New CEO takes the reins

Newly appointed Loddon Shire CEO Phil Pinyon is looking forward to living and working in Wedderburn following his recent appointment.

“I am delighted to join the team at Loddon Shire and am looking forward to working with a cohesive group of Councillors and staff,” Phil said.

“I’m enthusiastic about the opportunities and challenges presented at Loddon and my wife and I look forward to living in Wedderburn and becoming part of the local community.”

Mayor Neil Beattie said Council appointed Phil to the position at its May meeting and was looking forward to benefiting from the new CEO’s wealth of local government experience spanning across several states.

“Phil’s most recent posting was as Locum General Manager at Murrumbidgee Shire Council,” Neil said.

“Other previous roles have included Chief Executive Officer with Jabiru Town Council in the Northern Territory, and General Manager positions with Greater Taree City Council, Blue Mountains City Council and Wagga Wagga City Council.”

“On behalf of Council I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Acting CEO Marg Allan for the time and effort she has dedicated to the interim position.

“Marg has been highly effective in leading the organisation and managing several significant matters during her time here.”

Join the Fiesta

The second annual Pyramid Hill Fiesta promises to be a fabulous feast for the senses.

Following on from the success of the inaugural Fiesta last October, Council has been working closely with the Pyramid Hill community to deliver a bigger, brighter and better event this year.

Loddon Shire Tourism and Marketing Officer Robyn Vella is encouraging residents to jot Saturday 22 October on their calendar and invite friends and family to join them at the multicultural celebration.

“Last October’s first-ever Pyramid Hill Fiesta really showcased the flavours and traditions of the growing Filipino community,” Robyn said.

“This year we’ve been working closely with the Pyramid Hill Progress Association along with the local Lions and senior citizens’ clubs, historical society and both schools to broaden the event.

“Our working group decided we could further develop the Fiesta by inviting multicultural groups from Bendigo, Kerang, Swan Hill and surrounding areas to demonstrate a cultural dance.

“Joining together a traditional Filipino santacruzan parade, Filipino games, cultural dance and singing and pig on a spit, with more home grown offerings such as a barbecue, shearing demonstration and singing of Australian bush ballads, really brought the Pyramid Hill community together.

This year we want to build on that success by actively involving our Muslim and indigenous communities to create a truly multicultural celebration.”

Based in the Kelly Park precinct, the Fiesta was conceived by the Pyramid Hill Progress Association as a means of recognising the town’s growing Filipino community and building understanding between the two cultures.

Funding for the Fiesta has come from the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s Festivals and Events program, Loddon Shire and the progress association.

Entry cost is $15 per adult, $5 per primary school child or $40 for a family and includes an evening Filipino banquet.

For further information phone (03) 5494 1257 or visit Council’s website: www.loddon.vic.gov.au.
Budget reveals healthy financial position

Loddon Shire Council has adopted a budget which boasts a debt free position and delivers a small cash surplus.

Council Director Corporate Services Jude Holt said Council was debt free for the first time in some ten years, after completing the final payment on its Wedderburn office.

“Council has always focused on looking ahead and planning for the future by building cash reserves for future purchases, and this will continue,” Jude said.

“To be in a position where Council doesn’t have to use a bank overdraft firmly enables the best use of the community’s money.

“I consider Council to be the custodians of the community’s money and this is something we’ll be keeping firmly in mind as we step our way through a grass roots service delivery review to take place.

“It’s the first year of rate capping under the Fair Go Rates System and this means Council has no discretion to apply a rate increase above the legislated rate cap.

“While all councils had the option to apply for a variation above the rate cap of 2.5 per cent, our Council decided not to.

“With Loddon Shire’s long term rating strategy planning for a 5.5 per cent increase per year, the introduction of the rate capping system effectively passes on an overall 3 per cent ratepayer saving to the collective ratepayer group, although individual property owners may experience differing results depending on their own particular circumstances around their own property.”

Jude said ratepayers could also be assured that rate capping wouldn’t result in a reduction of vital community services in 2016/2017, but acknowledged the importance of the service delivery review process that Council will undertake to secure Council’s ability to return budget surpluses into the future.

“The good future planning done in the past has put Council in a solid position, so we really now need to focus our efforts on the community consultation process, detailed in our service delivery review, to ensure we are focusing funds in the right direction.”

“We’ll be doing this at an absolute grass roots level from talking to mums and dads about their maternal and child health needs, through to meeting with our senior citizens to listen to their current and future service delivery priorities.”

Interested residents are able to view the 2016/2017 Budget, which was adopted at Council’s meeting on 28 June, by visiting www.loddon.vic.gov.au under Financial Reports.

Taking a stand against domestic violence

The Loddon Mallee region has the second highest incidence of reported family violence in the state.

Loddon Shire Mayor Neil Beattie said while reported incidents within Loddon Shire were lower than some other municipalities within the broader region, every single incident, reported or unreported, has broad reaching and long lasting ramifications for those affected.


“It is an issue Loddon Shire has long demonstrated an active awareness of, through initiatives such as introducing a family violence clause in its staff enterprise agreement in November 2011,” Cr Beattie said.

“We were pleased to recently have Loddon Mallee Women’s Health CEO Linda Beilharz present Council with a plaque acknowledging Council’s commitment to the Loddon Mallee Action Plan.

“To date, the plan has resulted in a number of preventative actions being taken in Loddon Mallee to address family violence and its contributing factors.

Some of these include the development of the Loddon Mallee Takes a Stand Workplace Resource Kit and Bystander Training, providing education focused resources for our schools, supporting public awareness media campaigns and joining together for White Ribbon Day.

“By signing the plan we have committed ourselves to taking a leadership role in helping to educate and re-educate our communities about this important issue.

“Standing united with others by signing a commitment statement is just a first step.”
Step back in time

Loddon tourism in the spotlight

A five year plan to guide Loddon Shire’s tourism direction, as part of a cluster of neighbouring municipalities has been unveiled.

Key tourism and economic development staff and Loddon tourism business operators were among those to attend the launch of The Bendigo Region Tourism Destination Management Plan in Castlemaine.

The plan, which provides a strategic approach to growing tourism within the region, identifies a number of key promotional opportunities.

Some of the key projects include Bridgewater and Inglewood township and foreshore improvements, increasing awareness of indigenous heritage sites as part of the Lake Boort tourism development project, and exploring farm-stay accommodation focusing on the Shire’s agricultural strengths.

Aspects of the plan have already swung into action, with a branding personalities workshop to capture the essence of Inglewood and Bridgewater, already held.

Inglewood is also in the spotlight following the production of a television commercial designed to unlock the historic town’s hidden treasures.

The commercial, produced to screen on WIN television, was the result of the town’s businesses working with, and contributing to, a separate Council supported project.

As part of the broader media campaign, the commercial is also being broadcast at Bendigo Cinemas and on Facebook pages.

Whether you’re looking for an afternoon out, or you work in Wedderburn and have an hour lunch break up your sleeve, pop into The Coach House Gallery & General Store Museum.

If you’re a first time visitor you’re sure to be surprised, and will undoubtedly be tempted to escape the cold by stepping back in time on another occasion.

The gallery and general store is run by a team of enthusiastic volunteers who take particular pride in showcasing local work.

Exhibitions are run on a five-week basis and are enjoyed by visitors from near and far including local school groups and organised bus tour day trippers.

But it’s the general store that you may be particularly surprised by.

From the moment you step through the door and take your first earthy breath you’re transported to a different time.

It’s 1913 once again and gold is bought and sold, general store stock is lowered from street level down a drop to the cellar below.

An eclectic assortment of relics hanging and sitting on shelves filling each and every nook and corner, are lit by two central skylights above the store counter, and you can just imagine the town hearse, housed at the museum, being drawn down the main street by horse and cart…

If you’re a tad curious now, pop in from the cold and see for yourself, or phone 5494 3342 to arrange a group booking, or to discuss the possibility of exhibiting your artwork.

Wedderburn College Grade 5 students Eliza, Shelby and Ella were quick to point out some of their very own artwork on display at The Coach House Gallery & General Store Museum during a school tour.

Graeme Nichols donated his time and skills to build a welcoming wheelbarrow. It’s regularly overflowing with potted plants offered free to good homes.

Volunteers Glenda Brooker and Denise Nichols behind the sturdy old counter of The General Store Museum.

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Mayor appointed to GMW Connections committee

Loddon Shire Council Mayor Neil Beattie has been appointed by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Lisa Neville as a member of the Goulburn Murray Water Connections Project Stakeholder Committee.

The stakeholder committee comprises a range of representatives including those with a significant interest in the Connections Project including customers, agricultural and industry peak bodies as well as local government.

Having Cr Beattie appointed to the advisory position is encouraging news for Loddon Shire’s farming community.

His appointment follows Council submitting a firmly focused response to the mid-term review of stage 2 of the Goulburn Murray Water Connections Project.

Loddon Shire has a strong voice on a pivotal committee which will reinforce the key submission points underpinning why the project must be completed across the entire region as initially outlined.

Agriculture, agribusiness and associated tourism ventures are the lifeblood of Loddon Shire, and decisions made about water and the irrigation systems which feed the farming sector have the power to make or break countless small businesses within the municipality.

Cr Beattie will tirelessly lobby to have the GMW project delivered as originally designed and promised to meet the irrigation needs which feed the productivity of key water intensive livestock, cereal and milk production industries within the Shire.

Cr Beattie’s appointment to the committee followed earlier lobbying activities by Council including meetings with Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards and Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan.

The submission “Response from Loddon Shire Council to the mid-term review of the GMW connections project stage 2” is available to view on our Council website at www.loddon.vic.gov.au under Plans and Strategies.

Inglewood project nearing completion

Work is progressing well on the construction of a new two level community centre adjacent to the Inglewood Town Hall.

The project also includes the first major restoration of the front rooms of the Inglewood Town Hall in living memory.

Director Community Wellbeing, Wendy Gladman said that by July a new roof should be firmly installed on the new building.

“The frame is up and we’re about to install the walls and ceilings, the new kitchen in the old hall will soon be completed and painting as well,” Wendy said.

“It really is pleasing to see the contract is on target and Inglewood residents can look forward to enjoying their new community centre in the very near future.”

The project would not have come to fruition without the joint financial backing of local, state and Australian governments, along with a generous contribution from the Inglewood and District Community Bank.

Volunteer voice

Q. What’s your name?
A. Jennifer Prior.

Q. What town / locality do you live in and who with?
A. Pyramid Hill.

Q. What organisation do you volunteer for?
A. Loddon Shire Meals on Wheels program and Alcheringa Hostel Op Shop.

Q. What attracted you to volunteering with this organisation?
A. Wanting to help the community and be an asset to the town.

Q. What led to you putting your hand up to help?
A. Shortage of volunteers, too much spare time and a wish to help others.

Q. What’s the most rewarding thing about volunteering?
A. Being able to help others and interacting with members of the community.

Q. What’s the most challenging thing about volunteering?
A. Not knowing what you may encounter. Always being cheerful in any situation but being able to take control when needed.

Q. What would we find if we snuck a look over your back fence?
A. An aviary of budgies, sheds and a bit untidy.

Q. Sum yourself up in four words or less?
A. Reliable, caring and friendly.

Q. Why would you encourage others to try their hand at volunteering?
A. The satisfaction of knowing what you’re doing is helping the community. Your presence could brighten someone’s day!
A sustainable solution

Council has invested $14,000 in a sustainable silt removal project to improve the water capacity of Wedderburn reservoir.

Contractors employed an excavator and two dump trucks to complete the five day operation, which is expected to pay for itself in the medium term.

The project cleared almost 5,000 cubic metres of silt which had gathered since the reservoir was last empty in 1982.

With poor rainfall leaving the reservoir near empty last summer, Council took a timely approach to clearing the silt which will improve the catchment capacity by five megalitres.

This increased water will ease the need for Council to subsidise sports clubs for the cost of using Coliban Water to maintain Donaldson Park Recreation Reserve, the tennis courts, bowling green and Market Square Cricket Ground when reservoir levels are low.

The timely initiative has the added bonus of beautifying the Wedderburn Caravan Park grounds for the enjoyment of locals and visitors alike.
Compulsory Council elections encourage all eligible adults to have a say in who represents their community over the next four years.

The Council election due to be held this year will take place on Saturday 22 October, and in Loddon Shire is to be conducted by postal vote.

In the lead up to the election, residents are encouraged to ensure their current details are registered with the Australian Electoral Commission.

Residents considering running for Council can find out more about what to expect when beginning the journey from citizen to councillor by attending an information session to be held on Wednesday 13 July from 6pm to 8pm at the Serpentine Council Chambers.

Further information about voting in the forthcoming Council election will be advertised in the coming weeks.

Some changes have been made to the monthly meeting cycle due to Council’s election period policy placing restrictions on decisions of Council during the election period. Please note the following dates and venues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council meeting date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 28 June</td>
<td>Serpentine Council Chambers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 26 July</td>
<td>Serpentine Council Chambers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 23 August</td>
<td>Wedderburn Council Offices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 13 September</td>
<td>Wedderburn Council Offices</td>
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<td>Tuesday 11 October</td>
<td>Serpentine Council Chambers</td>
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<td>Tuesday 22 November</td>
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