



“From the GM’s Desk”

17th September 2015



The newly appointed Chair of the Far Western Initiative Advisory Committee (FWIAC), John William met with Council on Monday as part of a familiarisation tour of the Northern Councils proposed to be members of the Far Western Initiative. John is a pilot and flew to Cobar on the Monday morning for a meeting with Cobar Shire before coming to Bourke in the afternoon. Given the huge distances involved in the Local Government areas that form the Far Western Initiative, a pilot’s license may be a very valuable asset.

The Office of Local Government and the Department of Premier and Cabinet are the two (2) lead agencies involved in the establishment of the Far West Initiative and they have developed a comprehensive community engagement strategy to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the plans. There are a myriad of groups and organisations that will need to be consulted and the opportunity is being given to each of the Councils to review the strategy to ensure that it suits their purposes. Councillors and staff will have the opportunity to discuss the strategy during a teleconference between 9.00am and 10.00am on Friday 18th September 2015. The second half of the teleconference will be allocated to an update on the Far Western Initiative by the Regional Manager of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Alison Morgan.

The Minister for Local Government released the latest Paper in relation the Local Government Reform Process and the latest paper provides an update regarding Joint Organisations which were one of the initiatives recommended by the independent Local Government Review Panel. The release of the Joint Organisations “Emerging Directions Paper” follows work done by several Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) in developing “Pilot” JOs over the past six months.

A copy of the paper is available on the internet

<http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/joint-organisations> (see ‘Related Downloads’ in right-hand menu bar).

Councils have until the 16th October 2015 to make a submission in relation to the paper.

Included on the agenda for the September Meeting of Council will be a meeting with representatives of the Rural and Remote Medical Services (RaRMS) who have been awarded the contract to provide Medical Services to Bourke.

Advice has been received that the transition of services from OCHRE Health to RaRMS will take place over the weekend 28th and 29th November 2015. From my understanding the transition should be relatively seamless with no interruption to services at all.

RaRMS have been successful in gaining contracts in a number of towns and will stage the introduction of their services.

RaRMS are also currently in Warren, Gilgandra, Warialda and Tenterfield.

There have been a number of changes to the Mayors and Deputy Mayors across the OROC Region and other parts of the State as the Annual Elections for Mayor and Deputy Mayors are held. A number have been decided via draw from a hat which is the procedure in the case where two (2) candidates have an equal number of votes.

The Bourke Swimming Pool will be open for the summer season this Saturday, 19th September 2015 which is the first day of the school holidays. New pool lessee Cathy Lowe is looking forward to the forthcoming season and has been busy getting the pool ready. The weather has already started to warm up and no doubt the pool will become an increasingly popular venue as the summer approaches.

The State Librarian, Dr Alex Byrne visited Bourke Public Library last week and met with library staff and took the opportunity to inspect the facilities that exist. Alex presented Library Manager, Jodi Hatch with a book as a memento of his visit.

Congratulations to Bourke High School on the 50th Anniversary of the school. I attended their Mardi Gras fete on Friday night and would like to congratulate the staff, students and the members of the Parents and Citizens Association on their efforts. It was good to see the level of help that was available.

The Hospital Fete was also held over the weekend and once again was very successful with the dedicated members of the Local Hospital Auxiliary to be congratulated on their efforts in raising funds to assist in the provision of facilities for the Hospital.

The next Meeting of Barwon Darling Water is scheduled to be held on the 7th October 2015 at the Walgett Sporting Club and will commence at 10.00am. The General Meeting will be preceded by an Annual General Meeting.

Barwon Darling Water is an important lobby group for irrigators and other water users along the river system and no doubt the issues of embargoes will figure prominently on the agenda. Enquiries should be directed to the Executive Officer, Ian Cole on 0429 722 857.

The 2015 Tour de OROC will visit Bourke on the 7th October 2015 with around 26 people in the party including support drivers and other coordination staff. Bourke Shire Council will join with Bourke Rotary Club in coordinating the visit to town. Accommodation has been

arranged for 20 of the group with the other six having the use of the Tour de OROC caravan facilities.

The Rotary Club and Bourke Shire will be hosting a welcome to town / fundraiser on the night of the 7th October 2015 at the Port of Bourke Hotel.

Tour De OROC aims to raise funds for the construction of Macquarie Homestay which is accommodation for patients and family of patients at the new Dubbo Base Hospital.

On Thursday night last week, I joined representatives from other organisations in attending a function organised by TAFE Western so that they could detail the opportunities that they could provide to the broader Bourke community.

The next morning the Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown and I met with TAFE representatives to discuss opportunities that exist for Bourke Shire and its employees.

In news received last week, following the restructure of the Rural Counselling Services across Australia that the Bourke Rural Counselling Service will be absorbed into the Central Rural Counselling Service which is one of three Counselling services to be funded to meet the needs of NSW. The Bourke Rural Counselling Services could tender to provide the services across the entire region but would need to 'Gear Up' significantly and it is likely that an existing provider of similar services would be better placed with the required resources and infrastructure already in place. This decision will be one for the Board to determine.

The Bourke Rural Financial Counselling Service has proved a valuable service for the community over the years and being locally based and administered has been able to keep touch with the needs of the local farmers and build a high degree of trust and confidence something that is not achieved overnight.

The current contracts will come to an end as at 31st March 2016 and after that the way in which the service will be delivered will be the responsibility of the successful tenderer.

The potential centralisation of the service will not necessarily translate into loss of jobs in Bourke however, this is yet to be clarified but it will mean a loss of the local decision making and unfortunately the drift of the administrative functions and jobs to the larger regional centres continues to impact on the viability of the smaller centres in regional Australia and this is yet another example of this happening.

Quote of the Week!

"We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone". - Ronald Reagan

Ross Earl
General Manager