



“From the GM’s Desk”

10th March 2016



The Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis, Deputy Mayor, Cr Barry Hollman and I joined with delegates from other Councils in the Western Division and representatives from a number of Councils in attending the Annual Conference of the Western Division held in Lightning Ridge on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The Conference featured a number of excellent speakers who were able to update delegates on a number of matters which will impact on the Council over the next few years.

Cr Keith Rhoades, the President of Local Government New South Wales was in attendance as was the Chief Executive of the organization, Donna Rygate. Cr Rhoades gave an interesting update on the Local Government Reform process including updating the delegates on number of the mergers proposals previously proposed, that are now subject to possible change.

Bourke Shire Council submitted 11 motions for consideration at the conference and each of the motions were passed.

The motions presented were as follows:-

1. That the additional responsibilities undertaken by the Deputy Mayor be recognized in a change to the Local Government Act that allows an additional fee to be paid to the holder of the Office of Deputy Mayor in addition to the fee they receive as a Councillor.
2. That Local Government New South Wales continue to lobby the Commonwealth Government to increase the amount of funding available to the Mobile Black Spots Program to ensure a greater access to mobile services to all residents and in particular those in rural and regional Australia
3. That Local Government New South Wales be asked to ensure that the introduction of the New South Wales Container Deposit Scheme takes into consideration the low volumes that will be generated in regional and remote areas.
4. That the increase in State Government fees and charges applicable to Local Government be capped at the same level as the IPART determination for rates each year, with any deviation from that amount having to be justified by IPART.
5. That Local Government New South Wales be asked to clarify the operation of the proposed Emergency Services Levy which is to apply to all properties and collected on behalf of the State Government by Councils.
6. That the State Government is asked to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Social Services as expeditiously as possible.
7. That both the State and Federal Governments be asked to factor in the area of each electorate as well as the population when determining the electorates.
8. That the New South Wales State Government be requested to re-introduce an effective Decentralization strategy for New South Wales to encourage the location and /or establishment of businesses in regional and rural New South Wales. One of the starting points may be to halt the centralization of Government services.
9. That the Murray Darling Association be strongly supported in their efforts in seeking the establishment of a Fresh Water Research Institute at Bourke.

10. That the current policy of Housing NSW does not allow the supply of air-conditioners in public housing be reviewed in the Western area of New South Wales where the temperature often exceeds 40 degrees well into the evening.
 11. That Local Government New South Wales be asked to seek an assurance from both the State Government and Essential Energy that proposed cut backs to staff in rural and regional New South Wales will not impact on their ability to respond to calls to restore power in times of outage.
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The conference also saw the election of Officer Bearers for the ensuing twelve months with Cr Leigh Byron the Mayor of Balranald replacing Cr John Medcalf from Lachlan Shire as President while Cr David Lane Mayor of Walgett elected as Vice President with Cr Steve O'Halloran of Balranald and Cr Peter Nunan from Wentworth being elected to the Executive.

With the Local Government reform process gathering momentum those elected to the Executive positions will no doubt be kept busy.

Bourke Shire Council continues to play an important role in trying to coordinate the purchase of video conferencing facilities for each of the eight (8) Councils who are members of the proposed Far West Initiative.

Funding for the purchase of the equipment was announced by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Paul Toole, MP a few weeks ago and I am now part of a working party tasked with the coordination of the purchase. Other members of the task force come from the Department of Heritage and Planning and the Office of Local Government.

Bourke Shire Information Systems Coordinator, Damien Slack-Smith has undertaken much of the initial research in relation to products that would be suitable to all Councils.

It is hoped to have the equipment installed as quickly as possible to negate the amount of travelling involved.

Aquawest, the company who will be undertaking the work involved in the connection of Walkden's Bore to the water treatment plant are currently in town undertaking the work required on the connection and commissioning of pump stations, which will see this project finally completed.

Council staff have finalised the preparation of the Draft Operational Plan (Budget) which will go to the Corporate Planning Committee on Monday, 14th March 2016 for review and subject to any amendments the Operational Plan will then be submitted to Council for its endorsement and approval to advertise and seek public comment.

Tomorrow (11th March) the Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis and I will join with other members of the Far West Initiative Advisory Committee on a teleconference to discuss the progress in the development of proposals relation to the Far West Initiative. The Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Paul Toole, MP has also indicated that he will participate in the teleconference.

The Far West Advisory Committee will also be meeting in Wentworth on the 6th April to undertake a preliminary review of a discussion paper which is being prepared in relation to the Far West Initiative. The Discussion Paper is planned for public release early in the new financial year and it is important that Local Government representatives have the opportunity to review the paper prior to its release.

Council staff are currently preparing grants applications for a number of projects including the Water Treatment Plant and many of these grants require a considerable amount of time if you are to give yourself the best opportunity of being successful.

Council services over the Easter weekend will essentially be as normal with no alteration to garbage collections.

The only significant change will be the closure of the Waste Management facility in Bourke on Good Friday (25th March 2016) and on Easter Sunday (27th March 2016).

Plans for the Back to Bourke Festivities over the Easter weekend are coming together very well and everything looks to be in place to ensure a great weekend.

Annette and I attended the Annual Conference of Rotary District 9670 in Mudgee last weekend and met up with the Taiwanese Group Study team once again and they are still very much enjoying their stay in Australia. The conference was a great experience with several world class speakers in attendance. I also caught up with a number of friends from Mudgee as well as a number of other people whom I had met over the years both through work and also socially.

The tourist season will shortly be in full swing and the Jandra will commence running on Monday, 14th March, and the Crossley Engine will also be in operation on a daily basis.

Quote of the Week!

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing.

Pele

Ross Earl
General Manager