

Edition #5 LOCAL LEGENDS

December 2020



Dr Joe McGirr MP

INDEPENDENT MEMBER
FOR WAGGA WAGGA



*Artwork representing the electorate
by Owen Lyons hanging in the office*



WHAT'S INSIDE:

A celebration of five local legends | Electorate Wrap Up |
Christmas cracker jokes | Kids colouring in competition





INTRODUCTION

This has been a year of unprecedented challenges, but our communities have shown extraordinary strength and resilience.

After years of drought, summer brought devastating bushfires and then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the people of the Wagga Wagga electorate have adapted and coped.

Despite the challenges our community has continued to work hard, with people striving to make positive contributions notwithstanding the impact of the pandemic and subsequent shutdowns.

I acknowledge the distress and suffering that this year has brought to many in the community. Thank you to everyone – together we have managed and as 2020 draws to a close and we reflect on the year, we should try to look forward with optimism to 2021.

GET IN TOUCH

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I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Owners of this land. I would also like to pay respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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DENISE GARNER

In the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, Denise Garner has been at the forefront of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the MLHD's disaster co-ordinator, Denise's focus has not only been on the pandemic, but also on preparing the community to meet other emergencies that might happen.

Preventing and containing a pandemic requires a team response, so in addition to managing the emergency response for the 32 health facilities across the MLHD, Denise has been working with agencies including the police, ambulance, emergency services and neighbouring Albury-Wodonga Health.

Denise is also a local administrator for the Australian Medical Assistant Teams database. Most recently she deployed a staff member to Wuhan, China, to help repatriate Australians, and another to Darwin to meet Diamond Princess passengers from Japan and care for them during their two weeks of quarantine.

Despite the challenges this year has presented her professionally, Denise has still managed to find a little time to explore the region on her motorcycle, while still remaining COVID-safe of course.





DARRYL WATKINS

As the devastating Dunns Road bushfire burned closer to Batlow on January 4 this year, the town was declared “undefendable” and residents were urged to leave.

Despite the grim warning, the brave members of the Batlow Rural Fire Service and many volunteers were determined to stand firm and do what they could to defend their community.

Under captain Darryl Watkins, around 20 RFS members were joined in their Herculean effort by about 30 or so local residents and they saved much of Batlow.

Mr Watkins says the firefighters weren’t sure just how much they could save, but everyone simply “got in and did their job”.

And, most importantly according to Mr Watkins, no one was hurt.

There were losses of homes, property and businesses, including the old hospital and the petrol station, but Mr Watkins says the community is focusing on recovery and renewal.



DEB BEWICK

For Deb Bewick, 2020 has been about trying to maintain community connections.

The president of both the Uranquinty Progress Association and the Wagga Autism Support Group says the year has presented many challenges, particularly in light of the COVID-19 social restrictions. For families on an autism journey, the year has been about trying to maintain routine while facing possible shutdowns of support facilities and the added challenges not only of homeschooling, but also then returning to school again.

Deb hopes 2021 will continue to see a relaxing of restrictions and a renewal of those important community connections.

These connections are also important to Deb in her role as president of the Uranquinty Progress Association.

There has been, Deb says, a “lot of creative thinking and a lot of creative people doing things” as the community continues trying to stay connected in a socially distanced time.





OWEN LYONS

Wiradjuri artist Owen Lyons has found himself busier than ever in 2020.

Mr Lyons – whose work hangs in the Baylis Street electorate office - has just been selected to create a new work for inclusion in the Wagga Base Hospital redevelopment project. He will focus on the Cultural Courtyard on the ground floor of the new multi-storey Stage Three building and team up with another local artist, Rachel Viski, to develop art work for other parts of the building.

But as he continues to use his life experiences as inspiration for his vibrant canvases, Mr Lyons admits to worrying about how the community is coping with the pandemic.

Mr Lyons was introduced to the Aboriginal art style by his father and continued to develop his style alongside his older brother, but he says that undergoing a kidney transplant in 2015 and watching his only son deal with challenges of his own have had a profound impact on his development as an artist.



KAREN MURRAY

As Karen Murray watched coverage of the January bushfires, she wanted to do something to help.

Acknowledging that she didn't have the skills to help actually fight the fires, Karen eventually decided to help by collecting and sorting donations.

Karen was able to use Kildare Catholic College, where she works, as a drop-off point for what she had expected to be a modest amount of donations.

Instead, there was a huge reaction and Karen pays tribute to both the people who took the time to donate and the massive number of volunteers – at least 120 in all – who helped to sort, package and distribute the donated items, which went both to those affected by the fires and those fighting them.

Karen, who is also a volunteer at Ronald McDonald House, says it was a huge community effort, made possible by the kindness of hundreds of people from across the Wagga Wagga region, who either answered the call for donations or gave up their time to help.



ELECTORATE WRAP-UP

What an unprecedented year 2020 has been. From drought to bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, the electorate of Wagga Wagga has been impacted by some extraordinarily challenging events and will continue to feel the effects for many years to come.

But like the new shoots appearing on fire-ravaged trees, communities and businesses have demonstrated their resilience and determination to renew. We have seen residents of the Snowy Valleys begin their work to rebuild and have watched the ingenuity and determination of business owners who have had to adapt to lockdowns, restrictions and border closures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

I remain impressed by the diligence and dedication of so many in our community.

Across the electorate, work has continued on a range of projects despite the challenges presented by the year.

We have watched as the scaffolding has been gradually removed and the new ambulatory care building at Wagga Base Hospital has been revealed, as the \$431 million redevelopment project continues.

Work is also underway on the \$50 million redevelopment of the Tumut Hospital.

Wagga Wagga's newest public school – in the northern suburb of Estella – is taking shape and is expected to welcome its first students for term one, 2021.

The Eunony Bridge was reopened in September after a seven-month \$10.6 million upgrade.

I am continuing to work with residents of Lockhart, Kyeamba, Yaven Creek, Adjungbilly and surrounding areas, whose properties are likely to be affected by the development of the EnergyConnect project. I have met with residents, senior staff of TransGrid and the Minister for Energy, Matt Kean. I will continue working to ensure there is meaningful consultation with the people affected by this project.



Work has begun on Wagga's Multi-Sport Cycling Complex. The \$9.2 million undertaking will have mountain bike and running paths, a BMX track, cycling education area, mountain bike playground, a velodrome as well as upgraded car parking and barbecues.

In October, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Paul Toole announced a roundabout would be built at the intersection of the Gocup Road and Snowy Mountains Highway.

Following the Batlow Recovery Forum I held with Kristy McBain (Federal Member for Eden-Monaro), Resilience NSW hosted a Batlow Next Steps forum in November and there was a great attendance and energy at this event. I look forward to continuing to work with all our fire-affected communities on the road to renewal.

Throughout the year I have continued to meet with constituents to hear their concerns and to advocate for them. I look forward to continuing to work with the community in 2021.

AUTHORISED BY JOE MCGIRR MP, INDEPENDENT, 64 Baylis Street, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650. **PRINTED BY CHAMBERS WHYTE DESIGN AND PRINT**, 5 Rabaul Place, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650 using parliamentary entitlements November 2020.



Kerin and I were thrilled to welcome our first granddaughter Rachel to the world this year. From our family to yours, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

HOLIDAY HOURS:

Dr Joe McGirr's office will **close** on Friday, 25 December 2020 and **reopen** on Monday, 11 January 2021

COLOURING IN COMPETITION

Merry
Christmas

Cut here ✂

Name _____

Age _____

Phone _____

Please drop in your entry to my office
at 64 Baylis Street Wagga Wagga or email
to waggawagga@parliament.nsw.gov.au
by Monday 21 December.



Cut along the dotted lines and use at your Christmas dinner table

Q: When does a joke become a dad joke?

A: When it becomes apparent!

In Greek mythology, Chiron was not only half man half horse, he was also a doctor of medicine. That made him the Centaur for Disease Control.

Q: What did the bee say to the flower?

A: Hi honey!

My friend composes songs about sewing machines. He's a Singer songwriter, or sew it seams.

Q: What did the grape say after the elephant stood on it?

A: Nothing. It just gave out a little w(h)ine.

Scientists have recently recorded the sound of two helium atoms laughing. HeHe

Q: What do you call a line of rabbits hopping backwards?

A: A receding hairline

When I moved into my new igloo, my friends threw me a housewarming party. Now I don't have a house

Q: What happened to the guy who invented door knocking?

A: He wone the NoBell prize!

Back in his day, Samuel Morse was a dashing young man.

Q: Why did the tomato blush?

A: It saw the salad dressing

The patron saint of copying people in on an email is Saint Francis of a CC

Cut here