice heard as we roll it out.

Many major capital projects will be completed this year. Throughout our Council area, capital improvement works have been a feature of this Council's term, and every community

has been a beneficiary. Many projects have been delivered; more will be ready for ribbon cutting this year.

Change will continue. Our agricultural sector continues to feel the impact of the drought, and the immediate outlook is for that to continue. It has and will continue to change the way our farmers and their surrounding communities operate. We as a Council will continue to support them in any way we can. We continue to support new innovative businesses and industries to develop and adapt to this changing environment.

And of course, there will be a change later in the year in terms of who will be representing you on Council. Local elections will take place in September, and it's not too early to think about who you would like as candidates. Maybe that person is you.

Cr Chris Bilkey



Change of rates and water account numbers – March 2020

In an effort to streamline processes for rates, water and accounts receivable, all accounts will become 8-digit reference numbers from mid-March 2020.

This means there will be a change of account numbers for ratepayers in the Greater Murray and Moama Wards.

Affected ratepayers that make regular Bpay payments will need to modify their account number (ie their customer reference number) for payments after 10 March 2020.

Ratepayers paying by Australia Post will need to contact Council to obtain their new account number if they are making a payment after 10 March 2020.

Please contact Kim Burke, Rates Co-Ordinator, on 1300 087 004 (extension 204) if you have any queries regarding these changes.



**LIKE US ON
FACEBOOK**

Keep an eye on updates or community information via our Facebook Page: Murray River Council.



Australia Day...

Murray River Council, meet your Australia Day award winners...

Barham's Colin Barnes is Murray River Council's Citizen of the Year, rounding out an impressive collection of residents and organisations who received awards at last month's Australia Day celebrations.

Murray River Council Mayor, Cr Chris Bilkey said the Australia Day Awards acknowledged the achievements of individuals and groups who worked so tirelessly to make our community a better place.

"On behalf of Council, I would like to acknowledge all the nominees and congratulate this year's award winners who are a shining example of how we can all have a positive and lasting impact in our community."

"From community volunteering, community events, sporting achievement, and artistic contributions, this year's awards reflect the vast and varied amounts of contributors across our area."

"It is their efforts that add to the story of Murray River Council and make it such a great place to live," Cr Bilkey said.

Citizen of the Year **Colin Barnes, Barham**

Colin has been named Citizen of the Year for his willingness to dedicate time, effort and passion to local organisations in Barham and surrounds.

He is a key member of the Barham Baptist Church, is heavily involved with the Scouting movements, is a valued member of the local fire brigade where he is known for his "hands on" common sense approach to fighting fires and his support and mentoring of new brigade members.

He assists with productions within the Golden Rivers Theatre Group, helps in setting up the Barham Show, helps with various Border Flywheeler projects, and in his spare time, carries out sundry repairs or gathers firewood for needy persons within the Barham-Koondrook area.





Young Citizen of the Year **Matilda Hollins, Burraboi**

Matilda has been recognised as Young Citizen of the Year for her active involvement in local community life, and, most notably, her admirable commitment to fundraising for kids with cancer.

Matilda is a remarkable young lady who, at 9 years old, made a commitment to grow her hair for the next 18 months with a view to donate the length to the Children's charity 'Variety' through their 'Hair with Heart' program.

Matilda raised over \$2500 in 2019 for the charity as well as donating her gorgeous locks to be made into a wig for a young person who had lost their hair due to a medical condition.

Matilda has also begun her next fundraising campaign, planning cake stalls to raise funds for Children with Cancer.

Young Sportsperson of the Year **Jemika Cooper, Mathoura**

Jemika has certainly accomplished outstanding success across all sporting areas throughout 2019. At just thirteen years of age, Jemika has accumulated an impressive list of sporting achievements. Her efforts and success at

Mathoura Public School's carnivals and trials, led her to participate in multiple district, regional and state competitions.

Jemika is not only a talented sportsperson but she also continually displays outstanding sportsmanship and humility. At school, she is always seen encouraging her peers and congratulating other competitors.

Jamika is clearly an outstanding member of the local community and has demonstrated dedication and commitment to her sports and embodies all the values that the Young Sportsperson of the Year award stands for.



Community Group of the Year **Lions Club of Moama**

The Lions Club of Moama have been recognised for their ongoing support of the Moama community over a number of years.

They are a small club with 16 members who have, through sheer hard work and persistence, provided the Moama community with a number of assets and developments through their ongoing fundraising efforts.



The Club are certainly worthy recipients of the Community Group of the Year award and are to be commended for their efforts in delivering a number of amazing community projects- too many to mention here!

It is an enduring credit to all of the volunteers who have provided their expertise and time in the interest of their community.

Community Event of the Year **River Daze, Barham**

River Daze is a fabulous annual event created by a small group of committed volunteers from Barham Koondrook.

Held in Riverside Park in early March, the event celebrates where we live, work and play and has grown in its popularity since its inception four years ago.

The committee reflects an abundance of talents that ensures River Daze is an exciting, very professionally conducted event full of music, food and wine!



This award is to showcase a truly wonderful event and acknowledge the contribution of all involved. It is an enduring credit to all of the volunteers who have provided their expertise and time to promote Barham and surrounds.

Arts/Cultural Award **Moulamein Arts Council**

The Moulamein Arts & Craft Council received the Arts and Culture Award for their inaugural Acquisitive Sculpture Competition.

This three-day outdoor sculpture competition and exhibition provided artists a one-off opportunity to exhibit their works and showcase them alongside other local and regional artists.

Held at the Moulamein Art Gallery, the Sculpture Competition was a unique way to put a spotlight on the town, focusing on the impact of drought conditions affecting the area. The competition undoubtedly enabled some entrants an opportunity to participate in a community event and gain some respite from the hardships of the drought they had been experiencing.



New office for Moama

Murray River Council's Moama staff have ended their first month in their new office building, capping off a long history at the former Meninya St building and steering in a new era for the organisation.

The majority of the Moama-based staff moved into the new premises at 52 Perricoota Rd over the last month, along with Planning and Building staff formerly located in Mathoura.

Customer Service functions, including Council, RMS and Service NSW are also now fully operational in the new and improved customer service area.

Murray River Council General Manager Des Bilske said the transition had been embraced by staff.

"The feedback from staff about the new premises has been really encouraging; it has been a little bit of a disruptive month but it's wonderful to hear how positively staff have embraced not just the new location, but the different office set-up."

The council has made a move to more open-planned work spaces rather than a collection of offices to encourage greater collaboration and communication between teams.

It is also designed to better cater for staff from other locations across the council footprint on the occasion they may need to work from Moama.

"It was becoming increasingly difficult to deliver Council's important services from the crowded Meninya St office, so the acquisition of the Perricoota Rd space opened up the opportunity for a more streamlined and accessible council facility to service the community and our staff," added Mr Bilske.

On top of a fresh new look, there is now also better disability access, improved customer privacy, larger waiting areas and better spaces to conduct Council, RMS and Service NSW business.

"The new office building has provided residents with a more attractive venue to deal with Council and has provided a platform to consolidate the administration functions in Moama in a fit-for-purpose building that will serve the community for years to come," Mr Bilske said.

The new office building also houses new purpose built council chambers, with the monthly council meetings now held at this site.

Did you know we offer social support?

As part of our Community Services, we have staff dedicated to running social support programs.

These cover a range of group and social activities such as home visits, outings, cards, lunches, movies, cuppa n chat, help with your shopping, banking, paying bills and more.

This also includes gentle exercise classes across all our locations. The exercise program is delivered by qualified and passionate staff and is a great opportunity to meet new people...whilst being active!

Want to find out more including what's on offer and transport and social support costs? Call 1300 087 004 and ask to speak to your nearest Community Services team member.

Murray River Council water meters are about to get smarter

To become more efficient and to reduce our water resources, Council will soon commence the process of replacing outdated manual-read water meters with new, automatic devices on filtered and raw water services called 'smart meters'.

This is one of the many actions we are undertaking to better manage our water infrastructure to ensure long term sustainable outcomes.

A smart water meter is a device that automatically records water use, has the ability to electronically report water usage information at regular intervals and provides instant access to data that can show peak usage and other information.

The transmitted data can assist your household with the management of water consumption and

promote the early detection of water leaks or unusual usage amounts.

There is no direct cost to ratepayers associated with the installation of the meter at properties, as the meter replacement program is being funded through Council's Capital Works Program.

The following Questions and Answers have been developed to help you gain a greater understanding of the changes, how it may affect your household and the long-term benefits.

The staged replacement program is expected to commence in March 2020. Households will be notified ahead of time when to expect installation to commence in their area.

What is the "smart meter replacement program"?

It is a staged program of works to introduce smart technology to water meter reading. This means that 'smart meters' will replace manually read meters in a staged rollout from March – December 2020.

Recognising that water is one of our most valuable resources, this program will make a significant contribution to our water security by reducing water loss caused by leaks and encouraging greater awareness around water usage on our properties – it is one of our many actions to apply best practice in responsible water management.

Some of the benefits in automating the reading process are:

- improved meter reading accuracy and frequency
- quicker identification of water loss and supply
- proactive response to service requests
- effective and efficient use of resources to maintain and build infrastructure
- improved water management to meet current and future demands

What it means for you?

It means that you will have a filtered and raw smart meter installed to replace your existing meters and can access your water usage data through a web-based portal called MyH2O. Through MyH2O, you can monitor your water usage and quickly detect leaks at any time. Instead of a "one-off" manual meter read, you will have a "near real time" automated read with no manual processing.

We can also view the same data through the same portal and can better assist you with any usage enquiries.

Why are we introducing smart meters?

We are introducing smart meters to automate the process, improve our water management, upgrade our infrastructure, improve our response times to service requests, effectively use our resources to fulfil our capital works program and, by 1 July 2020, harmonise our rates.

What are smart meters?

Smart meters use wireless technology to record water usage and transmit frequently without

physically reading the meter. Each smart meter has flow measuring, volume recording and communication capabilities all in one device. They typically use magnetic or ultrasonic solid-state flow sensing to provide higher accuracy and measurement at very low flow. Ultrasonic meters are less susceptible to blockages causing malfunction, as there are less moving parts.

Who will install the smart meters?

We have engaged Taggle Consulting Pty Ltd who have significant experience in smart meter installations across Australia.

What will I expect during installation?

You will receive written notification when your smart meter installation will occur. Although you don't need to be home you will need to provide clear and safe access to your meter. There will be minimal impact to your water supply during installation.

What will change with raw water?

If your raw water access is already metered, we will install a smart meter and bill you accordingly for usage and access.

If your raw water is not metered, and you currently pay a flat rate, we will install a smart meter and bill you accordingly for usage and access. If this occurs prior to 30 June 2020 you will remain on the flat rate until the new rates and charges come into effect from 1 July 2020.

Will this change affect my bill?

Smart water meters have a high level of accuracy when recording usage therefore you may see a change in your overall water usage compared to your current meter reads.

Can I access my usage data?

YES – through the My2HO customer portal. Once the installation program is complete, you will receive information on My2HO availability, information and access.

Have smart meters been installed before?

Councils and water authorities have installed smart meters successfully over the past 20 years.

Feedback suggests customers have welcomed access to the MyH2O portal to monitor water usage and detect leaks beyond the meter at a much earlier stage saving money.

For more information on the smart meter installation program, please contact our Customer Service Team on 1300 087 004

Recording of council meetings up and rolling!

Council will now be recording all the Council Meetings held at the Council Chambers in Moama, ensuring all the community can see how decisions are made.

"This is an exciting step in connecting a broader range of our community; recording will provide greater transparency of Council decisions so people who cannot attend meetings can watch them from the comfort of their home," Mayor Cr Chris Bilkey said.

"So if you have a burning interest in how Council meetings proceed, how debate evolves and decisions are made, you can access our website and take a look."

All ordinary and extraordinary Meetings of council will be recorded.

Confidential Sessions of Meetings that are closed to the public in accordance with Section 10A of the Local Government Act 1993 will not be webcast.

People attending the meetings should be aware that the proceedings of each Council meeting (including presentations, deputations and debate) will be webcast and may be recorded and broadcast under the provisions of the Code of Meeting Practice. Attendance of the public to the meeting is taken as consent to the possibility that their image and/or voice may be recorded and broadcast to the public.

If you want to see what happens at council meetings, head to our website and follow the link to our YouTube channel.

www.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au/council/about/meetings



The project updates...

Here are some updates on just a few of the community infrastructure projects we are continuing to deliver!

Moulamein Recreation Reserve Tennis Club upgrades

Funded under NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund, round 2.

The Moulamein South Recreation Reserve has received further upgrades with the tennis court area receiving a facelift!

The project involved demolition of an existing shed, construction of a new shed and the resurfacing of two tennis courts from grass to a synthetic hard surface.

The new shed now serves as a clubroom space for the Tennis Club to run competitions and matches, as well as various social events.



The lighting also enables evening training, matches and competitions to take place throughout the season.



Barham Recreation Reserve Multipurpose Pavilion

Funded under NSW Government's Stronger Communities Fund.

Construction works are well- and truly underway on Barham Recreation Reserve's new multipurpose pavilion.



This exciting project - designed by McKnight and Bray Building Designers and constructed by O T McLoughlan Builders - will deliver up-to-date facilities for local sporting and community groups, including sporting area facilities (football change rooms, trainer's facilities, netball change rooms, amenities, time keepers office and covered areas) and function area facilities (function room, meeting room, kitchen, stores, amenities, bar, covered areas and paved ramps).

The Barham Recreation Reserve Committee have been working with council staff right throughout this process to ensure the pavilion delivers maximum benefits and usage for the whole community.

Construction is still on track for completion mid-year.



■ Barham Recreation Reserve Multipurpose Pavilion concept drawing.

Moama Recreation Reserve Multipurpose Pavilion

*Funded under NSW Government's
Stronger Communities Fund.*

There's plenty of movement at the Moama Recreation reserve, with the new multi-purpose pavilion well on its way!



Designed by local design firm Brandrick Architects, the pavilion will feature a function area, club rooms, change rooms, a kiosk, viewing areas, public amenities, storage, car parking and landscape works.

The Reserve Committee including the Moama Football/Netball Club and the Cricket Club have been working with council staff right throughout this process to ensure the pavilion delivers maximum benefits and usage for the whole community.

With the inclusion of this spectacular piece of community infrastructure at the Rec Reserve, the location is certainly positioning itself to be a first-class regional sporting precinct.

Construction is expected to be complete around July 2020.

Opitz Park Mathoura

Funded by 2019/20 Capex Budget.



The community surrounding Opitz Park in Mathoura will be receiving a new open space on what has been, since development of the land, a vacant paddock.

The works include a connecting footpath, open lawns with shade trees in surrounding garden beds. There will also be the inclusion of a new playspace with a natural element feel as part of the design. The playspace will also feature a swing set, climbing ropes and balance elements.

Work has begun on the site with services being connected. The footpaths will begin shortly, followed by the irrigation for watering the newly sown turf.



■ Concept plans of Opitz Park development.

Community Grants Program - now open

Applications are now being sought from community groups and not-for-profit organisations for Round 2 of Murray River Council's 2019/2020 Community Grants Program.

The program offers financial support for various projects, equipment, events, exhibitions and performances which contribute positively to the Murray River Council community.

Applicants can apply for grants of up to \$3,000 via the program.

Applications will be accepted until 4.00pm on Thursday 9 April 2020.



For information and access to the online application form, visit www.murrayriver.nsw.gov.au/community/grants/council-grant

Rural medicine mixed with rural experiences!

Barham and district recently welcomed four medical students to town on placements as part of the NSW Rural Doctors Network's (RDN) Bush Bursary program.

Council was pleased to once again sponsor the placement program which aims to increase the number of graduates who join the rural and remote medical workforce.



■ First-year Medicine student Hannah Derrig and first-year Nursing student, Daisy Denton undertook rural placements in Barham...whilst taking the time to explore what the locals had on offer!.

The program gives students the opportunity to gain knowledge of rural lifestyle, health care services and remote medical practice.

This is the second-year council has supported the program, in partnership with the Local Health Medical Trust who coordinated all aspects of the students' visits.

A big shout out also goes to the community members and health care workers who kindly included the students in their social lives or helped to make their clinical placements memorable!



■ First-year Nursing student Cleo Crawford and first-year Medicine student, Angus Begg took some time to get in touch with country hospitality during their recent medical placements.

New Biosecurity Team

Council has formed a new biosecurity team to manage invasive plants across the region. This follows the wind up of the Central Murray Country Council who previously delivered weed management to the former Murray.

The Biosecurity team have hit the ground running and are busy undertaking roadside weed control and conducting public and private property inspections for weeds.

The current weeds that are being targeted include Silverleaf Nightshade, Spiny Burrgrass, St. John's Wort, Blackberry Bathurst Burr and Noogoora Burr.

Landholders are encouraged to contact a member of the team for any weed related issues, as they are available to help identify weeds and provide advice on appropriate management.



■ Meet Council's Biosecurity team (L-R) Reece Smith, Stephen Battenally, Tim Moodie and Jordi Gradon.

Rates Harmonisation

The rates harmonisation process is on the agenda, with council on-track to have its rating systems unified by July 1 2020.

Rates harmonisation requires councils to come up with a new rating formula across previously existing boundaries; in this case the former Wakool and former Murray.

All amalgamated councils were given a three year rate path freeze upon merging, however the equalisation process now needs to commence to come into effect in the next financial year.

Mayor Chris Bilkey said Council has a responsibility to ratepayers to keep things moving.

"There is no doubt that harmonising rates across former Wakool and Murray will be a significant exercise, but we hope it will be a worthwhile one."

"It's a large piece of work but Council is committed to push on with things and make this process as fair as possible," he said.

Community consultation will take place at the same time as our Integrated Planning and Reporting process in the coming months, as we develop budgets for the next financial year.

Modelling of different rating scenarios will be done prior to the consultation period to provide the community with a transparent view of the process.

Dates and locations will be advertised locally.

Have you seen our fortnightly update feature yet?

In an effort to provide frequent and equitable updates across Murray River Council, we have been placing a fortnightly update feature in various newspapers and community newsletters across the council area. This is a great way to find out about grant opportunities, meetings, or just general updates...and also includes a message from our Mayor. We have introduced this in an effort to make it easier for our residents to know when and where to look for our updates. And if you don't read the local rag or newsletters...it's also posted on our Facebook page every second Friday!

Skate Park Leagues comps and clinics hit town

On Sunday 29 March local skaters, BMXers and scooter-riders will have the opportunity to compete for a regional place as part of the Australian Skate Park League series held at Barham Skate Park. There will also be free skateboarding clinics held the day before on Saturday 28 March.

Held in partnership with YMCA Action Sports, Skate Australia, cluBarham and Murray River Council, locals and out of towners from ages 5 and up, are expected to take part in the event.

Its free entry- and all abilities are welcome!

The scooter, BMX and skateboard competitions are a part of a structured and interconnected Australian Skate Park League series held across the country.

Free skateboarding clinics:

Saturday 28th March

11am-4pm, Barham Skate Park

Competition:

Sunday 29th March

**Scoot 11am, BMX 12:30pm, Skate 1:30pm
Barham Skate Park**



Dog attacks on stock in the region

Over the past 12 months, Murray River Council Officers have noticed an increasing trend in dog attacks on stock throughout our Local Government Area which is leaving our already suffering rural communities devastated.

Council Officers have attended several reported incidents recently where unrestrained dogs have attacked stock with varying degrees of severity including minor injuries not requiring veterinary attention to major injuries and stock deaths. Officers have also noted several cases where unrestrained dogs have rushed at people and other animals in public areas.

Murray River Council would like to remind owners of animals that The Companion Animals Act 1998 states 'The owner of a dog must take all reasonable precautions to prevent a dog from escaping from the property on which it is kept.

'When away from the property on which the dog is kept, the dog must be under effective control by a competent person, at all times by way of chain, cord or leash attached to the



dog and being held by person/owner of that animal.

'Owners of dogs who rush, attack, bite, harass, or chase any person or animal, regardless of whether or not an injury is caused, are legally responsible for damages incurred and face Penalties of \$1320 per offence.

'Owners of threatened stock may lawfully seize or destroy a dog, if that action is reasonable and necessary for the protection of stock or persons from injury or death'.

Council Rangers will be increasing patrols through-out our Local Government Area in an effort to reduce incidents and are seeking owners assistance in containing dogs to their property.

Compliance - Did you know??

- Councils Rangers/Compliance Team are now conducting patrols 7 days per week in an effort to achieve a consistent level of compliance throughout the Council area. Remember outside of normal business hours on call staff will only respond to emergencies (stock on roads, dog attacks in progress). All other requests/enquiries will be attended to on the next business day.
- All pets must be microchipped by 12 weeks of age or before they are sold or given away.
- All dogs and cats must be registered with the NSW Pet Registry, which can be done through Council, by the time they are six months old.



Illegal parking

In the past several months there has been a notable increase in the amount of illegal parking occurring within the region.

Illegal parking comes in many forms including;

- People selling vehicles and vessels on the side of the road
- People parking on public land
- People parking longer than designated parking times.

Council Officers will be increasing parking patrols and issuing Penalty Infringement Notices, when applicable, throughout the LGA in an attempt to keep our roads safe.



What is illegal dumping?

Illegal Dumping is the disposal of waste larger than litter, on land or in water that does not have the correct approval to receive the waste (ie landfills, transfer and bin stations).

For example the following are examples of illegal dumping;

- Placing unwanted household items on the footpath when there is no council collection
- Dumping rubbish or green waste in the bush or on the side of the road
- Businesses or contractors who are paid to correctly dispose of commercial waste, but instead dump it on land without proper approvals
- Dumping asbestos waste.

If you are caught you risk being fined \$4,000 for individuals or \$8,000 for corporations.

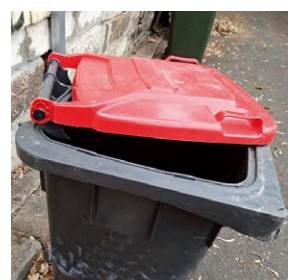
If you see evidence of illegal dumping:

Report it to council by calling 1300 087 004 or alternatively upload the evidence directly through the RID (Report Illegal Dumping) online NSW EPA portal ridonline.epa.nsw.gov.au/#/ home.

Is your bin damaged and in need of repair?

Did you know that if your bin has a cracked or missing lid, a broken wheel, a crack down its front or side or any other damage, Council's Waste Team can organise for your bin to be fixed or replaced?

It's as simple as contacting Council and advising us of the issues with your bin/s. We will then process your application and organise the repairs for you. If your bin is deemed to be damaged beyond repair, we will replace your bin.



Spotlight on.... Training

MRC has started the year with some great training initiatives, with two young Mathoura residents – Jack Celli and Tye Haywood – undertaking apprenticeships in horticulture.

It is a 4 year program, with Jack and Tye heading off to TAFE for one week every six weeks for study, with the remainder being on-the-job training here with Council.



■ Jack Celli is undertaking an Apprenticeship in Horticulture at Council.

Tye started at Council in October 2018 and has completed a successful year at TAFE already.

We are very pleased to be able to provide these great opportunities for a few of our locals!



■ Tye Haywood has already completed a successful year at TAFE.