



## “From the GM’s Desk” 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015



The sealing of the new streets in the North Bourke Estate should take place this week which will mean the completion of the road works.

The work on the other infrastructure is also well underway.

The first house to be constructed in the new development was put in place earlier this week and this will be the first of a number which are planned for the area.

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Council staff will be undertaking an audit of water connections over the next few weeks to determine the number of connections that are currently being provided and charged for in relation to all blocks within Bourke and North Bourke.

Each property is entitled to one connection of both filtered and raw water.

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Together with Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis, Deputy Mayor, Cr Barry Hollman, Cr Cecil Dorrington and I travelled to Condobolin last Sunday to attend the 2015 Annual Conference of the Western Division Councils held from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> February.

Local Member the Hon. Kevin Humphries, MP, Minister for Water Minister for Lands, Minister for Water and Natural Resources and Minister for Western New South Wales gave one of the keynote addresses and one of the areas he covered was the establishment of the Far Western Initiative, with the Local Government Reform Process dominating much of the discussion at the conference given the involvement of the majority of Councils in the concept.

It was obvious that there is still a long way to go in finalising all the concepts involved in the “Local Government Reform” process with the functions of Joint Organisation of Councils and the operation of the Far Western Initiative two (2) areas which are still very much in the formative stages.

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At a meeting of the Mayors, Deputy Mayors and General Managers of Bourke and Brewarrina Shires held at Condobolin last Sunday, the issue of the potential merger or the introduction of a shared administration by the two Councils was discussed as it was the preferred option identified by the Independent Local Government Review Panel and it was confirmed that neither Council supported either of the options. They have resolved to continue their efforts to ensure that each remained as autonomous Councils serving their current areas and communities.

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While in Condobolin for the Western Division Conference the Bourke Delegates accepted the invitation from Rowan Boehm the Independent Candidate for Barwon to meet with him to hear his vision for the seat of Barwon and the State of NSW. He also indicated that he will be visiting Bourke prior to the election.

The delegates also had the opportunity to meet with our current Member, the Hon. Kevin Humphries, MP, Member for Barwon. He has indicated that he will also be visiting Bourke over the next two weeks.

No doubt as the campaign progresses, Council will also have the opportunity to meet with the other candidates for the seat of Barwon.

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The Local Government Reform process has continued to be an issue for all Councils and in particular the Councils who have been mentioned as potential candidates for a merger proposal or to become a "Rural Council".

In very welcome news at the Seminar held last week in Dubbo to discuss the "Rural Council Template" it was brought to the attention of those in attendance that the concept of a "Rural Council" will not be pursued as recommended by the independent Local Government Review Panel.

All Councils, irrespective of size will continue to be under the same legislation, however, there is the opportunity for Councils who were identified as potential "Rural Councils" or those who meet the majority of nine (9) criteria now applicable to identify as a "Rural Council" to be able to complete a "Rural Council Template" under the "Fit for the Future" concept being introduced by the State Government and indications are that these Councils may be subject to a less stringent conditions when it comes to meeting the benchmarks for the criteria being used to determine a "Fit for the Future" Council.

The criteria for a Rural Council have been identified as follows,

1. Small and static or declining population spread over a large area
2. Local economies that are based on agricultural/resource industries
3. High operating costs associated with a dispersed population and limited opportunities for return on investment
4. High importance of retaining local identity, social capital and capacity for service delivery
5. Low rate base and high grant reliance.
6. Difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled and experienced staff
7. Challenges in Financial Sustainability and provision of adequate services and infrastructure
8. Long distance to a Major (or Sub) Regional Centre
9. Limited options for merger

Bourke Shire Council meets the majority if not all of these criteria.

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Don't forget the "Fee Free Tip Days" to be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to assist residents who will take the opportunity to clean up their yards prior to the Back to Bourke weekend over Easter. There are some exceptions to the items able to be dumped free of charge with a charge still applying to tyres, asbestos, chemicals, liquid waste and building and commercial waste.

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Together with the Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis, I attended the Liaison Meeting of the Barwon Darling Zone of the Rural Fire Services held yesterday at the Bourke Fire Control Centre. The meeting brings together representatives of Bourke and Brewarrina Shires together with staff and Volunteers of the Rural Fire Services to look at Programmes, proposed budgets and funding priorities for the 2015/2016 Financial year.

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A reminder regarding the Village Tours and Community Consultation Meetings planned for March 2015.

- Louth is scheduled for the morning, Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015
- Wanaaring are scheduled for the afternoon Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015
- Byrock is for lunchtime Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015
- Bourke is scheduled for the evening Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015
- Fords Bridge scheduled for the morning Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015
- Enngonia scheduled for Lunchtime Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Details relating to the times and meeting arrangements for the individual meeting will be circulated locally.

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At the meeting of OROC held last Friday the Mayors and General Managers of the member Councils were able to meet with representatives from the Police and the Western Area Health to discuss the issues relating to substance abuse and the impact of the various communities with the OROC area. The increased usage of the Drug "Ice" across the area was raised by most members as a concern within their communities.

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At the Western Division Conference held in Condobolin the Executive for the 2015/2016 year were elected with Cr John Metcalf, Deputy Mayor of Lachlan Shire Re-elected as Chairman, Cr Dave Gallagher, Deputy Mayor of Broken Hill elected as Deputy Chair with Cr Lillian Brady, Mayor of Cobar and Cr Peter Nunan of Wentworth Shire filling the other two Executive Committee roles.

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Remember the "Welcome to Bourke Night" scheduled for the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the Bourke Swimming Pool. All newcomers to Bourke and representatives of community, social and sporting organisations are encouraged to come along.

Please call Letiticia Tiffen, Council's Community & Governance Officer on 68308000 so that catering arrangements can be finalised. RSVP's are requested by 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

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Tenders for the management rights of the Bourke Swimming Pool Complex will close at 3.00pm on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015.

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Planning for the Back to Bourke Weekend is gaining momentum with the programme being circulated and indicates an extremely busy weekend with activities of a very diverse nature planned.

Booking for many of the events are being coordinated by the staff at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre and they are also able to assist with all general enquiries in relation to the weekend. They can be contacted by calling 02 68 721 321.

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Council over the next few months will be lodging a number of grant applications in an effort to access funds to assist with the ongoing infrastructure projects within the Shire.

In the case of many grants the lead time from the announcement to the lodgement is relatively short so it is important that Council has projects which are "shovel ready" to maximise the opportunities that are presented.

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Amongst the road works projects across the Shire, work is progressing on the re-sheeting of the area known as "Poison Point Plain" on the Wanaaring Road and maintenance grading is being undertaken on Rural Local Roads.

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Residents in Bourke would have noticed work being undertaken in Richard Street over the last few days. Work involving the raising of the water mains at the intersection of Richard Street between Mitchell and Anson Streets in preparation for upcoming sealing works.

Ross Earl  
General Manager