

Vote For Our Community: Buloke's Paddock Run

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The Paddock Run flood initiative, which was driven by the Buloke community, has been nominated for the Disaster Preparedness category in the 2023 National Awards for Local Government.

The awards recognise outstanding innovations that have improved local communities, shining a spotlight on resourceful and creative solutions, celebrating the dedication and innovation of communities, particularly those ideas which can be adapted and replicated elsewhere.

Getting information to 'where they are' was the motivation behind *The Paddock Run*, developed by the Buloke Shire Council, during the October 2022 Victorian flood event.

Floods had impacted around 50% of agricultural area in Buloke, with homeowners and businesses impacted by flooded roads, cutting off access during what would normally be a busy trading period.

Council partnered with over 45 food businesses and grain receival sites across the shire to deliver flood support and assistance information to the paddock, truck, tractor, harvester, ute etc., using a less conventional, but more practical delivery method – via their stomachs.

When visiting participating food businesses for a grocery shop or to pick up a takeaway meal for a bite to eat, harvest workers and families were given a *Paddock Run* card with condensed key messaging and contact numbers for specialist advisors, who could swiftly direct them to the help they needed, such as mental health advice.

At grain receival sites grain truck drivers were handed a *Paddock Run* card and a packet of Kooka's Country Cookies, a beloved, locally made treat, to share with colleagues in the paddock.

The award winner is judged by the highest number of peer votes received. Whilst the Buloke Shire's population may be significantly smaller than some of the other municipalities also nominated in this category, collectively their voices have always been mighty. Vote for Buloke!

Voting is open from 9:00 AM AEDT on 14 March 2023 to 11:59 PM on 14 April 2023. To cast a vote, go to <https://bit.ly/3l8AoEV>.

"From all reports *The Paddock Run* card and Kooka's cookies provided the necessary distraction when customer grain deliveries have not made the grade, turned away, or after a long wait in the queue – it hit the mark and the stomach," said Mayor Cr Alan Getley.

"The initiative was also an important occupational violence intervention, recognising that staff working at grain receival sites, often young women, have historically been subjected to verbal abuse."

During December 2022, a large fire at Rich Avon drew many farmers and CFA volunteers away from their harvest to extinguish the fire, Cr Getley explained.

“Many of them had not eaten since breakfast and rushed back to the grain receival that evening with a truck load of grain before closing. The provision of Kooka’s cookies and this key information was also very timely as they were exhausted and hungry.”

In all, 8000 cards were distributed, 1000 packets of Kooka’s and more than 70 posters, saturating the shire population of 6178, and empowering the community to support each other.

Photo: The Shire of Buloke has been nominated in the 2023 National Awards for Local Government.

End release

For further information contact Manager Customer Engagement on 1300 520 520 or buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au