



Spring Bulletin

Printed September 8, 2020

Claire Taylor snapped this image around the Sevens Creek in Euroa.

A Message From Our Mayor

At Strathbogieshire we are acutely aware of how our region has been affected by drought, bushfire and now the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coronavirus restrictions have hit our municipality hard. Our region has experienced job losses, staff being stood down and businesses being forced to close.

Our community has not been shy on its need for support during this challenging time and Council is committed to doing all it can to provide this help.

In recognition of challenges faced by a number of our businesses, fees for registered premises were set at zero in our 2020/21 budget and we will refund fees for the 2019/20 year.

This also applies to footpath trading fees.

Our Budget also included a zero rate rise in the average rate per property.

However, we know providing support to our community during the coronavirus pandemic is not limited to financial assistance.

Helping to Reset, Reboot and Revitalise our communities will take much more.

Now, more than ever, we must talk about mental health and look out for our friends, family and neighbours.

There is no doubt people in our community are feeling isolated and lonely.

To tackle this we have developed a series of initiatives to drive social connection.

The youngest in our community are participating in an innovative story telling project, while others are sharing their stories through a series of video profiles.

We're even encouraging our community to use the power of the written word to connect with loved ones through a postcard initiative.

All of this wrapped up in a project we're calling 'The Strathbogies Story'.



@strathbogieshire | 1800 065 993 | info@strathbogieshire.vic.gov.au | www.strathbogieshire.vic.gov.au

Making Changes for Our Community

Strathbogrie Shire Council is making some serious changes to the way it does business. We know we need to do better right across our organisation. There are the simple things we can do. Things like getting back to our community in a timely manner.

Then there are some more complicated things we must do. By this we mean changing the way we engage with our community to ensure you are involved in the decisions that affect you. Right across the board you – our community – have told us to lift our game.

In our 2020 Community Satisfaction Survey we have seen satisfaction drop across the board. Perhaps most significantly is a six-point decrease in our overall performance index score, bringing it to 50, which is the lowest level since 2016.

This score compares to a state-wide average index score of 58 and a small rural shire average index score of 56. To put it simply we are below average! (We can hear you saying you already know that).



There are four key areas the survey draws out as areas for improvement. These being:

- 1 Customer Service.** We must ensure our customers have a good experience when dealing with all areas of Council, not just our frontline customer service staff.
- 2 Communication.** We must be more transparent. We must get better at informing our community.
- 3 Community Decisions.** We must bring our community into our decision making process. We will make better decisions if we work together.
- 4 Consultation and Engagement.** We must engage genuinely and authentically with our community. This includes developing true public participation opportunities to improve outcomes and build trust.

Our community engagement principles

We've developed a set of minimal requirements and objectives that our community engagement must adhere to. These are our engagement principles.

Genuine and transparent

We will be open and honest in our engagement approach. Our scope will be outlined, the purpose clear and we won't shy away from telling the truth – even when it is hard.

Inclusive and accessible

We will be approachable. We will create an environment where diversity of opinion is welcomed and everyone is heard.

Responsive and flexible

Our engagement approach will be adaptable to ensure it meets its purpose and generates participation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach so we will be watchful and ready to change.

Listen and learn

We will evaluate and monitor our engagement and consultation to ensure we continually improve.

Working for Strathbogrie

Our hardworking crews hired through the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative have been out and about cleaning up our towns. You may have spotted them cleaning up roadsides, or laying sofffall in our playground. What you may not know is - they've also been making improvements to community facilities like the Miepoll Hall entrance (pictured).



Our community commitments

To do better we have developed a five-point plan to success.

- 1 **Develop meaningful service standards.** We will work with our community to review our current service standards (those outlined in our Customer Service Charter) and develop new standards in the areas that matter to you.
- 2 **Commit to a public Community Report Card.** We will be transparent on how we're tracking on the service standards you helped us develop. We'll do this through the release of a six-monthly community report card.
- 3 **Advance tools to measure improvement.** Our Customer Service team will create a program of continual testing and improvement by developing an ongoing pulse survey.
- 4 **Host an annual Community Forum.** We will create an annual Community Forum that will include deliberative engagement, participatory budgeting, community education and genuine and transparent engagement opportunities.
- 5 **Improve our communications.** We know improving our key avenues for communication is essential. We will build a new website that meets your needs, create an eNews for more regular updates and work with you to ensure our quarterly newsletter provides information on topics that are relevant and timely.

Our timeline to success

The simple changes we're making will start now. Internal monitoring, reporting and accountability of our current service standards. Working on improving communications, including our new website. For the commitments that require community engagement this will occur after the Local Government elections and into early 2021.

The table below provides a summary of Council performance.

Service	2020 result	2019 result	Small rural average	State-wide average
Overall performance	50	56	56	58
Overall Council direction	51	58	50	51
Customer service	72	75	70	70
Waste management	62	63	64	65
Tourism development	62	64	63	62
Enforcement of local laws	59	59	62	63
Environmental sustainability	56	-	57	60
Informing the community	55	59	58	59
Sealed local roads	51	51	51	54
Consultation and Engagement	50	55	54	55
Lobbying	50	54	52	53
Community decisions	49	55	53	53
Local streets and footpaths	46	48	57	58
Unsealed roads	41	43	43	44

About the Community Satisfaction Survey

Each year, our Council participates in the Victorian Government's Community Satisfaction Survey. This survey is coordinated state-wide by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The survey asks the opinions of 400 local people about the place they live, work and play. It also provides us with the opportunity to compare our results with previous years and against state-wide results and that of other small rural shires.

Most questions ask respondents to rate Council performance on a five-point scale from very good to very poor. This is then used to develop an index score, which is represented as a score out of 100.





THE
Strathbogrie
STORY



The Strathbogrie Story

At Strathbogrie Shire Council we have echoed the Victorian Government's calls to help slow the spread of coronavirus.

We have urged those in our community to stay safe by regularly washing their hands, keeping at least 1.5m for other people and staying home if they are feeling unwell.

And, our community has responded.

It worked hard to follow restrictions and help keep us all safe.

Major events across the Shire have been cancelled. Community groups and sporting activities have stopped.

However, in doing our bit to stop the spread of the virus, comes isolation and loneliness.

To help our community overcome these feelings we've developed a project that aims to drive community connections.

This is more than a simple video storytelling project and more than a children's story book competition.

This is **The Strathbogrie Story**.

So how does it work?

Through this project our community is sharing its stories through video, story books and even hand-written notes.

We are learning about our community's passions, why people love where we live and sharing advice on getting through this together.

Most importantly we hope we're tackling feelings of isolation and loneliness by bringing our community together.

You can read and watch the stories by visiting www.strathbogriestory.com.

For those who may not be technology experts we will share printed copies of our community's stories and share our video stories in our libraries when they reopen.

We urge our community to contact us by phoning 1800 065 993 and asking to speak to Kristin Favaloro if you would like to learn more.

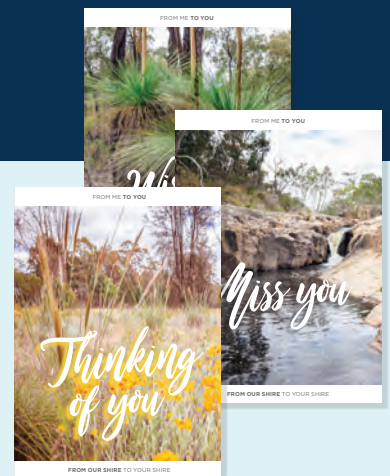
Stay in Touch through a Strathbogrie Postcard

Through the Strathbogrie Story we have created a postcard initiative as a way of keeping all community members connected during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The postcards encourage senders to let others know they are thinking of them.

The first in our series, features the Gooram Falls, has now been released, and is available at convenient collection points (like supermarkets, post offices and chemists) shire-wide. For a full list visit our website www.strathbogriestory.com.

We'll continue to release different post cards so watch this space!





Pam Walker captured this fantastic sunset at her property in Kelvin View.



Victoria Tuck captured this image of snow in Strathbogie.



Victoria Tuck captured this image of snow in Strathbogie.

Be heard this October Strathbogie Shire Council Election

The Strathbogie Shire Council election will be held this October.

The Victorian Electoral Commission is preparing to deliver local council elections during the extraordinary circumstances of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Elections will be conducted entirely by post – a safe and completely secret method of voting.

We strongly encourage all eligible voters to enrol and vote. Voting is compulsory for Australian citizens aged 18 years or older, and you may be fined if you don't vote.

If you are an Australian citizen go to vec.vic.gov.au enrolment to register for VoterAlert which is a free SMS and email reminder service.

If you're not an Australian citizen but pay rates to Council, own rateable property in Strathbogie Shire but do not live in the area, or are a director or company secretary of a corporation that pays rates to Council and have no other voting entitlements for this Council, you can apply to become a Council-enrolled voter.

The Victorian Electoral Commission conducts elections on behalf of all Victorian councils.

For more information, visit vec.vic.gov.au.

Strathbogie Shire Council election timeline

Friday 28 August:

Roll closed at 4 pm

Thursday 17 September:

Candidate nominations open

Tuesday 22 September:

Candidate nominations close at noon

Tuesday 6 to Thursday 8 October:

Mail-out of ballot packs

Friday 23 October:

Voting closes at 6 pm

Friday 30 October:

Postal vote receipt period closes at noon

Friday 13 November:

Latest date all results will be declared



Merrill Boyd took these stunning images of Avenel on a recent foggy morning.

Zero Rate Rise

is key to community recovery plans for 2020/21

Council has outlined its path forward as it assists the community to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with zero increase in rates a feature of the 2020/21 Council Budget.

After extensive consultation and feedback, Council showed it had listened to the community as it adopted the 2020/21 Budget at a Special Meeting on Tuesday, 14 July.

Council unanimously supported a zero per cent rate increase for the financial year, while also committing to the delivery of a significant capital works and asset-renewal program.

The 2020-21 Budget was developed around supporting the community recovery from the pandemic, while including many exciting capital works projects.

"We are pleased to deliver a Budget firmly focused on supporting our community through the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic," Cr McClaren said.

"We received more than 91 submissions to the 2020/21 Draft Budget and we are grateful for all the community feedback."

"We listened, asked for more time to deliberate, and this Budget outlines a capital works program that focuses on crucial projects for 2020/21. At the same time, it provides significant funding for renewal works on our aging and outdated infrastructure."

With the Budget providing for no increase in the average rate per property Mayor McClaren noted that outcomes for individual properties would still vary, depending on how that property's independent valuation had changed.

The Valuations are undertaken annually by the State Valuer General and this year's valuation occurred in January 2020.

Over this, and the previous two Budgets, the Municipal Charge (\$133 in 2019/20) has been removed while the farm rate differential has been reduced from 85 per cent to 80 per cent of the residential rate. This means that rates charged will be solely based on the value of a property.

Continuing the effort to encourage young families to move to the Shire the First Home Owners rate rebate has been maintained.

In recognition of challenges being faced by hospitality businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, fees for registered premises have been set at zero, while Council will also refund fees for the 2019/20 financial year. This will also apply to footpath trading fees.



The table below outlines some of the 2020/21 Budget Capital Works program. For the full program see the 2020/21 Budget at www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au

Location	Project	Cost
Shire wide	Swimming pool works	\$121,000
Shire wide	Zero class roads upgrade program	\$400,000
Shire wide	Town Entry Sign upgrades	\$30,000
Shire wide	Public Art	\$20,000
Euroa	Scoping sewer to Friendlies Reserve and Euroa north	\$100,000
Shire wide	Upgrade to the Euroa Saleyards.	\$300,000
Euroa	Croquet Club paint	\$17,000
Euroa	Rockies Pedestrian Footbridge scoping study	\$50,000
Euroa	Leash free area	\$25,000
Euroa	Memorial Oval Netball Court Repairs	\$40,000
Euroa	RSL Clubroom Expansion	\$350,000
Longwood	Longwood Community Centre Solar	\$42,000
Violet Town	Dump point	\$5,000
Violet Town	Netball and Multi-Purpose Courts	\$300,000
Violet Town	Recreation Reserve Market Infrastructure	\$84,000
Nagambie	Dump point	\$5,000
Nagambie	Wattlevale Road Council design	\$75,000
Nagambie	Aquatic Park	\$125,000
Nagambie	Pipe water from lake to Nagambie Recreation Reserve	\$125,000
Nagambie	Active Youth Space	\$500,000
Nagambie	Splash Park scoping	\$50,000
Strathbogie	Picnic Shelter associated works	\$25,000
Graytown	Toilet scoping and delivery	\$50,000
Graytown	Solar Panels	\$23,000
Avenel	Exercise Station	\$50,000

Meanwhile, the capital works program will provide high quality infrastructure, which, in turn, will create economic benefits through the construction of new projects and maintenance of existing assets.

The 2020/21 Budget includes capital spending on essential infrastructure such as roads (\$4.4 million), drainage (\$440,000), footpaths (\$166,000), and parks and streetscapes (\$1.5 million). This is in addition to ongoing maintenance.

Of particular note is continuation of an allocation of \$400,000 for the Zero to One Roads improvement program, which will continue to upgrade the municipality's unsealed roads This brings to \$1.6 million the amount allocated to this initiative in the term of the current Council.

The Budget outlines \$25.3 million on important services such as libraries, waste management, maintenance of roads, parks and gardens, animal management, maternal and child health, swimming pools and the arts and culture.

Stay Safe in Strathbogie Shire



Stay 1.5m from others



Wash your hands regularly



Stay home if you're feeling unwell

In Brief

Have your say

Strathbogie Shire Council is often seeking feedback on a range of different topics, policies and documents. We encourage you to visit our website at www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au and click on the 'Have Your Say' button on the front page to learn more and have your say.

Help us stay safe

Remember to watch our social media channels and our website to keep up-to-date on the latest coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and the effects on our region.

Our Mayor, Cr Amanda McClaren, also provides regular video updates. We urge people to protect themselves and others. To do this you must:

- Wear a mask or face covering when outside of home
- Practice good hygiene
- Maintain physical distancing, keep at least 1.5m away from others
- Understand the risk and symptoms
- Help continue to slow the spread of COVID-19 by getting tested, even if you have mild symptoms
- Stay home and avoid contact if you're feeling unwell
- Take care wherever you go, assume others may be carrying the virus.

Do you know an awesome local?

Nominations are now open for next year's Australia Day Awards. Categories include:

- Community Organisation of the Year
- Junior Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Citizen of the Year

Nomination forms can be downloaded from our website or by phoning the customer service team on 1800 065 993. Closing date for nominees is 21 September. This year and next year's awards will still go ahead in some format depending on coronavirus restrictions.

Green bin contamination rates down

When it comes to green bin contamination we are excelling!

During May and June Strathbogie residents achieved an all-time record with contamination levels dropping below one per cent.

Soft plastic is still the biggest contaminate in our green bins and unfortunately even at these very small rates it is hard to sort from the compost.

Please take extra care to remove all plastics from your food scraps and garden waste and never place plastic bags into your green bag.

Only our purple bags are suitable as they are compostable to Australian Standard 4736-2006 and the sorters know what to look out for.

Sign up for eNotices

Do you want to receive your rates notice via email? By signing up to our eNotices web portal, you not only get electronic bills, but you can access past and present rate notices.

The process is simple. Just grab a copy of your rates notice (you need this because you need your reference number) and go to strathbogie.enotices.com.au.

This will take you to the webportal where you click on 'sign up' tab. Complete the form, which includes your email address and the reference number, and you're right to go.

If you need help signing up phone our Customer Service team or the Rates Department on 1800 065 993.

Have you snapped an image of our region?
Send it to
info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au

Tracey Christian captured this image recently during a morning walk in Nagambie.