Honouring our local champions

The Bland Shire community will once again gather in its masses to honour some of the outstanding groups and individuals in our community at the Australia Day breakfast and awards at McCann Park on January 26.

In accordance with local tradition, the West Wyalong Lions Club will cook up a traditional Australian breakfast from 7am before the official proceedings and presentation of awards commences at 8am. Official Australia Day awards will be presented for Citizen of the Year, Community Event of the Year, Community Group of the Year, Achievement in Sport and Contribution to Sport. Bland Shire Mayor Neil Pokoney also hinted at some potential surprise new awards and presentations this year. Limited seating will be provided but to ensure a seat people are encouraged to bring along their own chair.

In the event of inclement weather the breakfast and presentation of awards will be held at the West Wyalong High School MPU. A series of Australia Day activities are also planned in the Bland Shire’s villages.

More information about Australia Day in the Bland Shire is available on Council’s website or by contacting Bland Shire Council on 6972 2266.

Free taste of the bush on Australia Day

Patrons at the Bland Shire Australia Day breakfast in McCann Park will be treated to a free bush tucker tasting. Bland Shire Council has partnered with the West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council to provide a contemporary bush tucker tasting experience. Community members are encouraged to come forward and try some of the tastes of the bush on offer including quandong jam, bush tomato relish, passionberry and fig jam and wattleseed and lemon myrtle muffins personally prepared by members of the Land Council.

Patrons are assured a tasty Australian treat to perfectly complement the famous breakfast being prepared by the West Wyalong Lions Club. The introduction of bush tucker tasting to the Australia Day program is an initiative of Council’s Indigenous Advisory Committee, which comprises joint representation from Bland Shire Council and the Land Council. For those who want to try some locally sourced bush tucker food at home, following is a recipe for making Quandong paste.

QUANDONG PASTE

Ingredients
100 grams dried quandong
400 grams of sugar
Juice of one lime

Cover the quandong with water and soak for a minimum of one hour.

Cook until tender (about 30 minutes) and strain.
Puree the fruit and place in a pot with sugar and lime juice.
Cook for approx half an hour until all the sugar has dissolved and the mixture has thickened.
Then pour into moulds and allow to cool before covering.
You may have noticed if you have travelled the Newell and Mid-Western Highways recently the clearing and trimming of trees that has occurred. This was carried out to provide a wider safety zone for motorists who may accidently veer off these roads due to fatigue, or trying to avoid a collision. Other similar clearing work is currently occurring across from the West Wyalong Golf Club, where a dangerous T-section is being replaced with a gradual curve and new exit to Tallimba Road. Before Roads and Maritime Services (RMS - formerly RTA) carry out this type of work, extensive environmental studies of the area are carried out to ensure minimal harm to native plants and animals. As a result, the RMS is conducting various environmental initiatives. One of these initiatives is the erection of nesting boxes in large numbers to compensate for any loss of nesting sites. These boxes are being built in five sizes to allow for different sized birds and bats. They have been placed out ahead of nesting season to allow birds time to investigate and get used to them. An indication of the density of nesting boxes is that 1250 have been installed between Tocumwal to West Wyalong on the Newell alone. More are installed along the Mid Western Highway and even Belarwi Road. Other environmental initiatives include leaving behind fallen timber for native habitat, chipping, shredding and mulching to maintain ground cover, and erosion controls.
Appreciation for our paramedics

West Wyalong’s paramedics have been honoured for their life saving dedication to the Bland Shire community.

At a special ceremony conducted at the West Wyalong Ambulance Station, Bland Shire Mayor Neil Pokoney presented local paramedics with a series of signed and framed honour boards containing personalised messages of thanks from members of the community.

Mayor Pokoney said while the paramedics are professionals, it is their extra care, compassion and dedication to the community which inspired people to contribute to the honour boards.

The boards were collated by Council on behalf of the community and include some heartfelt personal messages of thanks and gratitude from users of the service and their families.

Mayor Pokoney said local families with a loved one being transported by ambulance are comforted by the high levels of skill, care and compassion of the local paramedics. He also acknowledged the many personal sacrifices each of the officers go through to care for the Bland Shire community in a challenging environment.

“It is greatly appreciated and we are truly fortunate to have such dedicated and compassionate officers living and working within our community,” Mayor Pokoney said.

“This is a small token of thanks on behalf of the community for the wonderful work you do.”

The presentation was also attended by representatives of local schools, who thanked the paramedics for the work they do both within the schools and the wider community.

The honour boards were accepted on behalf of the West Wyalong paramedics by the typically humble Station Officer, Mal Croucher, who reinforced the passion and commitment of each of the paramedics to serving the Bland Shire community.

The presentation to the paramedics follows a similar ceremony recognising the dedication of local nurses a couple of years previously. It was resolved by Council’s Health and Wellbeing Committee to acknowledge the contribution of our ambulance services in the same way.

Committee chair Dot Smith said it was a wonderful opportunity for the community to say thank you for the outstanding service which has been provided over the years.

Barmedman revs up

Bland Shire Council has approved a donation of $6400 for the Barmedman Modified Tractor Pull Association.

The money will be used for earthworks to prepare the grounds for the 2013 Tractor Pull on March 2.

It is envisaged that the works will provide long term benefits which will help secure the future of the Tractor Pull for many years to come.

After wet weather forced the cancellation of the event over the last couple of years, excitement in Barmedman is at fever pitch.

Up to 2000 people are expected to attend.
Plantings completed at wetlands

Bland Shire Council recently planted 5100 wetland plants at the Cooinda Wetlands. Completion of the major planting project marks another exciting step forward for the Wetlands project, which is set to become a major local attraction. The wetland plants will provide habitat for populations of aquatic invertebrates which will in turn provide a valuable food resource encouraging other wetland fauna to the area. The sedges and rushes are part of an overall revegetation plan for the wetland with species including Juncus, Carex and Schoenoplectus. Council also has plans to release fish in the area in the future.

Olympian appointed Australia Day Ambassador

The leader of Australia’s famous “Mean Machine” Olympic gold medal winning swimming relay team, Mark Tonelli, has been appointed as the Bland Shire’s Australia Day Ambassador. Mr Tonelli swam the crucial butterfly leg and was the nominal leader of the Mean Machine quartet, also comprising backstroker Mark Kerry, breaststroker Peter Evans and freestyler Neil Brooks, which created history and caused a legendary upset by winning gold at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Mr Tonelli will share the remarkable story of his colourful life and swimming career when he visits the Bland Shire on Australia Day. His visit will coincide with the opening day of competition at the New South Wales Country Regional Swimming championships being held at West Wyalong’s refurbished Holland Park pool. His official duties will include an Australia Day Ambassador’s address at the Bland Shire Australia Day breakfast in McCann Park, a visit to the swimming carnival and appearance and address at Mirrool’s Australia Day celebrations during the evening.

Far from your average Olympian, Mr Tonelli has a remarkable story to tell surrounding selection dramas, boycotts, expulsion from the Australian team, Olympic and Commonwealth Games glory and a post swimming career almost as dramatic. The 4 × 100 metre medley relay was the focal point of Mr Tonelli’s Moscow Olympic campaign where Australia was ranked seventh of the competing countries and given no chance of winning the gold. Mr Tonelli swam the butterfly leg, despite having never competed internationally in that discipline, and in his role as team leader plotted one of the great upsets in Olympic history. Mr Tonelli smashed his personal best by almost two seconds to swim a butterfly leg which set his team on course for a famous victory during which Norman May’s famous catch cry “Gold, Gold, Gold” was first coined.

Mr Tonelli retired from swimming after the Moscow Olympics and moved into swimming commentary, coaching, motivational speaking, broadcasting and real estate. He is currently the swimming analyst for Sky News Australia.