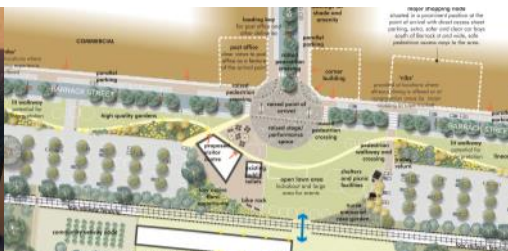


SHIRE OF MERREDIN COMMUNITY NEWS & INFORMATION



New shelter & panels display history of Merredin

You might have noticed a new addition to the Visitor Centre lawn in the Merredin town centre in recent months!

In response to community consultation and feedback, Shire staff embarked on a project to rebuild the shelter and include some panels to interpret and display key themes from Merredin's history.

The first panel features local Njaki Njaki Aboriginal history and 'Welcome to Country', as well as a timeline of Merredin's history and development from 1836 to 2011.

The second depicts the history through the key subheadings of Military, Financial Institutions, Religion, Early Merredin, Extreme Weather and Rainfall, Agriculture & Population.

The third provides visitor information on how to Escape, Explore, Experience and Enjoy the sites and attractions of Merredin.

"Community members have been coming and telling us how great it is to see a snapshot of Merredin's history all in one place," said Robyn McCarthy, Manager of the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre.

"They have also been asking for an accompanying brochure or booklet to go with the panels. This would be a great addition in the future."

The Shire would like to thank Anita Metcalf for researching the timeline of Merredin, Carina Macdonald for compiling historical information, Michelle Marks for the design concept and Royalties for Regions for supporting the project.

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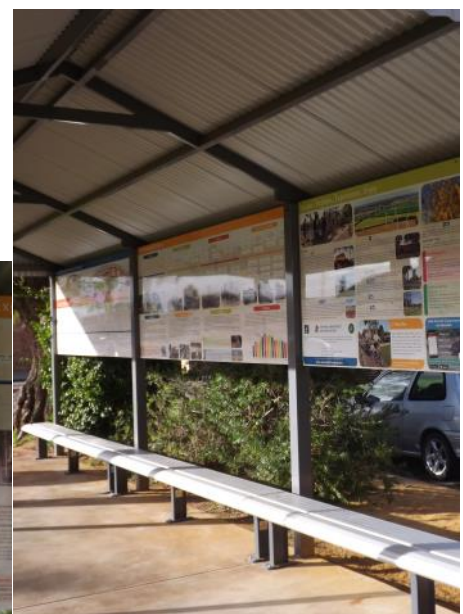
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September Council Meeting

The next Ordinary Council Meeting will be held at the Shire Administration Building, in Council Chambers, on Tuesday 19 September 2017 and will commence at 3:00pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend. The Agenda will be available to view on Council's website on Monday 18 September 2017.

Q&A: Management of the Rec Centre

Who are Belgravia Leisure?

Belgravia Leisure is a company that manages leisure facilities right across Australia and New Zealand. They have extensive experience in managing everything from swimming pools to golf courses to ski resorts - and community recreation centres like ours. You can learn more about them at www.belgravialeisure.com.au

What is the arrangement with Belgravia Leisure?

Council pays Belgravia Leisure a management fee to run the Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre ("Rec Centre") for us.

This means they are responsible for the day to day operation of things - the hiring and firing, centre maintenance, planning and implementing programmes, liaising with sporting clubs, etc.

How did the decision to outsource the management of the Rec Centre come to be made?

We've had a good crack at managing the Rec Centre ourselves and we haven't done it as successfully as we feel the Merredin community deserves. We've struggled with a high staff turnover and had difficulty getting and keeping good managers of the facility.

It's not a new idea. We put it out there in surveys and consultation groups and we've talked to the Sports Council about different ideas including management of the centre by the Sports Council. The offer to the Sports Council was declined.

Belgravia has a two-year contract with us. When that two year period comes to an end, Council will have to decide whether to take back the management of the facility, reappoint Belgravia, or take another path entirely. The decision will partly take into account whether Belgravia can reduce the deficit, but even if it costs a little more for them to run it than we could run it ourselves, if they can do a better job of running the Rec Centre for the community then the cost may be deemed to be worth it.

This does not, as has been expressed by some on social media, give Belgravia a blank cheque or a bottomless pit of money to do whatever they like - that would certainly be the quickest way to ensure their contract would not be renewed. Any major initiatives they wish to undertake which involves significant cost or works has to go back to Council. And neither do Belgravia make any profits which are directed elsewhere from the Rec Centre.

Why Belgravia?

We've had conversations with a number of organisations about managing the Rec Centre, but when given the opportunity to tender for it, the only submission we received was from Belgravia Leisure. Their submission ticked all the boxes, and Council voted to appoint them for a fixed 2-year period. Their whole reason for existing is to make leisure centres run well. They have a national network of experience, knowledge and resources to draw from which we simply don't have. It made sense.

So what's the story with the proposed gym then?

One of the ideas that Belgravia has proposed is a 24 hour access gym as part of the Rec Centre. They believe it will help reduce the

deficit of running the centre, and add value for the sports clubs and casual users.

It has been said on social media that any profits from a gym at the Rec Centre will go to Melbourne. This is not true - Council are paying Belgravia a fixed fee, whether or not the gym goes ahead.

Belgravia do not pocket any profits from the gym (or the bar, or programmes, for that matter). Any profits from the gym (or the bar) at the Rec Centre go back into reducing the annual operating deficit and supporting the Rec Centre. All profits from any initiative at the Rec Centre reduce the cost of the facility to the ratepayer.

But there's already a gym in town. Surely the town doesn't need a second gym?

We weren't altogether convinced either. That's why Council decided at the December 2016 Council meeting that Belgravia should be required to prepare a business case giving reasonable evidence for the viability of a gym at the Rec Centre. They did so, and it was presented at the May 2016 Council meeting.

On the basis of the business case, Council made the following resolution:

81978 That:

1. the proposal for Belgravia Leisure to develop a 24/7 access gymnasium in the Early Childhood Room at the Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre be approved in principle but its commencement be deferred until the agreement with Belgravia Leisure is extended, should it be extended; and

2. Belgravia Leisure be permitted to undertake the proposal in its own right prior to the expiry of the current agreement, should it wish to do so, on terms and conditions to be determined.

What that means is that Belgravia does not have Council's blessing to install a gym within the current 2-year contract at ratepayer's expense. If it's so central to Belgravia's successful management of the centre that they want to go ahead and do it anyway without Council's green light, they have to do it entirely out of their own pocket, and if their contract is not subsequently renewed, they are responsible for the ongoing equipment lease costs.

Belgravia's business case for a gym at the Rec Centre involves a 5-year lease of gym equipment rather than outright purchase of it. Council's resolution ensures that there is no cost or financial risk to the ratepayer in the event that Belgravia's contract is not renewed.

And what if the contract is renewed?

It's an agreement *in principle* - it's still not carte blanche to go ahead and do it. If the contract is renewed and Belgravia still want to go ahead with the gym, they have to go back to Council and get them to agree to it again.

This information is provided to clear up any misconceptions about what is going on at the Rec Centre. If you have any queries please feel free, in fact you are encouraged, to contact either Belgravia Leisure, Councillors or Shire Management.

2017 Pioneers' Pathway Photo Comp

The Pioneers Pathway is a 314km self-drive trail between Toodyay and Merredin. The route is an alternative to the Great Eastern Highway and follows the original song lines the Aboriginal people have used for tens of thousands of years and more recently the European exploration and eventual agricultural settlement and pathway to the Coolgardie Goldfields gold rush.

Today, this route leads visitors on an interpreted journey following in the footsteps of the Aboriginal and early pioneers through the Wheatbelt regional communities of Toodyay, Goomalling, Dowerin, Wyalkatchem, Trayning, Nungarin and Merredin.

The Pioneers' Pathway Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the Shire of Merredin, invite you to enter the 2017 Pioneers' Pathway Photo Competition. A first prize of \$100 and two second prizes of \$50 are up for grabs, and your images may be purchased by the Shire.

Could you be our next Councillor?

Have you ever wondered why Councillors make the decisions they do (or thought you could do it better?) Have you ever wanted to play a role in making the shire a better place to live?

You might be one of our next Councillors!

Nominations open on 7 September 2017, and close at 4pm on 14 September 2017.

If you are interested in becoming a Councillor you will need to lodge a nomination paper, in the prescribed form, with the Returning Officer during that period.

For more information about the competition or to pick up a 2017 Pioneers' Pathway Photo Competition entry form and talent agreement and release form, contact the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre on 9041 1666 or visitor@merredin.wa.gov.au, or call in to the Visitor Centre and pick one up.

Entries close Friday 15 September.

2017 PIONEERS' PATHWAY Photo Competition



Can you show off the Shire of Merredin and its place on the Pioneers' Pathway?
A first prize of \$100 and two second prizes of \$50 each are up for grabs!

For a 2017 Pioneers' Pathway Photo Competition Entry Form and a Talent Agreement and Release Form, contact the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre on 9041 1666 or visitor@merredin.wa.gov.au, or call in and pick one up.
Entries close Friday 15 September

Supported by




COMMUNITY EVENTS

Every Tues	10:30am	Story-time at the Library	Library	Free
Every Wed	6:30pm	Bingo Night	Rec Centre	Up to \$30
Every Thurs	10:00am	Walking group	Rec Centre	Free
7 September		Nominations open for Council		
9 September	7.30pm	Cosi: A play by Louis Nowra	Cummins Theatre	
14 September	4:00pm	Nominations closer for Council		
15 September		Entries close for photography competition	Visitor Centre	Free
17 September	8:00am	Merredin Fun Run	Rec Centre	\$15



Wall of Fame in Pioneer Park

The Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre now looks after the “Wall of Fame” in Pioneer Park near the picnic/barbeque area.

If you would like to organise a bronze plaque to recognise the contribution of someone, either past or present, to the Merredin community in a permanent way, you can now do so easily.

Please contact Robyn at the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre on 9041 1666 or visitor@merredin.wa.gov.au for more information on costs and how to go about doing it.

Purple Poppies for Remembrance Day

Horses transporting troops. Donkeys carrying wounded soldiers under heavy fire. Pigeons accompanying pilots to be released in the event the planes were shot down. Cats securing food supplies from vermin. Dogs detecting mines and guarding their owners. Canaries detecting poisonous gases. The myriad animals accompanying the troops as pets and mascots to lift morale in the camp.

The Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation (AWAMO) is a volunteer organisation developed with the aim of recognising the deeds of animals during Australian military service. As part of this campaign, they have released a purple poppy, which can be worn alongside the traditional red poppy.

The Shire of Merredin is recognising this initiative by encouraging the people of Merredin to add to the remarkable handmade red poppy collection with a field of purple poppies.

As with the red “Field of Poppies” project from previous years, members of the community are encouraged to create poppies out of any material that their imagination, creativity and skill allows, including wool, felt, fabric, wood, metal, clay, recycled materials and more.

Poppies should be delivered to Lee at the Shire of Merredin office by 1st November to ensure they are on public display by Remembrance Day.

For further information, please contact Lee on 9041 1611 or clo@merredin.wa.gov.au



New nature playground

You may have noticed some activity in the small park opposite St Mary’s Primary School lately!

A couple of years ago, St Mary’s advised the Shire that they would like to adopt the park. Since then, students of St Mary’s produced drawings of what they would like to see established in the revitalised park, and the most common features of the students’ plans will be incorporated into the park design.

Where, in the past, we have brought the Max Employment work crews in, this time we’ve taken a slightly different approach.

Through funding from Collgar Wind Farm, 17 unemployed men and women registered with Max Employment are enrolled in a Certificate II in Leadership with CY O’Connor College of TAFE - so, in addition to acquiring work experience and making the local area a nicer place for our kids, they will also walk away with a qualification.