Region celebrates Australia’s day

MATARANKA MADNESS: Deputy Mayor Judy MacFarlane improvises with a formal greeting as she accepts her Citizen of the Year award from Member for Arnhem Selena Uibo during Mataranka’s Australia Day celebration on January 26. Turn to page 6 to read the full story.

Council’s new vet keen to share health message

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BESWICK YOUTH HIT ROAD FOR MOVIE FUN: P3
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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
I would like to begin my first message of the year by congratulating all of the Council staff involved with coordinating Australia Day events in our communities on January 26.

It is a day that means something different to each of us, but it was pleasing to see our staff, residents and ratepayers uniting to celebrate what is special about being Australian.

While barbecues were a common theme, Ngukurr took an athletic approach to celebrations by hosting the first-ever Indigenous triathlon, which put the community in the national spotlight when the event was reported on by the ABC and 9 News.

I had the honour of spending Australia Day in Borroloola and presiding over the Council’s citizenship ceremony, at which a well-known couple became some of the Northern Territory’s newest Australians.

Congratulations to Municipal Pool Supervisor Mark Wakeling and his wife, Lesley, on making the decision to become citizens, and thank you to the Governance staff that flew out to Borroloola on the day to help the local team ensure the ceremony ran smoothly.

Local Authorities have started meeting for another year and will be again be a critical conduit between the Council and the communities it has been tasked with delivering services and programs in.

I urge everyone to attend at least one Local Authority Meeting in their community in 2017 to better understand how decisions are made – meeting dates are advertised in Council offices, on the website and via social media.

If you are interested in representing your community by being a member of a Local Authority, speak to your Area Manager or Senior Administration Support Officer to find out what is involved.

All the best

Hello readers

It is hard to believe that we are already one month into 2017.

I think I speak for everyone when I say that it is tremendous to see the Top End receiving its first proper wet season in several years.

In Katherine, we welcomed 451.2 millimetres of rain for the month, an incredible 370 per cent more than fell in the same period in 2016, while all of our communities also recorded impressive inundation – Borroloola had three days in January when more than two inches of rain (for those more comfortable using the old scale) filled the official gauge within 24 hours.

The rain has transformed the Council’s Local Government Area into 186,000 square kilometres of green landscapes and flowing waterways worthy of a postcard.

On a sombre note, the Northern Territory has already lost three lives this year as a result of people trying to cross flooded rivers, so I would like to echo the sentiment of the Northern Territory Police and say that if it is flooded, forget it.

The Finance Committee held its first meeting of the year on January 24, at which it resolved to accept a funding offer of more than $44,000 through the Department of Tourism and Culture’s 2016-17 Facility and Capital Equipment program.

This funding will be used to upgrade Borroloola’s Australian rules field – works which will involve the excavation of about 6500 square metres of topsoil – to provide the community’s future stars of the game a better stage on which to hone their craft.

It is the first of what I hope will be many successful grant applications that will allow the Council to improve infrastructure across the region in 2017.

With such a small ratepayer base, the Council relies on strong partnerships with the NT and Federal Governments to provide much of the funding for the infrastructure our remote communities rely on.

Until next time, stay safe.
Employees of the Month – January 2017

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

Headquarters – Munish Singla
Barunga – Jean Tiati
Beswick – Sarah Blanasi
Borroloola – Taryn Anderson
Bulman – Shaun Nugget
Eva Valley – Brandon Pamkal
Jilkminggan – Anne-Marie McDonald

Mataranka – Leanne Spencer
Ngukurr – Derek Wurramara
Numbulwar – Sylvana Wurramara

Congratulations to all of the winners

Cinema road trip reinforces anti-drug message

MOBILE FUN: Beswick youth can barely contain their enthusiasm after arriving at Katherine Cinema 3 for a Say No to Drugs event this month.

Popcorn was used to drive Monster Trucks at Katherine stopped at McDonald’s, home the message that it Cinema 3, the children where its excited is not cool to use drugs indulged in a nutritious passengers got their hands when 15 youth from lunch in the park and on a well-earned sundae. Beswick travelled to discussed how to say no to Katherine for a Say No to substance abuse. Drugs event on January 14.

Before the bus made the return trip to Beswick, it stopped at McDonald’s, where its excited passengers got their hands on a well-earned sundae. The Council’s Community Services Regional Manager, Annalisa Bowden, praised staff and volunteers for their efforts in getting the youth "It’s great to see the team taking this initiative and providing an alternative environment for the kids to discuss vital information," she said.
New vet outlines big plans for animal health

ANIMAL AMBITION: The Council’s new veterinarian, Dr Sam Phelan, has hit the ground running and says her long-term goal is to support the development of an animal management workforce within each community in the organisation’s Local Government Area.

Dr Sam Phelan is a veterinarian with a goal: to improve the health and welfare of companion animals and in communities in the Roper Gulf Region.

Dr Phelan began work with the Council this month and joined the organisation with an impressive record of animal health success within both the private and public sectors.

“I graduated from [the University of Sydney] in 1994, came to NT in 1998, and started my own business in 1999 conducting animal management programs in east and west Katherine regions, from Lajamanu across to Borroloola, I stopped bush work when I had my first baby at the end of 2003,” she said.

After that, Dr Phelan literally wrote the manual on animal management that is still used by environmental health workers today.

Dr Phelan explained the decision to head the Council’s animal health program had been easy.

“I love working bush, I love working with Indigenous people and I love the changes that can be created in an animal population with small-but-sustained input,” she explained.

“The difference two or three vet visits a year make to an animal population is just massive.”

Dr Phelan identified dog numbers as the biggest challenge in her new role.

“When houses are overcrowded, it doesn’t take too many dog owners in one house before you have a lot of dogs in that house,” she said.

She added that she believed “there is a real place” for Regional Councils to assist community residents to better manage their pets.

Dr Phelan also pointed out that “…when houses are overcrowded, it doesn’t take too many dog owners in one house before you have a lot of dogs in that house,” she said.

“The key is building relationships with owners.”

“...and the more you can do to help them, the better off they will be.”

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50,000km road trip to sell safety importance

CULTURE SHIFT: The Take 5 self-assessment handbook has helped the Council’s WHS team affect a dramatic shift in safety culture.

Keeping 400 staff and 1300 Community Development Program participants scattered across 186,000 square kilometres safe is a logistical problem that would be a nightmare for most organisations, but Roper Gulf Regional Council has overcome the challenge with innovation and the equivalent of one-and-a-quarter trips around the earth.

The Council’s Work, Health and Safety (WHS) team spent the past year tailoring the delivery of procedures and training programs to a culturally diverse workforce. The key procedural change had been the introduction of the Take 5 risk assessment booklet, which provides staff with a user-friendly tool for identifying potential hazards. The success of the approach can be measured by the fact that 2016 was the safest on record for the Council, a result highlighted by a milestone 100-day recordable injury free run and five months without an incident reported.

Face-to-face training was identified as the most effective way to drive home the WHS message, with driving the key word as the team clocked up more than 50,000 kilometres on some of the NT’s remotest roads in 12 months.

Read the full story about the Council’s record year for safety in 2016 on the website.

Borroloola is set to be the envy of communities across the Top End as the Council prepares to undertake a major upgrade of the Australian rules oval at the showground and sporting precinct.

The upgrade is being funded by the Northern Territory Government, which has provided $44,650 through its Facility and Capital Equipment Program. The grant offers a financial pathway for organisations to provide appropriate, affordable and accessible participation through infrastructure development. In a boost for players and spectators, the upgrade will include the excavation of approximately 6500 square metres of existing topsoil, site preparation, delivery of new topsoil to the remote community and a grade finish.

Mayor Tony Jack said the upgrade would give Borroloola’s future Australian rules stars a suitable surface on which to fine-tune their skills.

“It’s a great result for AFL in Borroloola,” he said. Works are due to be completed by March 2018.
New citizens welcomed

There are few similarities between the bustling streets of London and the unhurried pace of life in the remote Roper Gulf community of Borroloola, but it is a contrast that has been embraced by two of Australia’s newest citizens.

As part of Australia Day festivities in the community, the Council hosted a citizenship ceremony at which British ex-pats Mark and Lesley Wakeling pledged their commitment to their adopted home.

Mr Wakeling, who is the Council’s Pool Municipal Supervisor in Borroloola and former professional soccer coach, explained that obtaining citizenship had been the final step in a journey that began when the couple first arrived in Australia in 1999.

"For us, becoming citizens was about being in the right place to settle down and get it done, and now’s the time," he said.

"It was special becoming citizens out here in front of our friends.

"Citizenship kind of means that we belong now; this is our home now."

Mayor Tony Jack said Australia Day was an opportune time to unite communities, learn from the past and forge a sustainable future for every Australian.

"January 26 means something different to every person who calls this part of the Top End home, but I truly think it is a day that we should take advantage of to strengthen our resolve and open an honest dialogue to create a greater community, both at a local level and as a country," he said.

"On behalf of the Council, I’d like to congratulate Mark and Lesley on their decision, which is not one made lightly."

Read the full story about the ceremony on the website.
The Katherine School of the Air training centre was a hive of activity when 17 Council staff participated in a two-day first aid and CPR course this month.

The training was provided by Australian Red Cross and allowed staff to learn how to take control of an emergency situation to assess, treat and support victims in a range of circumstances.

Work, Health and Safety (WHS) adviser Renae Jarrett said it was positive to see so many staff keen to acquire or refresh their first aid qualification. “The more people Council can have trained how to provide first aid, the better, especially with the long distances staff have to travel as part of their roles,” she said. “The course has given them the skills and confidence to administer first aid, and potentially save a life if they are required to.”

The importance of carers in remote communities was recognised when Aged Care staff in Ngukurr held a barbecue and networking session to celebrate Carers Week on January 20.

Acting Aged Care Co-ordinator Ella Geia organised the event, which was attended by five community-based carers and 10 other participants, including Council staff. Twenty residents who rely on the Aged Care services in Ngukurr but were unable to attend the barbecue had meals delivered to their homes.

Funding for the event was provided by Carers NT and the Council’s Community Services Regional Manager, Annalisa Bowden, said the support meant those providing carer services in one of the most remote parts of the region had their efforts acknowledged.

“It was an excellent opportunity for community members to come together and raise awareness about their caring role,” Mrs Bowden said. “Participants and family members joined staff from the Aged Care and Disabilities program to swap stories and enjoy a meal.

“A big thank you has to go to Carers NT for their financial assistance with the barbecue - without it, it would not have been possible to celebrate the incredible job our carers in Ngukurr do every day.”
As part of its commitment to improving the liveability of its Local Government Area, the Council has made a submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Inquiry into Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Advocacy) Bill 2015.

Following the ABC’s decision to switch off its shortwave radio service on January 31, Mayor Tony Jack said the Council wanted to present a case to the Committee on why the move was detrimental to many Roper Gulf region residents.

“The decision to turn off the shortwave radio service represents another blow for the Council’s residents and staff, who already have to contend with substandard telecommunications options like hundreds of kilometres of radio and mobile telephone black spots, and appallingly slow internet speeds,” Mayor Jack said.

The Committee has until March 22 to report its findings.

The Council’s submission can be downloaded on the website.
Council announces 2017 vet visit dates

With this easy-to-read calendar, there is no reason to miss the Council's vet team visits to your community in 2017. Mark the dates in your diary to ensure your pet doesn't miss out on being wormed and a range of about the Council's animal health program, including health checks, worming, and treatments for ticks and scabies.

For more information, speak to the Council Services Co-ordinator in your community, or call 08 8972 9000.
Upcoming Meetings of Council and Local Authorities

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>22/02/2017</td>
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<td>3pm</td>
<td>Barunga Local Authority Meeting</td>
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ALL ORDINARY MEETINGS OF COUNCIL AND LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A Career with Roper Gulf Regional Council

The beauty of a career with Roper Gulf Regional Council is that there are a multitude of options available within the organisation, irrespective of your interests, skills or background.

No matter what career path you want to take, the Council has a job that will allow you to succeed in your own backyard, surrounded by your friends and family.

To view the latest job opportunities, visit ropergulf.nt.gov.au, or email recruitment@ropergulf.nt.gov.au.

Let us help you share your story

Roper Gulf Regional Council would like to showcase stories and photographs from across the region. Residents, ratepayers and Council staff are invited to submit their articles and original photos for consideration. Please send your material to roper.governance@ropergulf.nt.gov.au or call the Communications Co-ordinator on 0427 674 212.

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