

Edward River News

ISSUE 11 | 2020



Mayor's Message

When we look back on 2020 it will be a year none of us will ever forget. Our kids will talk about homeschooling, our families about being separated, our businesses about being forced to close and readapt and how we simply stayed home.

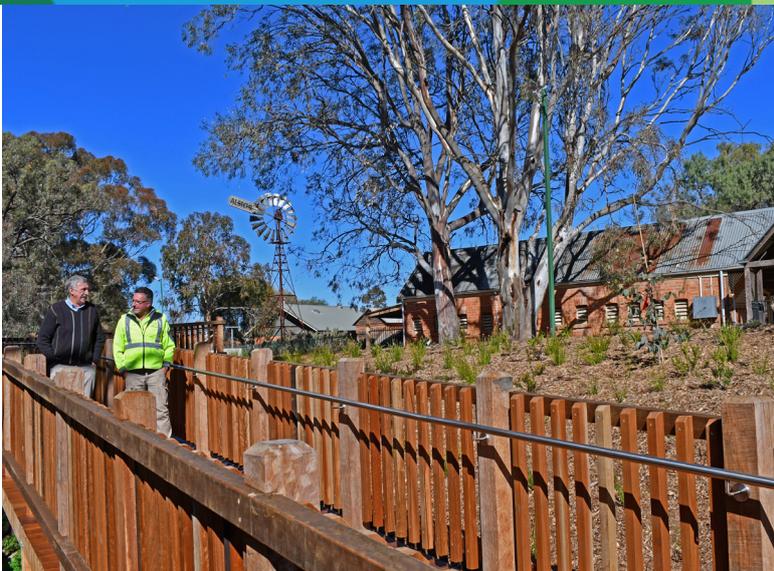
2020 has in some respects been a blessing in disguise for many. I can't remember a time more than this year where we have all practiced what we preached - we've shopped local, we've holidayed local and we've valued time with family and friends above all others.

Edward River's councillors and staff I'm sure will share my views that we have been extremely proud of our community this year. Working together to stay safe as a community. We as a Council have tried to offer as much support as possible, including a rates freeze, business support, extra spending on advertising and prioritising projects which ensured money stayed in the Edward River area and created jobs.

On behalf of everyone at Council, I would like to wish your family a very happy, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year. Take care and thank you for your support.

Cr Norm Brennan, Mayor.





Council's 2020 diary

January

Edward River Council's Peppin Heritage Centre recorded over 1000 visitors for the first month of 2020, many coming from Europe, Asia and New Zealand. Locally made handicrafts proved popular amongst the visitors as well as the newly launched Railway Mural and awning project.

February

Council began work on the Deniliquin Riverfront upgrade including upgrading the car park behind the IGA, a new ramp and walkway from the river bank to near The Crossing Cafe and general landscaping.

March

International Women's Day Lunch sponsored by Council was held in Conargo with 150 people attending.

April

Council began a Coronavirus advertising support campaign for local businesses - providing free advertising in local press, radio and social media. We also began beautification works at the entrance to Deniliquin from the South including planting of trees along Crispe Street and began work on the revamped Rams Club Rooms, funded by Council.

A rates freeze to support local residents was also announced.

May

Further business support continued including the *Trading While Upgrading* program. Funding was announced for driving Edward River's tourism recovery including for the Visit Deni campaign; rural village painting in Conargo, Wanganella, Pretty Pine, Boooroban and Blighty; Waring Gardens upgrades and more funding for sporting facilities. Free advertising was also offered in the new Visit Deni guide.

June

Council announced funding for Memorial Park with \$200,000 for upgrades and launched the draft Operational Plan which included proposals for the Town Hall revitalisation; new lighting for Deniliquin; and augmentation of Wanganella's water supply

July

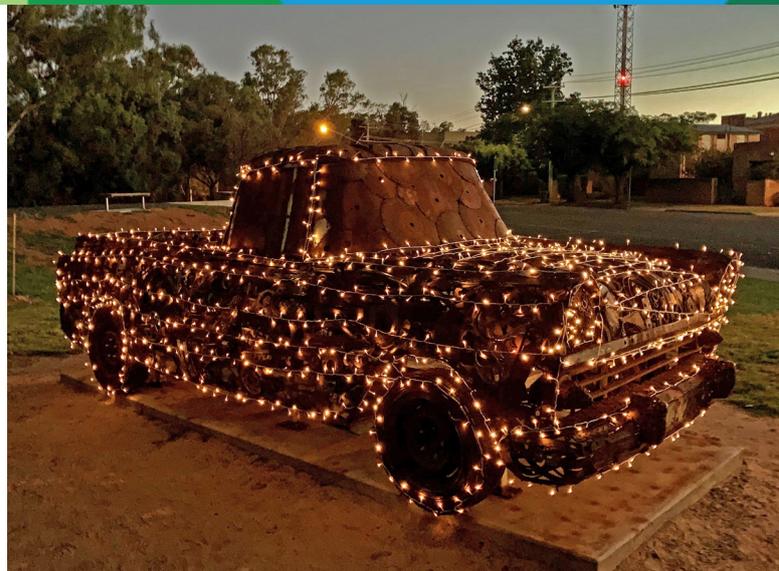
The Napier Street Revitalisation project wins a NSW Local Government award for excellence. The Awards celebrate outstanding achievements whilst promoting innovation and improvement. We won the Asset Management and Infrastructure Initiatives award for projects under \$1.5m.

DID YOU KNOW

FACTS about the Library:

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?



August

A tree planting subsidy aimed at increasing native vegetation in the Edward River Council region was offered to local ratepayers on properties one hectare and over. Over 50 varieties of plants were available under the subsidy, ranging from Melaleucas and Eucalyptus to wattles and bottlebrushes and ground covers.

Edward River Council's annual combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan reported a 20% increase in completion rate. In 2018-2019, Council committed to delivering 75 actions focused on achieving our community's vision across five key strategic outcome areas contained in Edward River 2030. Of those actions, 68% were completed on schedule, the balance affected by Covid delays.

September

Eight new LED streetlights were installed in Henry and Hughes Streets, with Edward River Council calling for feedback from local residents. Part of its 2020/21 Operational Plan, Council partnered with Essential Energy to replace all streetlights throughout Deniliquin and the rural villages with more efficient LED street lighting.

October

Council exceed our own benchmark for processing Development Applications in spite of working under very difficult circumstances thanks to Covid. Part of Council's Covid recovery plan was to minimise where possible red-tape and delays to encourage development in the region. The benchmark is 40 days – Edward River Council staff is processing DAs on average within 34 days.

November

Cressy Street is finally complete! Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive for the Cressy Street revitalisation. New footpaths and paving, heritage style lights, easier access, new road sealing and line marking plus two new pedestrian crossings.

December

Council is finishing the year on a high. Restrictions have eased and we're committed to continuing our road and footpath upgrades. Kerb and guttering works are ongoing along with road maintenance in the rural areas. And finally, we celebrated Carols in the Car this year and were delighted with the community response.

FACTS about ERC:

- Number of Employees – 117
(Women – 28%, Men – 72%)
- Number of services we provide to the community - 30
- Km of roads – 1598.76km
- Number of properties - 5018
- Annual budget - \$24.2M (2019)

Rates Harmonisation

Edward River Council has completed the second phase of its community consultation period for the mandatory Rates Harmonisation project.

Public forums were held in Deniliquin, Pretty Pine, Wanganella, Blighty and Conargo and attended by council staff, councillors and ratepayers.

“The meetings were another opportunity to inform the community of this path we have to go down,” Council’s general manager Phil Stone said.

“It is a requirement of the NSW Government that all 20 merged Councils ‘harmonise’ their rates. Unfortunately, we don’t have a choice and we’ve been trying to ensure the community is well informed about the process.”

The NSW Government has also mandated that no amalgamated councils can increase their revenue through the rates harmonisation process.

“This means that whilst some rate payers in the Edward River Council region will unfortunately see an increase, the overall rates pool will not increase. If someone is paying more, someone will be paying less – it is the reality of rates harmonisation,” Mr. Stone said.

Council advised residents during the public forums that if you live in an area where land values have risen more than they have in other localities, you will be likely to experience a bigger rise in rates than residents in some other areas - this is based on the valuation and not Rates Harmonisation.

“Council does not set the value of your property – this is done by the NSW Valuer General and is beyond the control of Council. What we have tried to do is find the fairest and most equitable system that sees as minimal impact on the majority as possible.”

Mr. Stone has already written to those ratepayers who are likely to see a significant increase in their rates and is holding several meetings over the next few weeks with residents with more public meetings planned in the new year.

“It is important to Council we go through the process of harmonisation with those negatively impacted. We’re not running away from the issue, the opposite in fact. We welcome discussion, feedback and input on the model Council voted to take to ratepayers.”

What does this mean for ERC Ratepayers?

- **Harmonisation is a requirement of the NSW Government under the Local Government Act 1993;**
- **Harmonisation will not result in an increase in Council’s revenue from rates - the pie doesn’t get bigger.**
- **All merged councils have a mandatory implementation date by 1 July 2021.**
- **The new harmonised rate structure may result in variations to individual general rate amounts; ratepayers may experience an increase, decrease or no change for 2021-2022 rate year.**



Contacting Council

**Our Customer Service Centre is located at the Deniliquin Library in Napier Street.
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.

**T. 03 5898 3000 E. council@edwardriver.nsw.gov.au
www.edwardriver.nsw.gov.au**