



# NEWSLETTER

## CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2026

### Mr Brian Donnellan

The winner of this year's Citizen of the Year Award was born in Wongan Hills, and has been a key member of our community from a very young age. He is one of those people you will find "sprinklings of" all over Wongan Hills, making their mark with true community spirit, the constant ambition to make our town a better place to live and offering a helping hand wherever needed.

This person is known for having a particular passion for preserving our history through his love of storytelling and sharing of knowledge – a wonderful gift to share ensuring the past is not forgotten. He is not the type to boast, but more considers it a contribution to the community and serving that community well. This must be the reason he was nominated multiple times this year for this award!



Brian has been an engaged member of the Wongan Hills Community since his return from active service in the Australian Army, in August 1969.

He is a valued and valuable community member within the Wongan Ballidu Shire, and a man very deserving of the honour.

#### **Some of the details about his service within the Community.**

Brian joined the Volunteer Fire Brigade (now Fire & Rescue) in October 1969.

A Brigade he was honoured with life membership with due to his countless years of service and dedication. During his many years with the Brigade, Brian was Captain for almost 12 years as well as carrying out Foreman, Treasurer and Secretary roles before hanging up his hat.

During his service, he was instrumental in the acquisition of the Rescue Trailer, heavily involved in competition-winning running teams. He attended countless motor vehicle accidents/incidents, chemical spills and fires large and small. The Feed Mill fire is one such fire of note, Wongan made the news that day!

Brian was one of the many men who carted hay bales to raise funds to buy the bricks that built the current station. A station that was not only built to serve its community and provide an essential service but also to preserve the history and legacy of people like Brian. Brian ceased active duty in the Brigade in 1996 but remains a proud Life Member of that organisation. You'll still find him at the annual AGM honouring his life membership and trustee role.



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Brian was a long serving member and Secretary of Wongan Ballidu RSL, and represented this region on the State Executive Committee of RSL for several years. He instigated the link to The Quiet Lion Tour of the Burma Thai Railway and was heavily involved in fundraising, promoting and interviewing prospective young locals who wished to join the tour. Many (well over 30), young locals were enlightened from the trip and gained much from their talks with the POW's who also joined the tours.

Brian is an integral part of ANZAC Day Dawn Service observance. He is pleased that the Dawn Service tradition will carry on for years to come with the ANZAC Committee taking over where the RSL left off.

Brian has served the community as a Justice of the Peace for many years and continues to do so.

He has been a member of the Museum and Historical Society. In fact the Museum was the old Wongan Hills Hospital, and where he was born, just a few moons ago!

Brian and his wife Sylvia were very involved members of the Wongan Hills District High School P & C for many of their children's schooling days.

He served as a Shire Councillor for approximately two and a half terms from 1999 - 2005, and more recently, at the ripe age of 79 years young, there was a vacancy on council and he stepped in for a period of about 14 months or so. During his time on council he was involved in the creation of Gratton Heights Sub Division; instigated the development of the Wongan Hills Medical Centre, and more recently involved in the upgrade of the public toilets in town.







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While on council from 1990 - 2005, it was his wish to see the town pipe water from local dams and convert Wongan in to a green oasis. As with all things on any council, it takes time for things to come to fruition, and Wongan now is indeed green.

He was also a member of the Local Emergency Management Committee and served as Disaster Recovery Coordinator for some years.

Also a member of the Friends of the Cemetery Group, who were key to the upgrades at our Cemetery to the beautifully presented area that we see today.

An inaugural member of the WHATS Theatre Group, including such fine examples as "The Queen & The Duck", "Rome Sweet Rome" and "Mystery on the Orient Express".



Brian is a willing volunteer on many community projects; one such project was the Airport extension and lighting of the runway. An important resource for the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu and surrounding districts, particularly for the ability for RFDS planes being able to land.

Also, numerous Tidy Towns Events, which he participated in for many years with his wife and children.

In recent times he has been heavily involved in the evolution of the Men's Shed from a borrowed meeting place to the vibrant and well equipped Shed that now exists on Depot Road. A facility worthy of a special mention as it will be a sanctuary for many men, for many years to come, to love and enjoy. You'll often find him down at the Men's Shed where he currently wears the hat of Vice President. This is just one of the many roles he has committed to since he joined in 2011.



In a world often defined by individual pursuits, Brian stands as a beacon of community spirit, reminding us all of the transformative power of collective care and shared responsibility - and all the while, in doing so, he beams with pride.

**Congratulations Brian!**







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## YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2026

### Lesley Hasson

This years Young Citizen of the Year has been described as “the epitome of a team player, kind, patient, and always leading by example.”

That is a quality that is sure to grow, as this worthy winner establishes the true foundation of an invaluable community contributor.

Lesley is an exceptional young community member who gives her time, energy, and heart generously across multiple local organisations.

Within the Wongan Hills Netball Association, Lesley has been an active and valued member for several years, previously guiding our junior teams with skill, enthusiasm, and genuine care. This year, she has gone above and beyond, taking on the roles of Vice President, A Grade player-coach, and stepping in as Reserve coach whenever needed. These responsibilities often resulted in long and demanding days, yet Lesley's dedication never wavered. Her hard work and leadership were recognised when she was awarded A Grade Fairest and Best this season.





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Lesley's commitment was clearly evident as she ran coaching sessions with her 18-month-old by her side.

Before her years with netball, Lesley served as Head Coach of the Wongan Hills Swimming Club, volunteering countless hours to develop the next generation of swimmers. She devoted her time long before she had children of her own, driven purely by a desire to give back to her community.

Lesley has also led the Winter Sports Social Committee for several years, helping bring together our hockey, netball, and football clubs. Her leadership has fostered a strong and positive sporting culture and strengthened connections across all codes.

Last year, Lesley joined the Bike It to Ballidu (BITBG) committee as an observer, assisting with social media and offering fresh ideas. This year, she stepped up and now carries full committee responsibilities, a role that is almost year-round in its demands.

Her willingness to take this on, especially as a new mum, is a testament to her dedication and strong commitment to our community.

Lesley's energy, generosity, and selfless community spirit make her a true role model for young people. Through her commitment to sport, volunteering, and uplifting those around her, she continues to inspire others whilst embodying the qualities worthy of the Young Citizen of the Year Award.

***Congratulations Lesley!***







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## COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR 2026

### Wongan-Ballidu Seniors Recreation Centre

The Community Group of the Year has displayed how the collaboration, care, and commitment to improving the lives of others can have true meaning for those most special in our community. This Group was also nominated multiple times for this award!

From humble beginnings this amazing group of Wongan Hills residents has become a central and increasingly popular location within our town.

The Wongan-Ballidu Seniors Recreation Centre has become an invaluable part of our community since opening two years ago. Established to meet a significant need within the Shire for a dedicated and welcoming space for older residents, the Centre has quickly grown into a thriving hub of connection, activity, and support now with 89 active members.





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With a massive arrangement of activities available to cater for our aging population, this centre has proven to be outstanding, with guest speakers on health, lifestyle, topics of interests and general wellbeing. Frequent bus trips to various towns and locations are so popular that booking ahead is essential. These include luncheons at many venues and fun days out for all. Exercises classes are popular with gentle encouragement to strengthen health and lifestyle by encouraging the citizens to improve their outlook and quality of life by giving them confidence to reach out and explore new boundaries. Bingo and Mahjong are highlights as are quiz days and arts and craft classes.

These events allow members to explore the region, form new friendships, and stay engaged with life beyond their homes.

The centre is open a minimum of four days a week, which provides a consistent and friendly environment for seniors to socialise, stay active, and feel part of the community.

The weekly exercise classes run by a qualified physiotherapist have been especially popular, helping members maintain mobility, balance, and overall wellbeing.

The Centre's greatest achievement lies in how it has addressed social isolation among seniors. This is an issue that is increasingly recognised as a serious challenge within regional communities and this facility has become a vibrant hub for our important senior community. The centre encourages people to stop by for a cuppa and a chat any time and enjoy the beautiful comfort and hospitality provided by the hard-working committee.







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Through its inclusive, volunteer-driven approach, the Centre has built a true sense of belonging and purpose for local seniors, strengthening the fabric of the entire Wongan-Ballidu community. here is no limit to the options provided by this group and the topics discussed. The importance of the carers is also highlighted within this group to recognize the amazing roll they quietly play in caring for family members.

This hardworking group has turned an idea into a vibrant and necessary centre in the Wongan Hills Community despite the opinion that it would not work. It is noted how busy the car park always is which proves the success, necessity for and importance of the group within our community and we are so lucky to have locals who had the insight and courage to conceive such an important centre for now & the future.

The Wongan-Ballidu Seniors Recreation Centre is a group truly deserving of the Community Group of the Year for the outstanding achievements for our seniors and for creating a welcoming, friendly space that everyone who attends loves.

***Congratulations to the Wongan Ballidu Seniors Recreation Centre!***





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## COMMUNITY EVENT OF THE YEAR 2026

### Boekeman Machinery Case IH Bike it to Ballidu Gravel 2025

This years Community Event of the Year will come as no surprise to many, as it has grown from a simple fundraising challenge into the weekend masterpiece it is now!

It is a true credit to all who have been involved and is sure to further grow from strength to strength in the coming years.

The Boekeman Machinery Case IH Bike it to Ballidu Gravel 2025 is a shining example of grassroots ambition and how a small rural community can deliver an event of state-level significance through passion, teamwork and genuine country hospitality.

What began in 1999 as a school fundraiser has evolved, through community dedication and a partnership with WestCycle, into a full-scale gravel cycling festival that attracts hundreds of riders and visitors from across Western Australia.







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The 2025 event was the biggest yet, with record cyclist numbers and a vibrant event village that buzzed from 8am to 6pm. For one remarkable day, the town of around 40-50 locals hosts a crowd over ten times its population, providing food, entertainment, and heartfelt country hospitality. The festival offers several gravel ride distances, catering to families, recreational riders, and competitive athletes alike, ensuring it is inclusive, safe, and professionally run. Combined with live music, novelty challenges, local produce and camping it truly is a wholesome event.

This year's event brought unprecedented economic and social benefits to Ballidu and the wider Wongan-Ballidu Shire; boosting local business trade, showcasing the region's beauty and gravel trails, and building long-term tourism interest for the Shire. The event's partnership with WestCycle and local sponsors (Boekeman Machinery and Case IH) reflects professional collaboration and excellence.

Beyond the numbers, Bike it to Ballidu Gravel 2025 represents the spirit of rural Western Australia: innovation, volunteerism, and community pride.

The event unites the entire town and surrounding region, celebrating the Wheatbelt's people, landscape, and hospitality. It truly embodies what the Community Event of the Year Award celebrates.

## **Some notable points;**

- Hosted by 40-50 local volunteers and the Ballidu Progress Group.
- In Partnership with WestCycle, Boekeman Machinery, and Case IH.
- Winner of SportWest Community Sport Event of the Year in WA, reflecting state-level recognition of quality and impact.
- Draws riders and visitors from Perth and regional WA, strengthening local tourism.
- Demonstrates exceptional community collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity.

***Congratulations to Bike it to Ballidu Gravel!***







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## CHRISTMAS LIGHT COMPETITION WINNERS

As part of our Australia Day celebrations, we were delighted to announce the winners of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu Christmas Light Competition.

### Wongan Hills – Best House

**1st Place:** Chantelle Wood & Scott Baines

**2nd Place:** Amanda Beerkens

**3rd Place:** Amelia Bendotti & Dillan Elliott

**Ballidu Best Business or Public Place:** Ballidu Progress Group for Alpha Park

**Ballidu – Best House:** Joy Leete

A huge thank you to everyone who entered and helped spread some festive cheer across our communities. Your creativity and effort made the season extra special!







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## AUSTRALIA DAY POOL PARTY

This year's Australia Day celebrations at the Wongan Hills Swimming Pool brought the community together for a relaxed afternoon of sunshine, laughter and plenty of poolside fun.

With families, friends and neighbours gathering to cool off and enjoy the day, the pool quickly filled with smiling faces, lively conversations and kids making the most of the inflatables and water activities. It was wonderful to see so many people connecting and celebrating together in such a welcoming atmosphere.

Thanks to funding support from the National Australia Day Council, the event offered a free and accessible day out for the whole community.

A big thank you to the Wongan Hills Swimming Club for cooking up a fantastic BBQ, keeping everyone well fed throughout the afternoon, and to DJ David Dew for providing the soundtrack that kept the energy high. We also appreciate Julie Lynn Creative Co for capturing the day through photos, along with everyone who helped behind the scenes to make the event run smoothly.

We were pleased to welcome CEO Sam Dolzadelli and Cr Sue Starceвич to join the celebrations and share in the community spirit.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the day such a memorable one.







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## AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ BREAKFAST

The Shire of Wongan-Ballidu's Australia Day BBQ Breakfast was a wonderful celebration of community spirit, bringing together friends, families, and neighbours to mark this special occasion.

In Wongan Hills, 146 attendees gathered at the Community Park for a delicious breakfast, kindly organised by Apex, with help from Rotary and the CWA.

Cr Sue Starcevich welcomed the crowd, presented the Community Service Awards to the 2026 recipients in attendance, and announced the winners of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu 2025 Christmas Light Competition.

Over in Ballidu, 29 attendees joined the breakfast at Alpha Park, hosted by the Ballidu Progress Group, where Cr Shaun Kalajzic presented the Community Service Awards to the 2026 recipients in attendance, and announced the winners of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu 2025 Christmas Light Competition.







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## NEW EMERGENCY GRAB BAG MAGNETS!

Our new Emergency Grab Bag magnets are designed to be placed on your fridge and act as a quick reminder of what to grab in an emergency. Whether that's a bushfire, storm, power outage, or another unexpected event where you need to be prepared to leave, or actually evacuate your home.

### What is it?

A simple, easy-to-read checklist magnet that helps you remember the essentials to take if you need to leave quickly, as well as some blank lines to write in specific things for your situation. There's also a QR code you can snap with your phone and it'll take you directly to the Emergency.wa website for the latest alerts and warnings.

### Why it matters?

In emergencies, stress and time pressure make it easy to forget important items. Having this magnet visible within your home helps you stay organised and prepared when it matters most. It's designed to be utilised by residents from all walks of life, so everyone in our community can be as prepared for disasters as can be!

These magnets are available at the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu and Wongan Hill CRC Customer Service Centre, and the Wongan Hills Post Office.



## STRATEGIC PLANNING OUTCOME ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent community engagement sessions and survey for the Strategic Community Plan (SCP) and Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) review. Your feedback has helped shape the priorities and direction for the future of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu.

We now invite community members to attend a follow-up session to hear the outcomes of your input and learn more about the strategic direction of the Shire for the coming years, presented by our consultants.

**Wednesday 18th February**  
**5.30pm start**  
**CRC Function Room**

We hope to see you there as we share what we heard and where we're heading next.

## Strategic Planning Outcome Engagement Session

**Strategic Community Plan  
and  
Disability Access and Inclusion Plan**

**Wednesday 18th February**  
**5.30pm start**  
**CRC Function Room**





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Eligible kids can now get a **maximum of a 3 month pass** at participating regional pools through KidSport!

Find out if your child is eligible and where it's offered

[cits.wa.gov.au/regional-pools](http://cits.wa.gov.au/regional-pools)



## KIDSPORT

## FREE KIDSPORT POOL PASS NOW AVAILABLE

Is your child between the ages of 5-18 and holds a valid health care or pensioner concession card?

Head to the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu and Wongan Hills CRC Customer Service Centre to apply and grab your FREE KidSport Pool Pass for the Wongan Hills Memorial Swimming Pool which is now available.

**Please bring your valid concession card.**

Any questions, please feel free to call us on 9671 2500.



## HARVEST BAN SMS SERVICE

[www.wongan.wa.gov.au](http://www.wongan.wa.gov.au) to sign up now!  
Or visit the Shire of Wongan Ballidu Customer Service Centre

## CURRENT ROADWORKS



**CONSTRUCTION CREW** – Dowerin Kalannie Road Reconstruction.



**BACKHOE CREW** – Dowerin Kalannie Road Reconstruction and Various Jobs Wongan Townsite.



**MAINTENANCE GRADERS** –  
Area 1: Maintenance Grading Craig Road, White Wells Road And Bus Routes.

Area 2: Bus Routes. Drains, Backslopes And Offshoots On Bitumen Road Network.



**TOWN MAINTENANCE** – Various Locations Street Tree Pruning, Seal Repairs And Sign Maintenance.

**All Above Worksites Will Be Under The Direction Of Traffic Management.**



## UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

### Annual General Meeting of Electors

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February - 6pm - Wongan Hills CRC Function Room.

## STAY IN TOUCH

☎ 08 9671 2500

🌐 [www.wongan.wa.gov.au](http://www.wongan.wa.gov.au)

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