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Wet Season Edition

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Pictures taken from the McArthur River Bridge, Borroloola........

Our Mission
Working as one towards a better future through effective use of all resources

Our Vision
Roper Gulf Regional Council, sustainable, viable, vibrant

Our Values
Honesty
Equality
Accountability
Respect
Trust
Message from the Mayor

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year. It’s Australia Day at the end of January and in many ways this marks the start of the new working year as the holidays become another memory.

Roper Gulf Towns were largely unaffected by flooding following the solid rains at the end of December but sadly we did have one flood related death. Outside Beswick a passenger drowned when a car was washed away trying to cross Dook Creek. This is a tragic reminder of how extremely hazardous flooded creeks and roads can be.

Please think very carefully before you drive into any flooded area, wait for water to subside or revise your travel plans. The cost of repairing flood damaged vehicles is substantial but lost lives can never be replaced. Our best wishes go out to our neighbours in the Daly River Community of Nauiyu who were flooded out over Christmas. They now have a long clean-up and recovery ahead. Some of our communities are also vulnerable to flooding and now is a good time to review or make personal flood plans. Planning won’t stop a flood but can make recovery quicker and perhaps less traumatic.

Your local Council Office can assist with information on making a flood or storm plan. 2016 will be as busy a year as well as normal Council business we will also have Northern Territory and Federal Government Elections. The last three years have been a bit of a roller coaster with substantial structural reform and real funding cutbacks in a number of our program areas. All parties are making promises and at the end of the electoral cycle both Governments are appearing to loosen the budget purse strings.

With the smoke and mirrors of electoral campaign there is an opportunity to lobby Government for projects that have lost or not attracted funding from Government previously. It is important for us to keep track of promises made so that they remain core promises for any new Government.

Here in Roper Gulf we are facing a dilemma over the future of our two town swimming pools. Even though we do not own these pools or the land they are on we have inherited substantial operational costs and this is impacting on our budgets. Council needs to stop these losses and if we cannot negotiate better funding arrangements with the owners of the land, back to cost neutral, we will unhappily have to close the pools.

Our options without a substantial Government input are very limited. We have advised the NT and Commonwealth Governments and NLC but we also wanting to hear from our residents.

You can share your opinions with your local Councillor, or local Authority members in person, by phone or in writing. I would also like to thank Sharon Hillen who acted in the CEO’s role over the holiday period.

Do you like getting your local news fresh?

Roper Gulf Regional Council’s Facebook page is an immediate way of gaining breaking news from the source. You will find employment opportunities, event information, sport event photos, meeting dates and much more!

LIKE OUR PAGE TODAY
I hope you have all enjoyed the festive break, rested a bit and now ready for the second half of 2015/16. So far the wet season has been a bit slow to come on and I guess from a service delivery point of view this is a good thing as this allows longer access to the communities for our services without much disruption. Traditionally, January is a quiet month with many staff taking their leave and services not at their peak levels so there isn't a lot to report on for this period.

Council will have their meeting in Katherine this month and already some interesting agenda items will be presented for their consideration with a number of projects completing and others about to commence, which is exciting for our communities and our operations. One project to be completed this month is our new Council Depot building in the Katherine East industrial estate.

This is a much welcomed facility which is more suited to our needs than the previous facility and will allow cost-savings for Council.

Once again more changes are planned to occur with the CDP program (formally RJCP) this year and we continue to work closely with Government regarding these so we can be as ready as can be come these proposed changes.

Till next time, stay safe.

Employee of the Month

Employees of the Month are selected for their dedication and hard work within Roper Gulf Regional Council.

- December -

Head Quarters - Rajni Kaira
Barunga - Eventhia Friday
Beswick - Jonathon Jackson
Borroloola - Kirsten Anderson
Bulman - Jill Curtis
Eva Valley - Simone Watson
Jilkminggan - Anne-Marie McDonald
Mataranka - Chris Williams
Ngukurr - Johnny Daniels
Numbulwar - Faith Numamurdiri

Congratulations to all the winners!

The voice of Radio in Beswick wins top awards

The best known voice on Beswick's local FM radio, Ronald Weetra, was this month awarded the Best Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service (RIBS) - Radio Operator of the Year (TEABBA) Award at the National Remote Indigenous Media Awards. Ronald has been the Remote Indigenous Radio announcer and producer in Beswick since June last year and this is his second stint on radio in Beswick.

Ronald broadcasts every morning between 9 and 12 on local FM frequency 107.3.

Helen Hawkins, Council Services Manager at Beswick congratulated him on winning the award saying, "Everyone listens to Ronald around here… he is a big supporter of local music. This is a big surprise for everyone here and we are proud of the work Ronald is doing".
Employee Of The Month

Bob Brewster - Regional Manager
Community Services

Reports to: Marion Smith—Director
Community Services

Bob started at Roper Gulf mid January in the recently expanded role which now includes, aged care, children’s services, libraries, Sport and Recreation and Youth Services.

Bob comes to Roper Gulf with extensive management and business experience working with Indigenous communities in Victoria and NSW and a recent marketing role in Real Estate in North Queensland. This is his first time in the Top End and says he looking forward to the challenges of the job.

Bob who is a CPA accountant and management consultant worked in the corporate sector for many years including time as deputy Company Secretary at the Melbourne Age where he also did a stint as a journalist and photographer. Looking for a change he took up a number of roles for the Victorian Government in rebuilding struggling indigenous communities and businesses in the Gippsland and Mildura regions and later in southern NSW.

Bob likes to tell how he started work at eight years of age working on his family’s farm in South Gippsland and how with his wife he built up a horticulture business that specialised in growing and sourcing bush foods for the whole sale market. Some of the products he pioneered in Victoria are now well known in the gourmet and commercial cooking market.

Bob sees real opportunities in the small but developing bush food market especially for small indigenous start-up businesses.

“I am passionate about my work and in maintaining and developing good community consultation. Without bringing your community along with you and them having ownership little can be achieved.”

“I am very keen to get out and visit our communities.” Bob said.

In his spare time Bob likes fishing, photography, travelling and likes to puts these interests together. Bob expects to be still working at 70.

“You are only as young as you feel so I guess I still have plenty left in me.”

Bob will be located at the Victoria Highway Office.

All Hands on Deck!!

When a rock collides with a harder rock something usually gives in the collision.

Marc Gardner, Councils Director of Contracts and Technical Services, is also a keen amateur Rugby player and recently met a harder rock in a game, resulting in a broken bone in his hand.

Just as the Technical Services mob are about to move to their new home in Chardon Street.

We don’t know about the other fella…Rugby is not for the feint hearted.
In the December edition we introduced the weather pattern known as the Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO) which with the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is some of the best predictors of large weather events in the top end.

The MJO that came through the top end around Christmas was relatively strong as predicted and bought with it the heavy rains that saturated much of the Territory.

This produced the highest rainfall recorded for the whole territory with an averaged 221 mm.

Roper Gulf towns had very little flooding during this event which badly affected Naiyru on the Daly River and much of the north west.

The next MJO, which is a basically a band of low pressure and very moist air that circulates east along the equator from East Africa, is due at the end of January. The BOM thinks this will be much weaker than the last so back to a below average rainfall for a while.

An MJO comes around every 30-50 days.

The SOI which measures and compares ocean surface temperatures between Tahiti and Darwin has weakened and with this the El Nino which bought very low rainfall and drought along the east and southern Australia.

The recent rainfall along the east coast has brought much needed rain but not ended the drought conditions in many places.

Chardon Street project is completed

Regular users of the garden end of Chardon Street in Katherine would have noted a big change to the skyline as the new Roper Gulf Regional Council Technical Services Workshop nears completion.

The new workshop and offices are opposite the Palmer Street intersection with Chardon Street and half a block from the Roper Gulf Regional Council main office in Crawford Street.

The new buildings will provide smart and modern facilities and give Council a valuable new asset and substantial saving in leasing costs.

Council staff have begun relocating from their old Emungulan Road site and this is expected to be completed by the end of the January.
Out & About

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH

Sommer McIvor - Borroloola

Wet season pictures

From our CSMs
Out & About

Australia Day at Borroloola

Annalise Bowden and John Gray - First day on the job

Chief Minister Giles with the Borroloola Local Authority
Big Green clean up follows the rain in Beswick

Down came the rain and up came the grass. Beswick, the neat little town on the Central Arnhem Highway experienced a vegetation growth spurt. Christmas and New Year’s rain provided the perfect growing conditions for grass after a long dry season and the community nursery and everyone’s yards quickly started to look like real jungle. With the grass growing up almost around them the municipal team with the help of the Community Development Program (CDP) guys started the big mow of lawns and maintenance of the CDP nursery.

After a huge amount of lawn mowing the CDP participants then undertook servicing of all Council’s lawn mowers and whipper snippers. As well as learning useful mechanical maintenance skills the CDP guys have extended the life of these valuable tools with essential servicing… and there is still plenty of mowing and slashing ahead.

The CDP guys also weeded and prepared the nursery for planting of crops of fruit and vegies for the coming year.

The equipment servicing was done at the popular new Men’s shed opened last year.

CDP Men’s Shed Coordinator Justin Fuller, has done a great job keeping the shed moving and clean and tidy. He has also organised a new fridge, fans and a radio for the shed.

Local men of all ages are invited down to the shed to meet others and to share and learn new skills.

Bringing home the Bacon in Borroloola

Borroloola Council Services Manager Nathan McIvor smells like a pig!

Well recently he did.

On duty as the Council authorised animal management officer, he and some of his Muns crew were called to the local Caravan Park to remove a delinquent stray male pig that was making a nuisance of itself.

After the pig was finally captured it was relocated to a secure pen out of town.

The capture was not easy as Nathan explained.

“Dog poles do not work on pigs …brute strength and the ability to wrestle comes in handy… need I say… I smell like … a pig”.

The caravan park is calling for a return bout… a rumble in the Jungle that would surely bring a big audience. Next time they are calling for the pig to be greased.

Pigs like all domestic animals kept in town need to be securely and appropriately housed.

For more information on Animal Management and Dog Registration contact your local Council Office.
The continued operation of the swimming pools in the growth towns of Ngukurr and Borroloola are in doubt following a review by the Roper Gulf Regional Council.
A recent report to Council found both Pools to be financially unsustainable under current arrangements. If no new funding or partnerships can be arranged before June 2016 Council has resolved to cease operation of both pools.

Mayor Tony Jack said that the decision is necessary.
“Council does not take this lightly. Council does not actually own the pools and has been managing them on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and the Northern Land Council with no financial contributions. Our good will represents a cost shift to Local Government by both levels of government and the NLC. We recognise the importance of these pools for recreation, health and for aquatic safety education but swimming pools are notoriously expensive to operate and the ongoing maintenance and appropriate staffing cost are blowing out the budget in a way we cannot allow to continue”.

The Borroloola Pool is located on Education Department land and previously operated under an agreement with the Education Department. This recently expired. The MacArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust has contributed to the operation cost of the pool but has also indicated it will no longer support the pool operation.

“We have approached the Education Department to enter a new agreement but this will need to be cost positive or at least cost neutral to Council”. Mayor Jack added.

The Ngukurr Pool is also operating at a substantial loss and the NT and Australian Governments have been approached to provide on going assistance.

Our local schools have a clear interest in the continued operation of the pools and we have written to Minister of Education and Sport and Recreation seeking assistance. Otherwise we will have to cease operations in June this year”.

Mayor Jack said that Council has also approached local Indigenous Organisations seeking funding support and sponsorship.

“We are willing to talk about sponsorship including naming rights on what are high profile and important community facilities.” he said.
“ We are also looking at other sources of revenue for the pools such as user pays service fees in our rates policy or establishing retail activities. We will do all that is possible to avoid closing these pools but Council cannot continue to leak unsustainably large amounts of money operating them.”

Roper Gulf Regional Council is seeking input from the local communities on the future of their pools.
New data network brings improved speed and capacity

Roper Gulf Regional Council’s ten remote service centres and Katherine based offices will start to see vastly improved data based Telecommunications with the near completion of what Alex MacPherson, Roper Gulf’s IT Officer calls, “… The next big step forward in data networking for the Council…

This is in effect an entirely new network which will be larger, faster and cheaper to use. The new network will allow for more reliability in communications, less drop outs, simpler inter office call connections, video conferencing and other efficiencies. Better than what currently exists for much less,” he enthused.

“One of the benefits is that with this faster and larger capacity we can combine traditional voice type lines with data lines for a clearer and more reliable service and one which builds capacity for our expected growth in network demand.

It will also be cost saver. An example of this is where currently we have to dial a full phone number externally for site to site phone calls, with the new service this can be done as a four digit internal call. That is 100% saving on the cost that we currently pay for external calls”.

Until now video conferencing has not been used as it has been very unreliable and grainy but the new data network will greatly improve quality and reliability making it a technology that will be really useful across the huge distances between towns and reducing the need for long and expensive travel for often short meetings.

Numbulwar, Ngukurr, Manyallaluk, Mataranka and Crawford Street HQ are ready and just awaiting connection. Other offices will be connected in the new year after some equipment upgrades by Telstra.

The network upgrade has come as part of a renegotiated contract with Telstra, Roper Gulf’s telecommunications provider, under a Telstra All 4 Biz Plan which offers considerable benefits to Council.

“Once we are all connected we can start to realise the many benefits and cost savings that will come with this new network” Mr MacPherson said.

News in Brief

Roper Gulf Regional Council has also been awarded two new grants under the Northern Territory Department of Sport and Recreation, Facility and Capital Equipment Grants. These grants will allow for improvements to the Manyallaluk Basketball Court worth $14500 and $15800 to upgrade the playing surface of the Numbulwar Basketball Courts.

Basketball is a popular sport in both these communities and this will improve the safety and playing surfaces for users.
Tourism Australia has just announced that Australian actor Chris Hemsworth has been appointed as their Global Ambassador for their next campaign.

Chris spent a number of years growing up with his family in Bulman, our beautiful small town located about half way up the Central Arnhem Highway. (The Central Arnhem Highway is one of the great unsung adventure road trips in the top end and Bulman is the jewel in the middle. Chris and his brother would well remember the country around Bulman).

CEO Michael Berto has sent an invitation to Chris through Tourism NT to revisit Bulman when he next comes to the Northern Territory. Perhaps he can officially open the newly renovated Visiting Officers Quarters at Bulman which use to be his family home. He could cut the ribbon at the Valhalla room.

A rumble of thunder at Bulman

Applications are now being sought for Community projects within the Roper Gulf Region that will benefit:

- Local community events and activities
- Economic development
- The physical or natural environment

Applicants may apply for:

- Up to $1,000 for minor projects
- Up to $3,000 for major projects

Applications for Round Three Open: 01 February 2016
Closing date for all applications: COB (4:36pm) 18 March 2016

For application package please contact the Grants Coordinator on (08) 8972 9038 or email grants.ropergulf@ropergulf.nt.gov.au
Upcoming Meetings of Council and Local Authorities

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<tr>
<td>22 Feb</td>
<td>3:00pm</td>
<td>Manyallaluk Local Authority Meeting</td>
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All Local Authority and Ordinary Meetings of Council are open to the Public to attend.

Please Note: Local Authority Meetings are subject to change

Job Opportunities

For current jobs go to [www.ropergulf.nt.gov.au](http://www.ropergulf.nt.gov.au) or email recruitment@ropergulf.nt.gov.au

Contact Us

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**Roper Gulf Regional Council Reception**  
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Do you have a story to tell or a photograph to share?

Roper Gulf Regional Council would like to showcase your stories and photographs from our region. Residents and RGRC staff are invited to submit their articles and original photos to be considered for an upcoming edition of the RGRC Newsletter, RGRC Facebook Page and/or RGRC Website. Please submit your material to roper.governance@ropergulf.nt.gov.au or 08 8972 9000