

Council News

Summer 2019 edition



Council employee Joshua Marchant with ARDi, the revolutionary vehicle at the heart of the Armidale Region Driverless Initiative. Josh has been trained as a technical officer for ARDi's trial in Armidale.

Visit www.ardi-bus.com.au for details of the pilot project.

Building on solid advice

Street libraries to boost youth literacy

Region prepares for busy season of events

Aquatic initiatives to save lives

Water restrictions looming

Message from the Mayor

Autumn is always a particularly busy time in the Armidale region, as our many beautiful trees start to turn on a stunning display of colour and usher in the festival season.



As we enter the final weeks of this summer, organisers are adding the finishing touches to a 2019 festival season that has been refreshed with new events and updates to some old favourites.

The New England Festival - previously known as the Armidale Autumn Festival since its launch 27 years ago - has undergone a name change to better embrace the whole region.

The favourite elements of this long-running event will be retained, including the street parade and pipe band performances on Saturday 16 March.

Entertainment includes the Burns Highland Dancers and culminate with a Drought Relief fundraiser concert

by the Australian Army Band at the Armidale SerVies Club in the evening. It's a coup to attract the internationally renowned Army Band to our region and tickets to the performance are likely to go fast, so move quickly to secure a seat. The popular Campus to City Canter fun run, pancake breakfasts and cycling criteriums also remain a part of this year's festival.

As an added attraction, Armidale's Jack Vallance Oval will host the regional firefighting championships on the same weekend. The event is a great spectator sport, pitching many of the area's best firefighters against each other in exciting, practical challenges.

They include a local team that will be keen for some home town support.

The beauty of autumn and amazing colours of our region will be further celebrated with a new event, the Colour New England Street Arts Festival on Saturday 6 April.

Council is supporting this community-driven initiative to give our local

artists centre stage - the visual artists, musicians, theatrical performers and artisans.

Watch a professional street artist create a mural of the city in all its autumn splendour, enjoy street theatre and take a selfie in a giant 3D work by international chalk artist Rudy Kistler.

Entertainment in the Beardsy Street Mall will be followed by a spectacular light show in the evening - transforming landmark buildings in the CBD - and live music in a number of local venues from 5pm.

Our region has a wealth of artistic talent that will be brought together by this new festival, to bid a fitting and fond farewell to the longer, warmer days.

Details and updates for the two festivals and many other upcoming events are available on Council's website. Visit the Events listing on the home page or go to the New England Festival page.

**Simon Murray
Mayor**

Times are a changin' for museum

Armidale Folk Museum is changing its opening hours from this Monday to encourage more lunchtime visitors.

The new hours, 11am to 2pm seven days a week, will make it easier for people to drop into the museum during their lunch break or stop by while shopping in the mall.

The museum, on the corner of Rusden Street and Faulkner Street, has been operating since 1933 to enable residents and visitors to connect with the region's history.

In addition to its permanent collection, the museum is featuring a new Oddities and Curiosities display of weird items that are no longer in regular use and in some cases have slipped from our minds.

Council provided full sponsorship for the museum when it first opened and now runs the facility as part of its cultural activities.

"The museum closed during World



War II, so the building could be used for more pressing purposes," Interim Museum Team Leader Hayley Ward said.

"When peace was restored, the museum was revived largely through the personal enthusiasm of the late Eric Dunlop, Senior Lecturer in History and Social Science at the Armidale Teachers' College.

"It was officially reopened in the old Literary Institute building in October 1958 by the then Minister for Education, Mr D. H. Drummond."

The displays have since been extended due to the generosity of local residents who have donated historically significant objects, Ms Ward said.



Building on solid advice

A substantial rise in the number of Armidale region property owners penalised for unapproved building work has been attributed to the popularity of DIY television programs and inaccurate advice from some professionals.

Council's planning staff have issued an increased number of infringement penalties in recent months, for construction or renovation works completed without the necessary approvals or without checking if the property improvements were compliant with regulations.

"Our key message is to contact Council and get advice before embarking on any building or renovation project," Council's Service Leader – Sustainability & Development, Ambrose Hallman, said.

"Building surveyors and planning officers are available at Council's front counters each working day. They can quickly provide clarification and advice that can avoid major problems down the track. Works that do need approval can be fast-tracked and processed in a matter of days, so owners can be confident the improvements meet building and safety standards."

Mr Hallman said a lack of awareness among some tradespeople about approval requirements was also contributing to the number of detections of building infringements.

"Owners should be aware that works undertaken without approval can have serious consequences when they go to sell a property," he said.

"Documentation of all property improvements must be provided at the time of sale and illegal works will be detected at this stage. Subsequent fines can amount to thousands of dollars and a lack of approvals can bring considerable complications in selling a home – not to mention the health and safety risks of works that might not meet national standards. "Retrospective building certificates can be issued but they are temporary, which creates issues for current owners and people looking to buy a property."

Visit www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/development/planning-controls-and-guidelines for more details, phone 1300 13683 or visit Council's Armidale or Guyra offices.

Water restrictions looming

Council is reminding residents and businesses to be water wise this summer as water consumption reaches record levels.

As dry weather continues to bite in our region, Council's water services team is experiencing a huge increase in water treatment through the plants in Armidale and Guyra. During January, Armidale usually consumes on average 14 million litres per day. For the past two weeks, the plant has been operating for 22-24 hours a day with consumption going over 18 million litres per day for the first time since 2005. There has also been an increase in consumption in Guyra, with dam levels dropping almost 1% a day and now at 80% capacity.

Armidale Regional Council's Service Leader Business Units, Phillip Perram, says the current level of water consumption is concerning.

"Armidale region residents have been very fortunate over the years to have not experienced water shortages and restrictions but if we keep using water at this rate and don't receive any meaningful rain in the next couple of months, we will have no choice but to implement restrictions in Guyra in mid February and in Armidale in mid March," said Mr Perram. "We are asking residents to be water wise, including limiting the use of sprinklers on lawns and the frequency of watering gardens and take shorter showers. Every little bit helps to conserve water as well as reduces the water bills."

In the Armidale region, an average person uses over 200 litres of water per day. In some communities, people have reduced average personal use to 130 litres per day or less. Most household water use is outdoors, watering gardens and lawns. About 40% of all water consumed in the home is used in the bathroom with 15-20% used in the laundry .

In the garden:

- Avoid watering during the heat of the day when a high percentage of water is lost through evaporation.
- Keep an eye on the weather forecast. If there's rain in the forecast, let the rain do your watering for you.
- Less frequent watering forces roots down to find water, making the plants less reliant on surface water and better able to stand hot, dry days.
- Many plants are much tougher than you think. Consider native plants
- Many people overestimate how much water their lawn needs. Grass is shallow rooted and rarely extends more than 25mm into the soil. Put more water than this on your soil and it's not helping your lawn or your water bill.
- Mulch can reduce evaporation from soil by up to 70%. It keeps soil cool by ensuring it is not exposed to dry air and drying winds.

In the house:

- 3-star rated showerheads use no more than 9 litres of water per minute, while old style showerheads use up to 20 litres per minute. If you shower for six minutes, a water efficient showerhead can save up to 50 litres of water for each shower or up to 20,000 litres of water per person per year. Shorter showers save water and money.
- In the laundry, only wash full loads.
- Look out for WELS (Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards) labels on major appliances and tap ware products. See Council's website for more water saving tips.

Street libraries to boost youth literacy

Mini community libraries are being established in Armidale's Girraween area to make books more available to children to improve their literacy.

Five 'street libraries' have been installed so far in the Aboriginal housing area – one outside a Narwan Village home and the others next to the footpath so they can be accessed at any time. A sixth will soon be installed at Minimbah Preschool.

"The great advantage of street libraries is there is an available collection of books just waiting to be discovered by any child who walks past," Karrali Aboriginal Mums & Bubs Service

representative Maxine Ross said.

Karrali, a program offered by Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Services, instigated the initiative in conjunction with other Hunter New England Health officers, local youth training organisation Backtrack and Armidale Regional Council.

Ms Ross said it was hoped the street libraries would help bridge the gap in literacy between Aboriginal children and the wider community.

The six libraries, constructed and installed by Backtrack, resemble giant letterboxes and are filled with books donated by Armidale War Memorial

Library and a number of community members.

"Anyone can borrow books from the libraries at any time, then return them for other people to read," Ms Ross said.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said the street libraries are a fantastic initiative to encourage children to read, by taking the books to their doorstep.

"The need to focus on literacy among young people is well documented and Council is very enthusiastic about providing an assortment of children's books through the library," Councillor Murray said.

Backtrack youth, Minimbah children and a Homes North Community Housing tenant, artist James Lovelock, have painted the libraries so they stand out and help make them attractive to kids.

The Hunter New England Health Child Young People Family Team will monitor the libraries, to ensure they are well maintained and stocked with donated books.

The libraries are located at: Jones Avenue, Golgotha Street, Morris Street, Parry Parade, Erskine Street and Minimbah Preschool.

Anyone interested in donating books can contact the Karrali Aboriginal Mothers and Babies Team on 6776 9801.



Service providers and community members celebrate the street libraries' launch.

Council backs program to save young lives

Council has backed a Royal Life Saving campaign encouraging parents and guardians to closely supervise their children around water.

The Keep Watch campaign urges parents to keep a close eye on children whenever they are around swimming pools or any other body of water, in an attempt to curb the large number of drowning deaths in Australia.

The campaign includes safety tips such as properly maintaining safety fencing, teaching children water awareness and encouraging adults to learn basic resuscitation skills.

It warns that many child drownings are the result of children playing next to water and accidentally falling in,

emphasising the need for parents to be watchful and nearby whenever children are near water.

There was a sharp rise in the number of drowning deaths in Australia this summer. Fifty-three people drowned during the first half of the 2018/19 summer, compared to 38 in the corresponding period last year. Drownings in waterbodies such as rivers and dams have risen in recent years, from 266 in the 2015 calendar year to 291 last year.

Children under five are the age group most at risk of drowning and swimming pools account for a large proportion of drowning deaths. Nearly 1000 children under the age of

five have drowned in Australia during the past 25 years.

The campaign warns: "Water is only safe while you're watching.

"Distractions like answering the phone, attending to another child, or ducking inside to grab something can have tragic consequences if a toddler is left unattended by water.

"Actively supervise children around water, check your pool fence and gate, and never prop the pool gate open. Swimming lessons are great, but they are no substitute for active supervision and a pool fence in good working order."

Visit www.royallifesaving.com.au for more information.

New vehicles improve animal welfare

Animals secured by Armidale Regional Council Rangers will have a less stressful experience thanks to two new purpose-built vehicles received by Council recently.

More comfortable enclosures, including soft floors and better ventilation, will improve conditions for animals being transported in the two utes.

They will also provide improved safety for Council's Rangers because of the vehicles' four mobile aluminium cages and lifting devices, enabling staff to more easily and safely secure stray and dangerous animals and transfer them onto the vehicles.

"Our Rangers began using the new vehicles this month, providing a more efficient and safer service to the community," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.

"It can be very stressing for pets when they go missing and these specialised vehicles will help to keep animals more calm and protected from the elements.

"Importantly, it will also offer much safer working conditions for staff,



Council's team of rangers with their two new vehicles.

who can be confronted with some dangerous situations when dealing with animals that might be frightened or aggressive."

Councillor Murray said pets are an important part of the Armidale region

lifestyle and enhance quality of life for many residents.

Council can provide owners with tips on how to keep their dogs and cats safe, as well as advice on steps to take if they lose their pet.

Pool fencing an inflating issue for local homes

The growing popularity of inflatable swimming pools at homes in the Armidale region has prompted a warning about the need for suitable pool fencing.

Any inflatable pool with a depth of 30 centimetres or more must be contained within secure and certified pool fencing, to reduce the risk of child drownings, Council's Service Leader – Sustainability & Development, Ambrose Hallman, said.

These pools are subject to the same fencing laws as any other backyard swimming pool constructed after 2010 and property owners are encouraged to contact Council for advice.

"The region's cool weather for much of the year means the prevalence of permanent swimming pools is lower than many parts of Australia," Mr Hallman said.

"However, inflatable pools are a popular option during the height of summer and larger inflatable varieties are now available from a number of local retailers.

"The majority of drownings in private swimming pools involve children under the age of five and inadequate pool fencing has been a contributing factor to a number of these tragedies."

He said in recent weeks Armidale Regional Council health and building officers had been made aware of a number of Armidale region households that had backyard inflatable pools but did not comply with the fencing requirements.

"Many households would not be aware it is illegal to have a larger inflatable pool that is not properly fenced and Council is looking to raise

awareness among the community," he said. "Conditions include minimum heights for the fencing, how the fencing and latches are constructed and the need for fencing to completely separate the pool from the house.

"Where education does not lead to compliance by households, Council will be required to issue fines."

Mr Hallman advised there are also recommended safety procedures for inflatable pools less than 30cm in depth, including constant parental supervision while children are using the pool, ensuring the water is kept clean to avoid health issues and emptying and properly storing the pool when it is not being used.

For further information, visit the Your Property page of Council's website, phone 1300 136833 or visit Council's Armidale or Guyra offices.

Make a date with a busy events calendar

The days are getting shorter and cooler days are on their way, as we near the end of another summer, but things are just heating up on the Armidale region events calendar.

A new Autumn - New England High Country - Event Guide highlights the long and varied list of attractions being held in the region during March and April, starting with the Armidale Cup race meeting on Sunday 3 March.

The online digital guide, produced by Council's Tourism, Marketing & Events team, is available on Council's website.

Activities in the region during March also include the New England Festival on 16 March, with its accompanying events,

the NSW State Firefighter Championships on 15-17 March and the Armidale Show on 8-9 March. A drought relief fund-raising performance by the internationally-renowned Australian Army Band, as part of the New England Festival, will be one of the hot tickets in March.

A gala fundraiser for the 2020 New England Festival will be held on Friday 5 April, setting the stage for the inaugural Colour New England Street Arts Festival on Saturday 6 April.

Visit www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au for a copy of the guide or see the Events listing on the home page of Council's website for details of upcoming events.

Fruitful focus on expansion

RIGHT: Turning the first sod at the expansion site ... Mayor Simon Murray, MP Adam Marshall, Costa Tomato Category General Manager Michael Engeman and local parliamentarian Scot Macdonald.



A \$67 million expansion of the Costa Group's glasshouse tomato production at Guyra has been welcomed by Council as an exciting further step in realising the region's potential as a horticultural hub.

The expansion, celebrated with a ceremonial turning of the first sod recently, will add another 10 hectares to the company's existing 30-hectare operation, which is already the largest in the southern hemisphere.

"The Guyra district has been earmarked by a number of horticultural producers as a highly desirable location for glasshouse production, because of its cool climate, high number of sunny days and abundance of suitable land," the Mayor of Armidale Regional Council, Simon Murray, said.

"Council has been part of a team effort to expand protected horticulture in the area, working with our local politicians and producers."

Councillor Murray said that included Council's project to construct a water pipeline from Malpas Dam, to provide water security for the Guyra township and local producers.

The NSW Member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, announced in June the State Government would provide \$12.38 million to the pipeline project.

Cr Murray said: "While harvesting of rain water and extensive water recycling have enabled the most recent glasshouse operations at Guyra to be almost entirely water self-sufficient, the pipeline will provide a secure supply during prolonged periods of dry weather.

"Costa's expansion is a wonderful example of the horticultural activity expected to flow to the area once that certainty of water supply is in place."

The project will double the size of Costa's operation, complementing the company's 20 hectares of glasshouses east of the township.

"The additional 150 jobs expected to be created by the expansion will be an incredible economic boost for the Guyra community and the wider region," he said. "The pipeline and protected horticultural production in the region are key components in Council's economic development program. Costa's expansion is evidence that focus is bringing dividends."

What's on Highlights

Birthday with the Birds 2 February

Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve is turning 40 and will host a special celebration as part of World Wetland Day 9.30am-12.30pm. 1300 072757 or visit nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/birthdaywithbirds

What a Waste: The challenge of food loss and waste 6 February

A Global Town Hall meeting bringing local, State and National interest groups together Visit www.facebook.com/events/252491255431935/

Community Connects 23 February

Armidale Plaza will be an 'Open Day' for the community to come and see what sports, hobbies and special interest groups are available in our neighbourhood.

Armidale Music Foundation Choral Weekend 8-10 March

Singers are invited to participate in a workshop culminating in a public concert with the Armidale Symphony Orchestra. Visit www.amfchoral.org.au to register.

Haydn, Mozart & Boccherini String Quartets 27 February

Auditorium, New England Conservatorium of Music. 7pm. australianhaydn.com.au/events/regional-nsw-tour or phone 1800 334 388. Enquiries: 6723 3556

For more events go to www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/events

Busy program begins for road reseals

Urban and rural roads throughout the region will be repaired through this financial year's road reseal program, which got underway in late January and will continue during February.

A contract roads crew will undertake the reseal program, with works totalling approximately \$930,000. Work began with the Guyra to Ebor road and a number of urban streets in Guyra, including Hardinge Street, Yarrowonda Street and Ryanda Street, from 23 January.

It will be followed by work on Guyra district rural roads – Maybole, Tubbumurra, Aberfoyle and Lagoon Road – from 30 January.

The crew is scheduled to turn its attention to Armidale urban streets from 30 January. Nearly 40 urban roads in the Armidale district are included in this year's program, such as Mann Street, Ishbell Drive, Drew Street and Elm Street.

Resealing along Waterfall Way is expected to begin on 11 February, ahead of rural road reseals in the Armidale area from 18 February. It will include sealing on Rockvale Road and Kellys Plains Road.

The schedule for all works will be subject to favourable weather.



Large-scale mural ignites library

The children's section at Armidale Regional War Memorial Library has been further enlivened by a new mural created by local artists David Allan and Fiona McDonald during the festive period.

A competition has now been launched inviting residents to name the dragon at the centre of the 15-metre-long mural along the children's section's main wall. Entries for the Name our Dragon competition will be open until 15 February.

Drop into the library to see the spectacular mural and submit an entry. Entry forms are also available

at the Guyra library and suggested names can be submitted online at yoursay.armidale.nsw.gov.au/library-mural.

A shortlist of three proposed names will be chosen and will be put to a popular vote by the community.

The winning name will be announced during a children's story time at the library on Tuesday 12 March from 10.30am.

Everyone who enters will have the chance to win a random draw prize.

For further details, visit yoursay.armidale.nsw.gov.au/library-mural or contact the library on 6770 3636.

Platform Road sealing for plain sailing

Platform Road in Kelly's Plains will soon be sealed including road alignment changes to improve driver safety and provide a smooth, all weather route for road users.

Armidale Regional Council will commence work on the \$1.5 million project from Monday 21 January. Contractors working on behalf of Council are expected to take approximately six weeks. (Weather permitting). The 2.3km reconstruction work is jointly funded through the NSW Government's Roads to Recovery Program and the Stronger Communities merger funds.

Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said Platform Road has been on Council's wish-list for many years.

"This is great news for the rural community in the Kelly's Plains area who will now have a much safer and smoother route from the New England Highway into the area," said Cr Murray.

"The commitment from the NSW Government through Roads to Recovery Funding and the availability of merger funds has enabled us to complete the work.

"Unfortunately Council's limited funds doesn't often allow us to seal many of our unsealed rural roads, so the financial support from the government is necessary."

To ensure the project is completed quickly and efficiently Platform Road will be closed at the New England Highway from 8am on Monday 21 January and reopen at 5pm on Friday 1 March (weather permitting) on the western end and at Burns Road on the eastern end to facilitate the ease and speed of construction.

Council appreciates the public's patience and recommends using the Kelly's Plains Road, Bona Vista road, Uralla Road route to access the New England Highway.

\$7 million boost for tourism

Council meetings

The general public is welcome to attend any Armidale Regional Council meeting:

- Wed. 27 Feb 2019, 4pm in Guyra.
- Wed. 27 March 2019, 4pm in Armidale
- Wed. 24 April 2019, 4pm in Armidale
- Wed. 22 May 2019, 4pm in Guyra
- Wed. 26 June 2019, 4pm in Armidale

Please note: workshops and closed sessions (in private) are not open to the public.



Live Streaming

Council meetings are now streamed live on our youtube channel or via our website!

Participate at a Council meeting

Public access is available for members of our community to voice their opinion on an issue at Council.

Public access will only be granted for items listed on the agenda.

Each address will be limited to a maximum of two (2) speakers for and two (2) speakers against the agenda item.

The address is to be no longer than five (5) minutes.

How to apply

Requests must be submitted by 12 noon on the day prior to the meeting. A form is available on our website under 'Participate at a Council Meeting'

Contact Us



Call: 1300 136 833

Email: council@armidale.nsw.gov.au

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158 Bradley St, Guyra

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Visitor accommodation in the Armidale region will receive a major boost by a \$7 million project to construct a new motel at the Armidale SerVies Club site, following close cooperation between club management and Council to enable the development to proceed.

The new motel, a 32-room complex between the SerVies Club and the Belgrave Cinema, has been in the pipeline for a number of years and required the resolution of some planning issues, including stormwater drainage and flooding, and increased traffic levels.

"Council planning officers have worked with club representatives to find solutions for these issues and achieve a development application that could be approved," Armidale Regional Council Mayor Simon Murray said.

"The new motel complex will be a valuable addition to accommodation in the region and will greatly enhance the club's capacity to host conventions and other major events.

"This project is another example of Council playing a supporting role for important initiatives, while ensuring these ventures tick all the boxes to protect public amenity and safety."

The Development Application received Council approval late last year and club management expects

work to start on the site soon. Armidale SerVies Club Chief Executive Officer Scott Sullivan said positive liaison between Council planning staff and club representatives played a large part in taking the project to fruition.

"The planning team has been very supportive and proactive in keeping the application moving along and ensuring the complex meets the regulations," Mr Sullivan said.

"We're extremely excited about the new motel and its capacity to bring people to the area. The modern accommodation, as an integral part of our club, will provide further incentive for visitors to stay longer and explore our wonderful region."

The announcement was welcomed by the NSW Member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, who said the venture brought another asset for the region's tourism industry, while providing a considerable injection of jobs during the motel's construction.

Mr Sullivan said Mr Marshall's ongoing hard work and advocacy for the region, both as the local Member and the State Minister for Tourism, was instrumental in generating activity and creating an economic environment in which the club had the confidence to proceed with this multi-million-dollar project.

Want to have your say?

Register now at yoursay.armidale.nsw.gov.au