

# MacNews

## MRC OPENS TWO MAJOR PROJECTS



# *A message from our* **Chief Executive Officer**

I am pleased to share the latest edition of MacNews with our MacDonnell Regional Council staff.

As we navigate the current heat wave, I want to emphasise the importance of looking after yourselves and your families. Please take time to stay hydrated, seek shade during peak hours, and check on vulnerable community members. Your wellbeing is our priority.

I am encouraged by the positive progress in our upcoming enterprise bargaining agreement. The first meeting has been held and these discussions reflect our commitment to fair and sustainable employment practices that recognise the valuable contributions our team makes every day. I look forward to reaching an agreement that benefits all parties. Communication will be sent regularly and please reach out through the email: [mrc2026ea@macdonnell.nt.gov.au](mailto:mrc2026ea@macdonnell.nt.gov.au) if you have any questions.

Our Local Authority meetings are kicking off for 2026, providing an important forum for community engagement and decision-making. The first round of meetings will include discussions around our 2026 Regional Plan. I look forward to participation from LA members as we discuss what's important in our region.

I must take this opportunity to sincerely thank all staff. Your commitment to delivering quality services across our communities is remarkable. Whether in administration, civil, infrastructure, community services, or support roles, you make a tangible difference in people's lives every single day. Your resilience, particularly during challenging conditions, do not go unnoticed.

Together, we continue to build a stronger MacDonnell Regional Council.

Warm regards,  
Belinda



*Belinda Urquhart  
Chief Executive Officer  
MacDonnell Regional Council*

# CELEBRATIONS AT MT LIEBIG & KINTORE



In early December, MRC proudly opened two major infrastructure projects, delivered with the support of the Federal Government.

On Monday 8th December, MRC officially unveiled the new Mount Liebig Sports Complex. The new upgrades - highlighted by a brand-new basketball court - will enable multi-sport and outdoor community events to be held year round. We were fortunate to be joined by Marion Scrymgour MP for the ribbon-cutting ceremony and marked the occasion by celebrating with the Mount Liebig community over a barbecue.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT MT LIEBIG...



- New basketball court and shade structure
- High-quality lighting for day and night use
- Fencing upgrades at the football oval
- Waterline extension for increased drinking water availability



The following day, celebrations continued in Kintore (Walungurru) with the official completion of 30 new shade structures, delivered across all of MRC's 13 remote communities (cont).



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# INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

## 30 NEW SHADE STRUCTURES ACROSS ALL COMMUNITIES

Amoonguna



The works were managed by our PMO (Project Management Office), who coordinated planning, procurement and delivery in close collaboration with community representatives, staff and contractors. The project was supported through government funding and implemented by experienced local contractors, helping ensure high-quality outcomes while also contributing to regional employment.

Areyonga



Hermannsburg



Finke



Docker River



Imanpa

This investment will provide residents with much-needed protection from the harsh Central Australian heat, making community spaces more comfortable and usable throughout the year. Lighting has also been installed to support community life both day and night.



Haasts Bluff

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Titjikala



Kintore



Mt Liebig



Papunya



Santa Teresa



Wallace Rockhole

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# CLEANING UP AT THE NT TIDY TOWNS AWARDS



In late November, a group of 14 head office and community staff flew up to Darwin to represent MRC at the 2025 Territory Tidy Towns Awards - and they came back with plenty to celebrate.

MRC took home several major awards, including Climate Change Readiness, Waste Management, Plastic-Free Communities, Best Regional Council, and Liveable Communities for our Community Beekeeping Project. Our Director of Council Services, Keith Hassett, was also named Citizen of the Year - a well-deserved recognition of his commitment and leadership.

The spotlight shone brightly on Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), who for the second consecutive year claimed Best Small Community and the overall 2025 Territory Tidy Towns Award. This recognition is a testament to the dedication and efforts of the Ikuntji community, who now have the honour of representing the Northern Territory at the 2026 National Tidy Towns Awards in Launceston.

These accolades would not be possible without the investment, innovation and hard work demonstrated by our staff and community members.



**ABOVE:** KABC NT CEO Heimo Schober with our famous Haasts Bluff Honey



## Full List Of Awards Won By MRC:

- Climate Change Readiness Award
- Waste Management Award
- Plastic-Free Communities Award
- Best Regional Council Award
- Liveable Communities Award - MRC Beekeeping Project
- Citizen of the Year Award - Keith Hassett, Director of Council Services
- Best Small Community Award - Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)
- 2025 Territory Tidy Towns Award - Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff)



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# FROM NEPAL TO THE NT: BIBEK'S PATH TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

In early January, our IT-wiz Bibek Paudel was granted permanent residency in Australia.

Bibek's journey to Australia came down to timing. He moved from Nepal to Darwin in March 2020 - just one week before international borders closed due to the Covid Pandemic. "If it was a week later," Bibek says, "I probably wouldn't be here." It was a true sliding doors moment.

Originally planning the move with a friend who had family in Darwin, Bibek arrived alone when Covid disruptions meant his friend could not follow. With no family and no connections, Bibek had to build a life for himself from scratch. He lived in Darwin for four years, where he studied cybersecurity at CDU and worked in education.

At the end of 2023, Bibek made the move to Alice Springs to take up his role as an ICT Officer with MRC. Reflecting on the uniqueness of working in the desert, Bibek says "it's totally different. I work in a small team, and we get a lot of opportunity to experience and learn - experiences that I wouldn't get elsewhere".



Bibek admits he misses his family and says things would feel different if they were here too. Still, he has made a strong impact at MRC. A much-loved and respected team member, Bibek was recently voted runner-up for Employee of the Year at our annual staff awards. It was recognition of his teamwork, positivity, and willingness to help wherever needed.

Bibek's application for permanent residency was approved in early January. A celebratory morning tea (with cake, of course) was held in the office to mark this significant milestone.



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# BUILDING CONFIDENCE ON THE ROAD

By John Chisholm, *Coordinator WHS*

A little over a year ago, we made the decision to bring MRC's 4WD training in-house – and since then, I've had the privilege of running the program for all new coordinators, CSCs, ESOs and others who need to drive between communities.

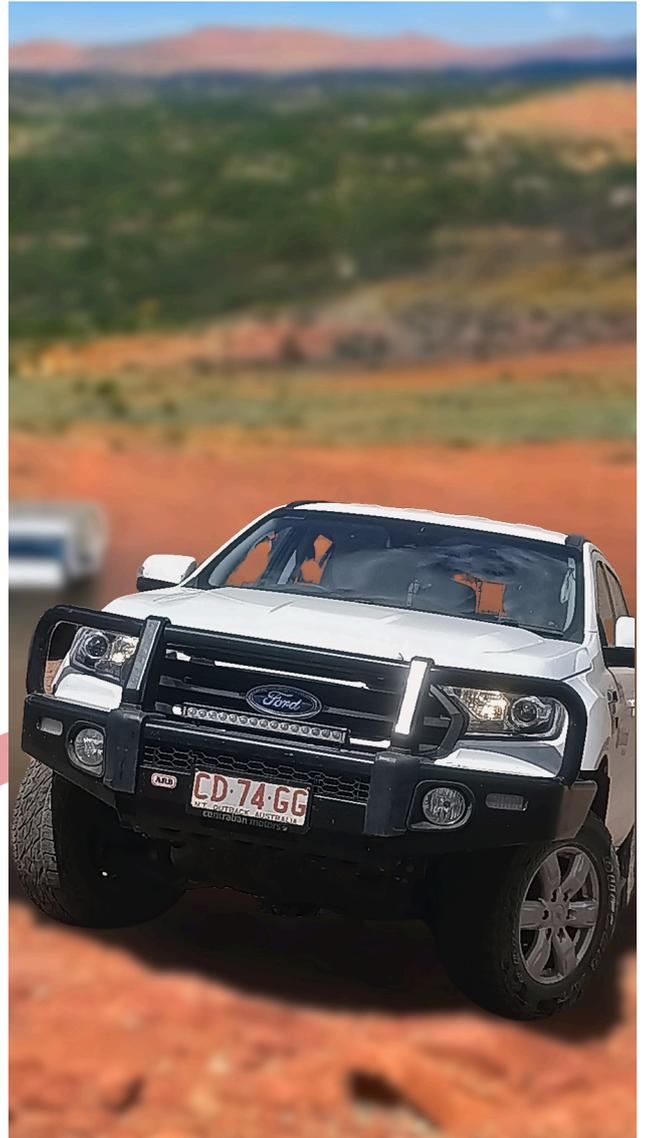
Every Tuesday after induction, I get to spend the day with new staff, helping them build the skills and confidence they'll need out on the road.

We always start with the basics: what a 4WD is, what low range does, when to use it, and a refresher on MRC's vehicle rules. Then we head over to Sargent Street, where I walk staff through vehicle care – from the weekly vehicle check to using the Fleetio app.

The real fun starts once we get behind the wheel. Out at the claypans and hills behind the Road Transport Museum, staff practice emergency stops on unsealed roads, switching into low range, using the diff lock and hill descent control while tackling steep, rocky climbs and descents. The hardest part of the day is usually the wheel change – no one escapes getting hot and dusty – but by the end, there's a real sense of achievement, especially for those who have never changed a tyre before.

We wrap up with a drive to Santa Teresa, which is often the first community our new staff see. Along the way, I observe how they handle corrugations and potholes, then we stop at Keringke Art, stretch our legs, and swap drivers before heading back.

Bringing this training in-house has made a huge difference. We no longer have to wait for outside providers, which means staff can head out bush straight after induction. Most importantly, I know that the people we're sending out are equipped to do it safely – and that gives me a lot of confidence too.



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# COMMUNITY STAFF CHRISTMAS PARTIES



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# CELEBRATING OUR PEOPLE

Highlights from our annual Staff Awards



The annual Staff Awards recognise the leadership, dedication and heart of our staff, with peer-nominated awards honouring the legacy of five significant MRC Councillors.



### Safety Award (in commemoration of Mr L Abbott)

This award honours the late Councillor Lance Abbott, a long-serving and respected representative of the Luritja Pintubi Ward. Elected in 2008, he was known for his leadership, good humour and strong commitment to community health and safety. His legacy of service continues to be remembered and valued.

### WINNER: Yarran Cavalier, Coordinator Community Safety

Yarran leads by example, empowering community staff through yarning and training.

about empowering young people - especially young women - to become future leaders. She is remembered for her energy, humility and lasting impact on her community.

### WINNER: Joe Rawson, Council Services

A long-term employee, Joe has held various roles across MRC. He supports staff to build confidence and develop strong practical skills. He is a role model who is always looking to make his community better.



### Team of the Year Award (in commemoration of Mr P Wilyuka)

This award commemorates the late Philip Wilyuka, a respected elder and dedicated leader who served both as a Council employee and later as Councillor for the Rodinga Ward. Known for bringing people together, he was deeply committed to teamwork, community safety and service. His pride, fairness and leadership continue to inspire.

### JOINT WINNERS: Finance & IT Departments

Both teams well extremely well together, operating at a high level in all tasks. They are autonomous, helpful in their support across all departments, and continuously uphold Council values.

### Leadership Award (in commemoration of Ms L Ellis)

The late Councillor Lynette Ellis was a strong and inspiring leader for the Amoonguna community. She played a central role in delivering sustainable projects, including the Jessie's Gap walking trails, and was passionate



**Spirit of Council Award (in commemoration of Mr Sid Anderson)**

A founding Councillor and inaugural President of MRC, Mr. Anderson’s leadership shaped Council’s vision, values and direction. His principles laid the foundations for stronger governance, and he keenly promoted community partnerships and advocacy.

*The Spirit of Council recognises an individual that embodies the values of MRC, promotes collaboration and inclusion and strives to work in the best interest of community.*

**JOINT WINNERS: Christine Allen, Children’s Services & Matthew Rabuntja, Council Services**

Christine consistently promotes positivity and professionalism, and her spirit fosters a sense of teamwork and unity, Matthew is known for his thoughtfulness; a quiet worker who offers considered guidance to his workmates. Both treat their colleagues with patience, respect and understanding.



**Employee of the Year award (in commemoration of Mr Barry Abbott)**

A respected Southern Arrernte stockman, mentor and leader, Mr. Abbott empowered young people through skills, discipline and pride while advocating strongly for people on country. Renowned for his strong work ethic and practical leadership, his knowledge, integrity and example left a lasting impact on Council and community.



**WINNER: Paul Fly, Council Services  
HONOURABLE MENTION: Bibek Paudel, IT Department**

Paul is a long-term employee who adapts well to changes, tackles any task with enthusiasm and leads by example. He always creates an environment where people feel comfortable.



**President’s Award**

**WINNER: Praful Gautam, IT Department**

Praful embodies the true values and intentions of MRC; openness, respect, accountability, inclusion and innovation. He is approachable, reliable and a team player.