

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Why agribusiness developers are choosing Loddon

Don't miss Eddington's "world famous" sprint races

Free expert advice available

Small Business Bus to roll into Wedderburn

Australia Day Loddon style

Bumper summer water sports season

A taste of Loddon reaches Government House

Plans afoot to stamp out mosquitos

Loddon's senior citizens celebrate together

Community spirit the backbone of Janiember Park

Volunteer Voice

Put your hand up to help a learner driver

Why agribusiness developers are choosing Loddon

Loddon Shire is developing a reputation as being a first choice location for future agribusiness development.

Whichever corner of the Shire you point toward, new and expanding opportunities are on the horizon according to Council's Agribusiness Development Officer Darryn Hartnett.

"Loddon is perfectly positioned and working to lure and assist new agribusiness ventures getting off the ground and also to value-add to existing operations," Mr Hartnett said.

With several more large and small businesses set to do just that in the coming months and years we're really seeing a regional success story beginning to blossom.

Mr Hartnett said the support Council offered to locate new agribusiness opportunities, assist business owners on a needs basis to negotiate with government departments and agencies, and generally help their business put down roots, was paying dividends.

"Exciting plans to develop luxury boutique accommodation just outside Serpentine at Turner's Crossing Vineyard, which is renowned for its award winning wines, is a prime example of what can be achieved when we work together.

"This planned expansion is an absolute vote of confidence in Loddon Shire and will attract top end tourists, many of which will move beyond their Loddon base to stay, eat and visit a range of places across the Shire."

Turner's Crossing vigneron Paul Jenkins said there were several key factors that lead to investing further in Loddon Shire.

"We have the ideal location here, with plans for the luxury villas to be tucked away in our vineyard running alongside the Loddon River, just off the highway, a little over two hours drive from Melbourne.

"Beyond that, the key to progressing the project has been the assistance that Council's Agribusiness Development Officer has provided with everything from planning issues through to dealing with relevant agencies such as the catchment management authority.

"Loddon Shire has a positive attitude towards economic development and this gives investors like myself confidence in projects developing as smoothly as possible.

"The villas will attract top end Melbourne and interstate visitors from couples wanting a quiet getaway in tranquil surrounds, to wealthy waterskiers who discover Turner's Crossing is an easy 10 kilometre run through to Bridgewater.

"There's also the opportunity without stepping off the property to enjoy cycling, paddling, fishing for yellow belly, or enjoying a winter campfire alongside the river while keeping an eye out for the occasional platypus known to visit the area.



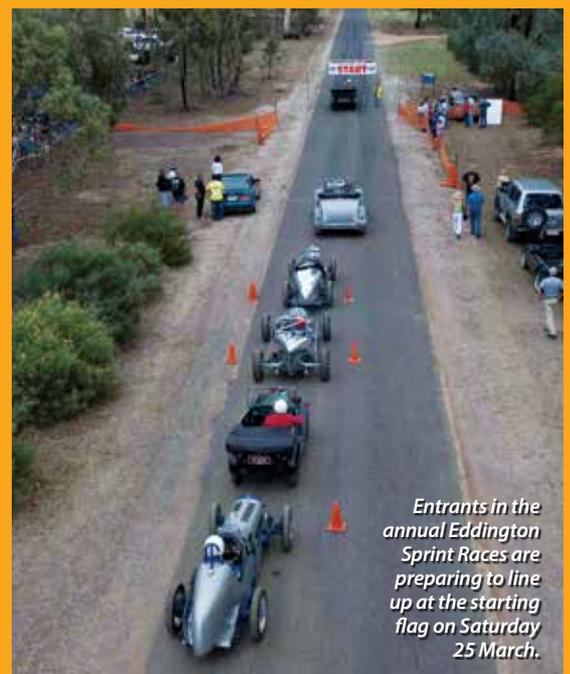
Turner's Crossing Vigneron Paul Jenkins has given Loddon Shire his vote of confidence.

"Loddon Shire clearly values the flow-on benefit agribusiness developments like ours can have for everyone from tradesmen and cleaners to shop keepers.

"We can also see the potential for Turner's Crossing to encompass a winery, wine tasting room and shop front further down the track."

Mr Hartnett said while the development provided an example of how agribusiness ventures could value-add into agriculture, there were many others dotted across the municipality.

You can expect to learn more about some of these valuable Loddon Shire developments in future Loddon Bulletin editions.



Entrants in the annual Eddington Sprint Races are preparing to line up at the starting flag on Saturday 25 March.

SEE INSIDE FOR THE FULL STORY ►

Don't miss Eddington's "world famous" sprint races

Neville Roberts was having a drink in a little English pub when someone asked where he was from.

"There's no chance of you having heard of my home in country Victoria" Neville replied.

"Try me," said the barmaid.

"Eddington," came the reply.

"Eddington... Eddington where the classic and vintage car sprints are held around Easter time each year," came the barmaid's enthusiastic reply.

As it turns out the barmaid had links with the Morgan car club in her English village and they'd watched a documentary on Eddington's sprint races on more than one occasion.

While the story may not have passed Neville and the barmaid's lips word for word, the conversation did take place and this is just one example of how the annual sports event has taken the tiny Loddon township of Eddington to the world.

In fact the event scheduled to take place on Saturday 25 March has received three entries from English enthusiasts.

Mr Roberts said for the last few years the Eddington sprints had hosted English competitors who travelled to Australia to attend the Melbourne Grand Prix each year.

"Within a week or so of the Grand Prix we hold the Eddington classic and vintage car sprint races and the English tourists make a point of competing in our event," he said.

Mr Roberts speaks relatively modestly about the event which began as a good idea over a drink with a mate who worked alongside him to get the idea off the ground in 1984.

Apparently it all began with 25 cars lining up for the inaugural event and grew in popularity from there.

Mr Roberts said that 33 years on, it really was a case of first in best dressed, with entries being limited to 125 and people seeking to participate from far and wide.

While the event remains close to the hearts

and hard work of individuals and families who began the Eddington tradition, the Bendigo Sports Car Club also helps organise the timed event which is centred along a quarter mile strip of Playfair Street.

Mr Roberts said the event was the highlight of the year for many vintage and classic car enthusiasts, but Eddington residents, regardless of their individual interests, banded together to sell food and drinks, with the profits going back into projects which benefited the community.

"In the past profits have gone to the Eddington Hall and repairing the roof of the local church," Mr Roberts said.

"Competitors camp on Eddington Golf Course, which is in recess, as there are toilets there and the locals put on a breakfast."

If past spectator numbers are any indication, staff at Eddington's Septembre Vintage Store and Café had better be well stocked for the weekend.

Don't miss your chance to join the fun!

Free expert advice available

Small businesses within Loddon Shire, much the same as small operations in other rural areas, tend to closely follow the fortunes of the farming communities they support.

When times are tough, families tend to stretch out the weeks between those hairdresser appointments and take-away teas, while when times are good residents treat themselves more often.

In a bid to help ease any financial pressure small businesses may be facing, Sunraysia Rural Counselling Services has been funded to deliver a 12 month project providing free financial counselling to eligible small business owners in drought affected areas of North West Victoria.

Financial Counsellor Jim Chamouras said many people knew there was an agribusiness counsellor available but were unaware of his recent appointment which is dedicated to supporting other small businesses in rural areas.

"My key message to business owners is that it's better to be proactive and seek assistance before things get out of hand," Mr Chamouras said.

"By making contact with me I'm able to



Jim Chamouras believes seeking business advice before too many concerns arise can make all the difference.

help you make small, achievable and practical changes to help create a more sustainable business in this financial environment."

Mr Chamouras said many small business owners were experts in their core business but could benefit from some sound advice in managing other aspects such as cash flow and record keeping.

"My position is based in Bendigo but it's a mobile, outreach service and I'm able to come to you to provide one on one advice."

For further information, phone Jim Chamouras on 0400 173 521, or email jchamouras@sunrc.com.au.

Small Business Bus to roll into Wedderburn

Looking to start a small business? Want to develop your existing small business?

Help is on the way with the Victorian Government's Small Business Bus rolling into Wedderburn on Tuesday 21 March.

The Small Business Bus offers free mentoring throughout the day with an experienced business professional who can assist you in taking your small business to the next level.

On board the Small Business Bus you will find information on Small Business Victoria's programs and services as well as tools and tips to help you start or grow your business.

The Small Business Bus will be located in the centre of town, just outside the Wedderburn Council office between 10am and 4pm.

Bookings are essential for the mentoring sessions, so reserve your place now at business.vic.gov.au/sbb or call 13 22 15.

Australia Day Loddon style

Australia Day festivities held across the municipality provided an ideal opportunity for friends and neighbours to join together to celebrate community and country.

It also created a platform to thank individuals and groups who have provided an invaluable contribution to their locality.

Loddon Shire's Citizen of the Year, Edna Boyle from Boort has given many years' service to the Boort community while raising a family of six children with husband Morrie on the family farm at Leaghur.

Her contributions include her position as a church elder and office bearer at Boort Uniting Church, her dedicated service to the Boort Hospital Auxiliary, and board membership for the Memorial Hall.

Edna is the longest serving member and current secretary for the Boort RSL Ladies Auxiliary, and is a current member of the Boort Senior Citizens Club.

Award recipients for other categories were Julia Twigg (Young Citizen of the Year), Wedderburn Coach House Museum (Community Group of the Year), Sandra Poyner (Boort Community Services Award), Christine Wattie (Inglewood Community Services Award), Graeme Stewart (Tarnagulla Community Services Award), Lionel Mann (Terrick Community Services Award), and Michael Moore (Wedderburn Community Services Award).



Loddon Shire Mayor Neil Beattie assisted with the flag raising ceremony at the Pyramid Hill service. Photo courtesy of The Loddon Times.



Friendly chatter and laughter filled halls across the municipality. Photo courtesy of The Loddon Times.

Bumper summer water sports season

Locals and visitors have made the most of brimming water levels over the summer, with campers and water sports enthusiasts flocking to Boort Lakes, Bridgewater's Loddon River and Wedderburn's Skinners Flat Reservoir.

While summer may be drawing to a close, Boort Lakes Caravan Park owner Gordon McCracken describes the "bumper" season as a precursor to what's in store over Easter.

"We've been at 85 per cent capacity over the summer school holidays and our bookings are chockers for Easter already with us expecting at least 600 to 650 people."

Mr McCracken said while the caravan park had people stopping in from as far away as Darwin, the majority of campers were from Victorian centres including Bendigo, Ballarat, Melbourne, Geelong, Gippsland and Corowa.

"People don't want to be travelling too far with a car load of kids in mid-summer heat...

you don't have to go far to have a great holiday," he said.

"We get a lot of repeat business, people come and then rebook before they leave... they meet up with family and friends from near and far year after year."

However, Mr McCracken said the last three to four years had been the busiest of his nine years at the park.

"It's boom time for the park and township... people are visiting, they're staying and they're spending in the pubs, supermarket, chemist and post office.

"There's only a small break between the busyness of the summer school holidays and then we're looking towards welcoming families involved in the Easter tennis tournament.

"The water sports start to slow down but then we've got the tennis enthusiasts coming, so we're looking forward to that."



Bendigo's Taylor family have made holidaying at Boort Lakes Caravan Park a summer tradition over the last seven years. This photo of Milahni, Sienna, Ryley and Spencer making the most of their holidays captures the joy their time at Boort promises to bring year after year.

A taste of Loddon reaches Government House

Images depicting Loddon Shire's strong agribusiness future and rich gold mining history feature on a handcrafted decoration hung from the Victorian Community Christmas Tree unveiled at a Government House ceremony. The decoration was designed by budding young artists from Boort District School.

Olive plantations and production, sheep and wool production, wheat and grain crops, as well as Loddon's rich gold mining history and Council logo adorn the faces of the decorative cube.

Loddon Shire's participation in the event follows the Governor asking each Victorian regional city and shire to submit a decorative ornament representing their municipality.

Past and present Young Citizen of the Year recipients Crystal Shaw-Beck of Dingee, Thomas Jackson of Wedderburn and Emma Leech of Mitiamo accompanied Loddon Shire Council Chief Executive Officer Phil Pinyon to Government House for the special event.



Current and former Young Citizen of the Year recipients joined Loddon Shire Council Chief Executive Officer Phil Pinyon at a Government House reception hosted by Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM.

Plans afoot to stamp out mosquitos

The impact of the 2016 flooding events continues to flow through Loddon, with the municipality facing a significantly higher risk of mosquito-borne health risks with the creation of prime breeding grounds.

While early indications of a return to more typical rainfall patterns has been welcomed by our farming community harvesting bumper crops over recent weeks, wet conditions following the floods resulted in a significant rise in mosquito numbers.

Residents may have noticed a drop in mosquito numbers, however presently there is a higher risk of mosquitos carrying diseases that impact negatively on human health.

Loddon Shire has been named one of 16 higher risk and flood affected rural Victorian councils to benefit from a special state government package designed to give the "Beat the Bite" campaign real clout.

Council's senior public health officer recently attended a seminar to equip Council with information to help move towards protecting the community from diseases such as Ross River Virus, Barmah Forest Virus, and Murray Valley Encephalitis.

Planned action to follow in the coming months includes mosquito management activities such as treating larvae in the water to reduce future populations, and increasing community awareness through identifying high risk areas in townships and sharing information through the media.

In the meantime, on an individual level there are many things we can do to help protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites.

These include wearing long loose fitting clothing, using effective mosquito repellents containing DEET or picaridin on exposed skin, using indoor 'knockdown sprays' or vaporising devices for living areas including caravans, installing flywire screens and removing stagnant water from flower pots, tyres, buckets, tins, bird baths and pet bowls.

Limiting outdoor activity at dusk and dawn when mosquitos are most active is also advisable.

If you have any concerns about your health talk to your doctor or phone Nurse on Call on 1300 606 024.

Loddon's senior citizens celebrate together

Catching up with friends who live more than a stroll away can sometimes prove difficult for residents as they grow older.

The annual Combined Senior Citizens' Club Christmas Party provided a fabulous opportunity to remove all obstacles to a joint celebration.

Senior Citizens from right across Loddon Shire made their way to The Wedderburn Mechanics Institute to enjoy lunch, music and a good old chin wag as Christmas approached.

While some seniors drove, buses and other transport options were organised to ensure no-one missed out.

The Combined Seniors Citizens' Christmas Party also provided a good opportunity for some of Loddon Shire Council's aged care and disability carers to step out and have fun with those they have supported throughout the year.



L-R Fred Brereton (Calivil Seniors Citizens Club), Vi Monk (Tarnagulla Senior Citizens Club), Margaret Rothacker (Boort Senior Citizens Club), Marian Sebire (Wedderburn Senior Citizens Club), Bernie Cockfield (Pyramid Hill Senior Citizens Club), Rosetta Stevens (Inglewood Senior Citizens Club).

Community spirit the backbone of Janiember Park

Over recent weeks Council has received a considerable amount of positive feedback about the progression of the \$1.2 million Janiember Park project.

It's certainly exciting for residents to see the facility take shape, with the change-rooms about 70 per cent complete and work continuing on the new social rooms.

To date, the building works have run smoothly and the project remains on track to be handed over to the community at the start of May.

While the project may appear to be moving forward rapidly, this project would not have been realised without the tireless work of the project's community steering group.

It's about nine years ago now that members of the Janiember Park Users Group approached Council with the concept, which they have backed from the initial design process and fundraising activities right through to where we are now.

The Janiember Park redevelopment is a shining example of what a group of dedicated community members can achieve when they work hand in hand with Council.

Designs for the adjacent playground are now complete and planning is underway for landscaping in the area immediately surrounding the sports facility.

Residents will also be pleased to discover that \$225,500 has been committed to installing new drainage, kerb and channelling along Chapel Street.



Serpentine sports lovers have enjoyed watching their vision come to life in recent months.

These works will complement the major project by improving stormwater management, general access and the overall appearance of the area.

It is anticipated the drainage works will be finished in April, with the kerb and channelling to be completed by the middle of the year.

Volunteer Voice

Q. What's your name?

A. Dede Williams

Q. What town / locality do you live in and who with? (feel free to include pets!)

A. One husband, three children, two cats, two dogs, one sheep, three pigs and eight piglets.

Q. What organisation do you volunteer for?

A. Wedderburn Community House, Wedderburn College, Wedderburn Hall and Loddon Visitor Information Centre. Previous work with CERT too.

Q. What attracted you to volunteering with this organisation?

A. The friendly people and being able to help others. There's also a flexibility which makes it achievable.

Q. How long have you been volunteering for this organisation?

A. Three years.

Q. What led to you putting your hand up to help?

A. Having family exposes you to many organisations which could always do with an extra pair of helping hands.

Q. What's the most rewarding thing about volunteering?

A. Being able to help someone who may not be able to help themselves and seeing their smiles.
I also value the friendship and fun of being with a group of people who are aiming for the same outcome to help others.
The training and support offered to you by the organisation is also fabulous.

Q. What's the most challenging thing about volunteering?

A. Remembering what you have been taught! Being confident in your own ability and making sure you don't overlook someone who needs you.

Q. Who do you most admire?

A. Other community members who have volunteered tirelessly for countless years.

Q. What would we find if we snuck a look over your back fence?

A. Work in progress...

Q. Sum yourself up in four words or less?

A. Loud, happy, forward and helpful.

Q. Why would you encourage others to try their hand at volunteering?

A. To learn new skills while being fully supported and the joy of giving to others.



Volunteering has helped Dede and her family become part of the Wedderburn community after moving to the township three years ago.

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Cr Colleen Condliffe

Inglewood Ward
0428 778 025



Cr Gavan Holt

Wedderburn Ward
0408 943 008



Cr Geoff Curnow

Tarnagulla Ward
0429 383 553



Cr Cheryl McKinnon

Terrick Ward
0409 557 888

Put your hand up to help a learner driver

Having a driver licence is the key to independence and community engagement, particularly in rural areas where public transport options are limited. Learner drivers aged between 16 and 21 years of age must undertake 120 hours of driving experience before taking their P-Plate test.

For some young people, this may seem an insurmountable issue due to a variety of socio-economic factors.

But what may once have seemed impossible, is being made possible through the L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program covering localities spread right across the Loddon and Buloke Shires.

The L2P program, coordinated through Charlton Secondary College, was

established to help eligible learner drivers attain their supervised driving experience required for the P-Plate Licence test, and in doing so, dramatically increase their employment, education and life prospects. The program relies on community minded local drivers volunteering to mentor these learner drivers through the licence journey. However, volunteer mentors often wind up being much more than driving supervisors, with many forming lasting friendships according to Program Coordinator Matthew Bennett.

"Many of the young people who participate in our program face barriers which significantly limit their potential to engage with community, employment and education opportunities.

"Our volunteer supervising drivers really take on a mentor role which often proves rewarding for both parties.

"A professional relationship is established through the provision of VicRoads mentor training, support networks and suitable vehicle to undertake driving sessions in. The program covers all relevant insurances, fuel and related costs."

All prospective volunteer mentors must hold a full licence and are required to pass a working with children and criminal record check.

For further information about the L2P learner driver mentor program contact Matthew on 0467 787 328 or email bulokeloddonL2P@gmail.com.