



“From the GM’s Desk” 27th August 2015



Council has been advised that the Rural and Remote Medical Services (RaRMS) has been the successful tenderer for the provision of Visiting Medical Officers (VMO) at the Bourke Hospital a role that has for many years been undertaken by Ochre Health.

RaRMS have a presence in a wide area of the state including , Warialda, Bingara, Tenterfield, Warren, Coolah and Gilgandra and will now add Bourke, Brewarrina Condobolin, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri to that list.

In welcoming RaRMS to Bourke, Council looks forward to the ongoing provision of first class medical services to our Community and the establishment of close links to ensure that the services in Bourke from a health perspective are not reduced, and where needed, enhanced.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution that OCHRE Health have made to the Bourke community whilst they had the contract and thank them for their efforts over that period acknowledging their ability to ensure that Bourke always had the services of doctors despite times when many other towns experienced shortages.

There will a transition period of at least three (3) months to allow all the necessary arrangements to be put in place.

Council on being made aware of the change in the contract at the Council Meeting on Monday resolved to seek a meeting with RaRMS to get a better understanding of their plans for Bourke.

Council’s understanding is that the new contracts do not require the provision of either obstetric trained doctors or anaesthetists which is a significant loss for our community and will impact on some of the services able to be provided. Council has already raised the loss of these services with the Western NSW Local District Health.

The Minister for Local Government, Hon Paul Toole, and MP has appointed the former Member for Murray Darling, John Williams of Broken to Chair the Far Western Initiative Advisory Committee. Mr Williams is a resident of Broken Hill and no doubt very aware of the issues facing many western towns. Bourke Shire Council looks forward to meeting John and working with him in developing the Far Western Initiative ensuring that it meets the need of Councils and the communities in this part of the state.

The State Librarian, Dr Alex Byrne will be visiting Bourke on Wednesday 9th September 2015 to meet with Councillors and Staff. Dr Byrne has the most senior library role in New South Wales and is indeed very pleasing to see him make the trip out west and get a full appreciation of the library services on offer plus the distances involved.

Council will be conducting a "Fee Free Tip weekend" on the 12th and 13th September 2015 to allow residents to undertake their annual spring clean in preparation for the upcoming summer period.

Whilst there is generally no fees applicable on the day there are some minor exceptions, with a charge still applying to some items including tyres, asbestos, chemicals, and liquid waste, building and commercial quantities of waste.

Bourke Shire yesterday hosted a seminar for Far Western Councils regarding the changes to the way in which workers compensation premiums will be calculated for 2015/2016. The Workers Compensation Premium calculation formula is determined by WorkCover and is applied by their agents. Council's insurer is StateCover which represents the majority of New South Wales Councils and they agreed to come to Bourke to explain the changes and strategies that should be employed to minimise the level of premium.

Council endorsed the lodging of an expression of interest for funding to upgrade the Bourke Water Treatment Plant and also the construction of an additional treatment pond at the sewerage treatment plant.

The current water treatment plant is reaching the end of its economic life and needs to be replaced. Council has the opportunity to apply for 50% subsidy towards the total cost of the work which is estimated to be \$8,739,150. Council's 50% will be made up of \$869,575 from reserves and the balance of \$3,500,000 being provided by way of loan.

The construction of the additional treatment pond had been part of the initial plan with the estimated cost being \$417,496 with Council's portion of \$ 208,748 to be funded from reserves held.

Council will also be investigating other sources of funding and is conscious of the financial impact on ratepayers but at the same time note that the current plant will not last forever.

Council has received notification that in 2015/2016 its Financial Assistance Grant will be total of \$5,028,666 made up of a general purpose component of \$3,257,015 and a roads component of \$1,771,651. The overall grant showed an increase of \$251,046. The funds will be generally allocated to an infrastructure renewal fund to allow Council to have the ability to maintain its infrastructure going forwards and also to be able to provide co contributions to capital works when required.

A reminder that the first instalment of the 2015/2016 rates is due on the 31st August 2015.

The first week in September will see the second Annual Festival of a Thousand Stories which proved very successful last year which was the inaugural event.

Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis and I met with representatives of Walgett, Brewarrina and Balonne Shires in Brewarrina to review the strategies being employed to control of wild dogs within the boundaries of each of the Council areas.

The General Manager of Brewarrina, Dan Simmons has offered to undertake a coordination role for the NSW based Councils and will liaise with his counterpart from Balonne Shire regarding future initiatives

The Mayor and I were joined at the meeting by Ben Mannix and Sharon Knight from the Lednapper Wild Dog Action Group.

Member for Parkes Mark Coulton, MP will be meeting with Council on Thursday, 27th August 2015 to discuss issues impacting Council and no doubt the issues of mobile phone services will be high on the agenda. While in town on Wednesday night Mark attended the 20th Anniversary Dinner for the Ronnie Gibbs Sevens.

There were a number other guests in town for the dinner including current NSW State Of Origin Coach Laurie Daley plus a number of ex-international and state players. The support shown by these people is tremendous and hopefully they will return in 2016.

Council has received notification that it has pre-approval for the carting of water to the village of Byrock should the need arise. Over the past few years the supply at Byrock has run dry necessitating the need to cart water for essential services and the pre-approval is recognition of this established need and the urgency that arises in times when the supply dries up in the reservoir.

I noticed in the Western Herald that Louth will be celebrating its sesqui-centenary on 31st October this year which should occasion for many ex-residents to return and join will locals in the recognition of this milestone.

The Tour De OROC will stopover in Bourke on Wednesday, 7th October 2015 and a function will be held on that night to assist in raising funds to support Macquarie Homestay which is the beneficiary of the ride.

To assist raise funds for the event Bourke Rotary Club will be conducting a Trivia Night on the 16th September 2015 at the Bourke Bowling Club. Cost per participant will be \$10.00 with tables of 10 being preferred. It should be a fun night so get a team together. Entries can be lodged at Council.

Quote for the Week!

“You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream”

C S Lewis

Ross Earl
General Manager