

Women of Warren Shire

Audrey Weston

Whether she's watching the Warren Pumas at a home game, having a chat with friends at the supermarket, or helping out on the farm, Audrey Weston loves getting out and about in Warren Shire and connecting with our local community.

A passionate advocate for community sport and local news, she has also been instrumental in bringing the much-loved Warren Community Triathlon and Warren Show to fruition.

Now, we celebrate all of Audrey's contributions as our latest 'Woman of Warren Shire'.

Quickfire questions...

A usual morning looks like...

I try to get up early and do some sort of exercise. It may be a walk/run or gym session, or recently, I've started to go to Pilates at Ellerslie Lane. Can't resist a plug for that - it's just so good!

I'm most proud of...

I am proud of my family. My husband Jeremy and I have three sons who are fun, active and hard-working young men, who get along well and seem to enjoy spending time with us!

On the weekend, you can find me...

No two weekends are the same! In winter, if there's a home game for the Warren Pumas, I'll be watching that.

I have a big garden that I'm never in enough, so I might be there, or I also love pottering around in my old ute checking cattle or helping on the farm.

We also visit our sons in Sydney or Armidale as often as we can, so sometimes you'll find me hanging out with them.

A quote or piece of advice I live by is...

I do love a quote or motto! My mother (who is about to turn 90) always says, "just have a go", which is ridiculously simple but still motivating.

Another one I heard recently was "dripping water penetrates the stone", which I like because it refers to persistence.

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My Dad used to say: "let the dog see the rabbit", which I'm pretty sure he made up, but loosely, it meant 'be ready for anything'.

How long have you lived in Warren Shire? What do you love most about living here?

Apart from a 12-year hiatus, I have lived here all my life. Our house is less than half an hour from where I grew up, so I guess you could call me a local.

I love the people. I love the friendliness and familiarity of walking down the street or going to the supermarket and running into lots of people I know. That sense of belonging or being part of a community can be difficult to find in bigger centres.

Tell us about some of your favourite places to visit in the Shire.

When we have visitors, we always try to take them out to Burrima Boardwalk on the Carinda Road, to see a part of the Macquarie Marshes. While it is 130 kilometres from Warren, that drive is interesting in itself, with stock and crops to view along the way. Plus, there's lots of wildlife which (if you can avoid hitting it), is also interesting for guests!

Our farm is on the Macquarie and while I'm not into fishing, I do also love spending time on or near the river.

Some more about you...

You're well known for your work bringing the Warren Community Triathlon to life. Can you tell us more about the passion behind this project?

I'm not sure if this has any bearing on it, but before Jeremy and I were married, we competed in a few regional triathlons. The most memorable was in Orange, where I had to be dragged from Lake Canobolas due to a leg cramp.

Despite that, we really had a lot of fun and when our boys were little, we thought it would be great for them to experience triathlons, too.

A number of local families used to compete in the annual Gulargambone Triathlon, and when that folded around 2007, we decided to start one in Warren.

Since then, we have held one every year, except during the COVID pandemic. I love that competitors of all ages and fitness levels can take part and that there's a culture of encouragement and inclusion.

We also have lots of help from family, friends, sponsors, Rotary, the Men's Shed, Council and the NSW SES, which is why it's called a 'community triathlon'.

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You are also involved in the Warren Show. How did this start and what is your favourite part about this much-loved attraction?

My connection with the Warren Show started at a young age; I still remember the excitement of running from the horse arena to the pavilion when I was about five or six to see if I'd won any prizes.

Mum and Dad were both on the committee (Mum is now a Life Member) and we four children were encouraged to have a go at everything: horses, cooking, literacy, dogs and photography... My Dad, who was also the horse measuring steward, even won the boiled rice competition one year. I do think the cooking stewards should bring that class back; it was hotly contested!

A less fond memory is the shame of vomiting on the 'Cha Cha' ride, having eaten too much fairy floss.

Funnily enough, one of my favourite parts now is the buzz in the Pavilion on the day before the Show, when people are bringing in their entries, the stewards are bustling about organising their sections, and the judges are quietly doing their thing. It's a community in itself and the morning tea always has the most delicious scones!

The thrill of competition has remained as well; I'm still trying to win a blue ribbon in the marmalade section.

You work closely with our local rugby club. Why do you think community sport is so important for people – both young and old – who are living in regional areas?

When our boys were young, we were involved in Macquarie Emus Junior Rugby, and I'm now on the committee of Warren Rugby Club.

Community sport is a great way to meet people, get fit, support mental health, form friendships, learn new skills, stay engaged and feel connected, regardless of your age. In regional areas it's even more important, as there are less opportunities for those benefits to be gained elsewhere.

I was at Victoria Oval late on a recent Thursday afternoon and there was junior league, senior rugby union (men and women), netball, athletics and yoga all taking place in the same precinct. Community sport is alive and well in Warren!

You've also worked with the Warren Weekly and other local publications. What do you love most about these roles? Why do you think the provision of regular local news is so important for communities like ours?

I worked at the Warren Weekly, the newspaper before the Warren Star, for 11 years, and have contributed stories to the Western Plains App. My time at the paper was so enjoyable; it was the ultimate in community engagement, as it was our job to report on everything that was happening.

Writing stories for the App requires a different emphasis, as it involves presenting Warren issues to a regional network.

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Local news helps give a community its identity by connecting people, informing them and telling their stories. A local paper is also a keeper of history.

There was a 10-month period between the closing of the Warren Weekly and the opening of the Warren Star, and in that time, many people I spoke to felt quite lost, and missed that feeling of connection.

Finally, what advice would you give to other women living in rural communities?

As warm and inclusive as they usually are, rural communities can also be lonely and isolating places, so I would say get involved as much as you can.

If you have children, volunteer at the school or on a committee, and if not, maybe join a sporting club or seek out a group that interests you.

Once you start meeting people, it snowballs. You have stuff to do, you know about things that are happening, you get invited to places, and before you know it, you are a part of that community.

To nominate a Warren Shire woman to be featured in this series, email media@warren.nsw.gov.au

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