

Edward River News



ISSUE 10 | 2020



Mayor's Message

This year will go down in history as one of our toughest. A resilient community, we're used to drought, fluctuating wool and stock prices and at times the flow on effects of these on local businesses and employment.

But 2020 threw a curve ball at us in the form of Covid-19, changing the way we live, work, travel, learn and play. Council responded swiftly, offering assistance in the form of rate relief for households and businesses.

To date we have provided over \$82,500 in rate relief to residents and businesses as well as freezing rate increases at a cost of over \$190,000 to Council's budget. We have also continued with our Small Grants Scheme and advocated for further assistance for our residents from the State and Federal Governments.

We are all looking forward to a brighter, healthier 2021. Summer is a magic time here, we're very lucky to call the region home. I hope everyone in the Edward River Council area enjoys the Christmas and New Year period. Take care and best wishes.



Cr Norm Brennan,
Mayor



Meet our GM

Council's new general manager Phil Stone outlined his key priority areas when taking up the role on 17 August.

The married father of four and former soldier, originally from Stawell, has over 15 years experience in local government.

"My priority as GM is to support the community to 'open back up' post-Covid and to build on Council's advocacy work for projects such as health, water, transport and freight.

"I am also committed to developing our staff and build up innovative practices within the council," he said.

Phil will oversee Council's continued digital transformation and plans for financial sustainability as a matter of priority, and he is keen to see where improvement can be made with processing to cut red tape.

The Essendon fan joined Council after assisting local governments in QLD, VIC and NSW, specialising in undertaking strategic initiatives; projects, strategies and cultural change. He has also held senior roles in the private and public sectors and said many things attracted him to Edward River Council.

"From a work point of view, a collegiate council, grass roots close-knit community and strategic challenges that align with my technical skills and interests really attracted me to the role - and besides, I've never been to the Ute Muster!"

River walk takes shape

The next stage of Edward River Council's revitalisation of the central business district and riverfront area has opened to glowing reviews.

Mayor Norm Brennan inspected the newly opened ramp from the upper river bank to the Riverfront Walk behind the Peppin Heritage Centre and was delighted to see locals and visitors utilising the area.

"The improvements are most welcome," Cr. Brennan said.

"What was really, an unused and not overly attractive space has been converted to a welcoming area to take in the views of one of our most attractive areas in town.

"The new ramp not only looks fantastic it is also serviceable meaning everyone from mums and dads pushing prams to the elderly can now enjoy this section of the Riverwalk," he said.

Further along from the Peppin a new harbour has also been completed which complements the sculptures along the Riverwalk, including the famed Reutilise ute.

This stage of the development is part of the \$1.8 million Federal Regional Growth Fund project which includes the reconstruction of two car parks (at the Ute On The Pole and IGA car parks) and the installation of a new floating boat pontoon (to come).

Cr Brennan said the riverfront revitalisation was designed to improve the relationship between the river and CBD, clearly positioning Deniliquin as a 'River Town'.

"We're going to be looking terrific in 2021!"

DID YOU KNOW?

FACTS:

Did you know that every month at the Deniliquin Library we add over 50 new titles to our book and DVD collection?

Did you know that as a member of Deniliquin Library you can borrow popular e-magazines, e-books, e-audio through the Bolinda app for free?



Napier St wins state award

The Napier Street Revitalisation project has won a NSW Local Government award for excellence. The state Awards celebrate outstanding achievements whilst promoting innovation and continuous improvement within NSW local government.

Edward River Council won the Asset Management and Infrastructure Initiatives award for projects under \$1.5m.

Due to Covid-19, Council was advised of their success via remote link, with an official presentation planned for 3 June 2021 when a trophy will be presented.

Mayor Norm Brennan said the award was particularly significant given the fellow finalists included much larger councils.

"We were up against the likes of Albury City Council, City of Newcastle, Coffs Harbour City Council and others so I am very proud of our team's win," he said.

During the presentation, the awards' host said Edward River Council should be congratulated for completing the Napier Street project on time and on budget, especially with such high levels of stakeholder and community engagement.

Special reference was made to the implementation of the 'Trading while upgrading' program which aimed to ensure support for Napier Street businesses throughout the works.

"This streetscape project involved renewal of all services, footpaths and the road, with the aim of increasing the access, safety and attractiveness of one of Deni's main shopping streets," Cr. Brennan said.

"The Council is delighted with the results and very proud to be the State winner of this award, it is a reflection of Council and community working together to achieve a fantastic outcome for our town."

Council's upgrade works at Cressy Street are progressing well, and will be completed by Christmas, assuming no further Covid related delays.

"The transformation of our CBD has been fantastic and we are very grateful for the support of the community during the works. We're sure the finished product will revitalise our town," the mayor said.

Christmas Party plans

The annual Council sponsored Carols by Candlelight will look a little different this year, again thanks to Covid.

The long tradition in Waring Gardens will instead be broadcast on ACE Radio on Sunday 13 December starting at 8pm followed by a fireworks display at Rams Oval.

"This year, with the help of South West Music, Ace Radio and Rotary we're inviting residents to enjoy Carols in the Car and watch a fantastic fireworks display," mayor Cr. Norm Brennan said.

"Deni always puts on a good show with our Christmas lights, so hopefully families will plan a night of seeing those decorated houses, then join us at Rams Oval at 9pm where there is plenty of parking available. In these 'Covid-normal' times we can't have a public party, but we can still share in the magic of Christmas together, from the safety of our own cars," he said.

Business Workshops

Edward River Council is sponsoring a series of workshops for local businesses as part of Small Business Month. These include:

Post Covid training

Recovery planning for small business at
BIG4 Deniliquin Holiday Park - Conference Room
5.30pm – 7.00pm
Wednesday 7 October 2020

Sales and Marketing training

The power of StorySelling, telling stories that drive sales
Online delivery
Via Zoom
12.30pm – 1.30pm
Thursday 15 October 2020

Retail shop design

The art of visual merchandising
Online delivery
Via Zoom
7.30am – 9.30am
Tuesday 20 October 2020

Social media skills

Creative social media content for beginners
Face-to-face delivery
The Depot – Conference Room
7.30am – 9.00am
Thursday 22 October 2020

Rates Harmonisation

The NSW Office of Local Government through the Local Government Act 1993 requires all merged Councils in NSW to establish a new, equitable rating structure and transition to it by 01 July 2021.

"We need to create a new framework from the previous rate structures of Conargo and Deniliquin Shire Councils," mayor Cr. Norm Brennan said.

"The process is guided by specific rating principles and it is a complex challenge for us. It is important to note, however that we are trying to make the structure fairer based on benefits for each rating category (residential/business/farmland)."

Edward River Council is required to create one general rate structure which will result in some changes to individual general rate amounts, either an increase, decrease or no change.

"Council has been working to find the best and fairest outcome for our ratepayers. We must proceed with rates harmonisation and are committed to ensuring the priorities of our ratepayers are at the forefront of our planning.

"Pensioner rebates will still apply and we will be consulting with the community once our preferred rate structure is agreed upon at Council," he said.

What does this mean for ERC Ratepayers?

Background

- Edward River Council is required to create one general rate structure for the previously Deniliquin Council and Conargo Shire Council.

This harmonisation process is:

- A requirement of the NSW Office Local Government under the Local Government Act 1993;
- Harmonisation must be effective from 1 July 2021 for the 2021-22 Rate year;
- Deniliquin Council and Conargo Shire Council's rating structures varied greatly and the harmonisation project has attempted to realign to a common rate structure, that is fairer to all Edward River Council ratepayers.

Where to now?

- Edward River Council will be engaging with the community in the second and third rate instalment periods of the current rate year, 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021 about the preferred rate structure option;
- Mandatory implementation date is 1 July 2021.
- Any increase in Council's total rate revenue resulting from the harmonisation will be limited to the Rate Pegging amount set by IPART (2.00% for 2021-2022 Rating Year), along with any allowable catch-up (lost) income from 2020-21 rate year.
- The new harmonised rate structure will result in variations to individual general rate amounts, ratepayers may experience an increase, decrease or no change in the amount of rates for 2021-2022 rate year, as a result of the rate category structural differences between the former Councils' rates models, and the new "Harmonised" Rate Structure.

"Council welcomes and values feedback on the proposed new rating structure and we will be updating you regularly via our website, on social media, through the local media and newsletters such as this one," Cr. Brennan said.



**Edward
River**
COUNCIL



Contacting Council

Our Customer Service Centre will be located at the Deniliquin Library from Monday 19 October. Opening hours from 10:00 – 16:00 Monday to Friday.

Our staff is available to assist you via phone and email from 08:30 – 17:00 each business day.

Follow us on Facebook for regular updates.

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