



## “From the GM’s Desk” 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016



The next meeting of the Far West Initiative Advisory Committee (FWIAC) will be held in Sydney on the 25<sup>th</sup> May, 9.00am - 2:30pm. The Minister for Local Government the Hon. Paul Toole, MP is planning to attend the meeting and it is anticipated that there will be further discussion on the potential models for the Far West.

The Mayor, Councillor Andrew Lewis and I will be attending on behalf of Bourke Shire.

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With the meeting of the FWIAC being scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> May, Councillor Leigh Byron President of Western Division has been forced to reschedule his visits to member Councils which he had planned for that week. Initially the meeting of the FWIAC was scheduled for the week beginning the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Councillor Byron is still keen to make the trip to visit all Councils but will now have to schedule his trip for later in the year.

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Last Wednesday Mayor, Councillor Andrew Lewis and Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown represented Council at the meeting of the Barwon Darling Bush Fire Management Committee held at Brewarrina.

The meeting was effectively to get a report on the activities during the 2015/2016 Bushfire Season and to look at strategies for the 2016/2017 Bush fire Season.

Preparedness for bushfires is a year round project with a great deal of preparatory work including hazard reduction work being undertaken throughout the year. The cooler winter months are utilised to undertake initiatives such as controlled burns to reduce the build- up of combustible material particularly in areas of high risk.

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The carpark at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition centre was sealed last week and these works will enhance the appearance of the centre. The Back O’ Bourke Centre continues to draw positive comments from the thousands of people who visit each year.

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Council’s Auditors, Hills Rogers from Sydney will be in town this week to undertake the half yearly audit of Council’s accounting records. Prior to visiting Bourke they undertook the mid-year audit at Brewarrina Shire.

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The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) have commenced a project to modify the existing water management infrastructure (primarily the dam walls on the Warrego River) on Tooralé National Park and State Conversation area. The project commenced last month and is expected to take around 18 months to complete. Consultancy firm “Alluvium” has been contracted to commence the initial stage of the project.

I met with a representative of Alluvium last Friday and he also met with other stakeholders during his visit. Following the initial phase of the project an “options paper” will be produced and representatives from Alluvium will be back in Bourke mid- June to present the options paper. There is some background information that can be made available on request.

The project will be run in three stages

1. Business Case Development : April-July 2016
2. Environmental Assessment and Approvals :September 2016- June 2017 (Est)
3. Implementation: post June 2017

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The Federal Budget was handed down last week and key components of interest to the Local Government sector was the announcements related to the Roads to Recovery Program (R2R), and the scheduled end to the indexation freeze on Financial Assistance Grants.

Treasurer Scott Morrison announced the R2R Program would extend beyond the former cut-off date of 2018-19. After this time the funding will be increased by \$50 million per annum; welcome recognition of the dire state of many regional and rural roads across the nation.

R2R funding has had a significant boost over the past few years and the additional funds have been welcomed by Bourke Shire Council and it has enabled a considerable amount of additional work to be undertaken on the road network within the Shire.

Local Government also welcomed the news that the indexation freeze on Financial Assistance Grants will end as planned in 2017/18.

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The Federal Election has been called for the 2<sup>nd</sup> July and Local Government organisations and individual Councils will be monitoring each of the policy announcements by the major parties to see what impact, if any, those policies will have on Local Government. The opportunity will be taken no doubt by the peak organisation to once again highlight the need for additional funding to be made available to Local Government to enable it to more effectively address the increased responsibilities that have come its way over the years and supplement the existing revenue base.

The Federal Government goes into caretaker mode in the period before the election and no major decisions or allocation of funding generally takes place within this period.

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LGNSW is seeking input from councils and hence the various rural communities on the recently released proposed reforms to land management and conservation in NSW.

The reforms implement the recommendations from the Independent Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel. The proposed legislation will affect the way in which biodiversity is managed and protected across NSW.

The reform package includes drafts of the new Biodiversity Conservation Act and amended Local Land Services Act, and supporting material. The package is on public exhibition, and is open for submissions, until 28 June 2016.

Key components of the reform include:

- a new framework for managing native vegetation clearing
- an enhanced and strategic approach to private land conservation supported by increased Government funding of \$240 million over five years
- an expanded biodiversity offsetting scheme

All information on the biodiversity reforms can be found at

<https://www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au/>

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The fourth rate instalment is due on 31st May 2015 as are any charges for the usage of filtered water.

If you are experiencing difficulty in paying these accounts and wish to make arrangements for the payment of these accounts please contact Councils Rates and Water Billing Officer.

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The Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 and will commence at 9.00am in the Council Chambers. All meetings of Council and Committees of Council where members of that Committee are Councillors are open to the Public.

On the agenda will be the consideration of any submissions received in relation to the 2016/2017 Operational Plan which must be considered prior to the adoption of the Plan.

A Public Forum is scheduled at each Council Meeting at 10.00 am. It would be appreciated if you wish to attend the Public Forum if you would please contact Kai Howard-Oakman on 68308000 or by email at [khoward@bourke.nsw.gov.au](mailto:khoward@bourke.nsw.gov.au), so that your item can be placed on the agenda and if necessary any background information can be obtained.

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This week is "Volunteers Week and as I have said on numerous occasions the whole social fabric of communities like Bourke is greatly dependant on the efforts of volunteers; whether that be helping with the School Parents and Citizens Associations, organising and coaching sport, helping with Meals on Wheels, being a member of the SES or Rural Fire Service or any number of other worthwhile activities all these activities combine to make the town a much better place to live and be able to offer a much broader range of services and facilities.

Council relies heavily on volunteers particularly in the villages areas and the effort of these volunteers is very much appreciated. Many people go about their role in a quiet and almost anonymous way yet their efforts are greatly appreciated and it is to these "quiet achievers" we say a particular big "thank you".

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Despite the good rainfall across the majority of the Shire there was little inflow into the Byrock water storage which is disappointing with carting set to continue for some time yet. While there was a reasonable fall in and around Byrock it was not enough to generate the flow required to increase the level of the storage.

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Quote of the week!

*"Smiles are understood in any language"*

Ross Earl  
General Manager