



“From the GM’s Desk” 7th May 2015



Congratulations to President Scott Mitchell, Secretary, Pru Ritchie and the hardworking members of the Bourke Show Committee for staging a very successful 2015 Bourke Show.

There is a considerable amount of work that goes into staging the Show and whilst it is all hands on deck for the last couple of days before the show, the staging of such an event is twelve months in the making, with even the date being set some twelve months in advance.

The show brings together all sections of the community with the wide variety of exhibitions and attractions at the show, offering something for everyone.

I noticed that the Committee of the show involves a number of the younger members of the Bourke community and so the future of the show is in safe hands and all they need is the ongoing support of the community.

The grounds were in great condition thanks to the hard work of all organisations which utilise the facilities at the complex, coupled with the input of Council.

The sponsorship both from within Bourke and from Businesses outside was extremely pleasing for the Committee.

It was good to see the car dealerships from Dubbo and Narromine well represented at the show and they gave the opportunity for any prospective purchasers to inspect and test drive the vehicles without having to travel to Dubbo or other parts of the Central West.

I attend the meeting of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils held in Warren last Friday and there was a reasonably full agenda. OROC had engaged consultants to coordinate the process for the purchase of electricity for the contestable sites of all member Councils and these are the areas within each Council that are larger consumers of electricity and include street lighting, swimming pool complexes, water pumping and treatment plants.

The undertaking of the bulk purchase of electricity in this manner has provided some significant benefits for all member Councils and the arrangement has been in place for some time. The combined purchasing has again produced savings for all members.

Further savings on electivity charges for not only Councils but all consumers will result from the decision by the Australian Energy Regulatory (AER) to ask distributors to reduce their operational costs by up to 30%.

On the downside of the decision to reduce the operational costs is a query regarding the ability of the distributors to be able to maintain the same level of service with the reduced expenditure and

this will be something that will have to be monitored. The impact of staffing levels in rural communities in particular, will also need to be monitored as rural New South Wales has been suffering from the withdrawal and erosion of services for some time and can ill afford a further reduction.

The old North Bourke Bridge is in need of some repair work and the ongoing maintenance of the bridge falls to Council following an agreement struck between Council and the Roads and Maritime Services.

Whilst the steel sections of the bridge are still in pretty good condition some of the timber sections are showing signs of deterioration and Council's Manager of Roads, Mark Gordon will be putting together a report on options for the repair of that section of the bridge and the estimated costs that will be involved.

The use of CCTV facilities to assist in the identification of those involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity is widespread throughout New South Wales. While much of the benefit assists the State Government agencies most of the cost incurred in the installation and maintenance falls back to Local Government.

Bourke Shire Council acknowledges that the current system is in need of upgrade to the most modern technology and expansion but does not have the funds available to undertake all the work required.

The debate over the re-establishment of the Birthing Unit in Bourke continues with the Western NSW Local Health District indicating that the re-opening of a Birthing Unit with full procedural services is highly unlikely and they have conducted a number of "Yarning Sessions" to talk about alternative models of care.

Council has resolved to continue its push to have the re-establishment of full procedural birthing services and is worried about an ongoing reduction of other services if proceduralist doctors are not available in town.

Western Local Health District is conducting another information day in Bourke on the 20th May 2015. It is important that all interested persons attend to ensure that the Western Area Health get an understanding of the community's view.

The Fit for the Future submissions required to be submitted by all New South Wales Councils (with the exception of the eight (8) Councils who have been placed in Far Western Initiative, for whom the submission is optional) are to be assessed by an Expert Advisory Panel. The Minister for Local Government Hon. Paul Toole MP, announced last week, The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) will act as that panel and will be supported by South Australian Local Government expert John Comrie.

John Comrie did an evaluation of the Financial Assessment of Bourke Shire Council undertaken by T-Corp in relation to its financial sustainability.

John Comrie also looked at Penrith City and Greater Taree City Council as part of a review of the methodology utilised by T-Corp with that evaluation process being commissioned by Local Government New South Wales

Council has been invited to submit a nomination for a representative to sit on the Byrock Rock Holes Reserve Trust and Council resolved at the meeting held last Monday to support the nomination of the Manager of Environment Services, Dwayne Willoughby. Nominations are sought from community members and nominations are due on the 7th May 2015.

Repairs on the Davidson Oval grandstand will commence in about two (2) weeks with Council accepting a payment from the insurers for the repair work and work will be undertaken by Council's staff. Part of the works will include the strengthening of the grandstand.

The cost of the repairs will be well in excess of one hundred thousand dollars. I would like to apologise to the users of the Oval for the delay in completing the works but am sure that the fact that the grandstand will remain and able to continue to be fully utilised is welcome news for everyone.

The construction of the pipeline to connect Walkden's Bore to the Water Treatment Plant is also on track with the boring to take the pipeline under the river currently being undertaken.

Water security is a major issue for the town of Bourke and indeed the whole district and during our recent meeting with the Minister for Water Niall Blair, water security figured prominently on the agenda.

The Barwon Darling Critical Water Group met via teleconference last Friday and the meeting was told that the level of water in Menindee Lakes will need to be sufficient to provide water for Broken Hill for twenty one months as opposed to the current eighteen months before the restrictions on pumping can be lifted.

The lack of water in the river system is having a disastrous impact on the agricultural industries based along the river.

The fourth rate instalment is due on 29th May 2015 as are the 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.

The display developed by the staff at the Bourke Public Library as part of the Centenary of ANZAC commemoration's will remain at the library for the next few weeks. If you haven't had the opportunity to have a look, why not drop into the Library. There has been considerable interest in the display particularly from relatives of those war veterans who are featured.

Thought for the week!

Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards." -- Unknown

Ross Earl
General Manager