



“From the GM’s Desk” 7th July 2016



The official naming of the Bridge over the Bogan River at Beemery as the “Wayne O’Mally Bridge” took place last Friday and was undertaken by the Hon. Duncan Gay MLC Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight together with the Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries. Speakers referred in glowing terms of Wayne’s contribution to Bourke and District. Wayne’s wife Patty and children Stephen, Natalie, Karen and Trevor and the thirteen grandchildren and his sister Nea were all in attendance along with other members of the family and numerous family friends together with other representatives of the Bourke community, and neighbouring Councils and many others who had travelled to be there for the day. The plaque was unveiled by Wayne and Patty’s grandchildren, in a spontaneous gesture, suggested by Minister Gay and provided a very nice touch to the ceremony and obviously a proud moment for all of the grandchildren. In addition to unveiling a plaque the actual bridge sign denoting the “Wayne O’Mally Bridge” adjacent to the highway was also unveiled by Patty O’Mally assisted by Minister Duncan Gay and the Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries.

The Bourke community was very well served by Wayne O’Mally via a number of roles over a long period of time and the naming of the bridge in his memory will ensure that his contribution will be etched in people’s minds for many years to come.

Council has received advice that there has been a change in the methodology utilised in the calculation of the annual contributions to the Rural Fire Service (RFS) by Councils and the idea of the new methodology was to level out the variations in contributions which have traditionally varied in line with projects undertaken.

The new methodology has resulted in a factor being developed for each Council based on their average spend from the total RFS budget over the past twenty years and the change was not meant to have a significant impact on any Council, with the 20 years period adopted meant to smooth out any major variations. Manager of Corporate Services Leonie Brown and I have calculated the increase for Bourke Shire Council and Brewarrina Shires as both Councils have a shared service agreement as part of the Barwon Darling Zone of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Bourke Shire Council undertakes the administrative function on behalf of the two Councils.

The proposed increase for each council is a staggering 27.46% well above the 1.8% rate increase allowable under the rate pegging legislation. It amounts to an increase of around \$23,500 for each Council and some would say that this is not a huge amount in a \$25 million dollar budget but it represents over 80% of the \$28,000.00 additional revenue able to be raised via the 1.8% increase for Bourke Shire and over 140% of the revenue from an increase in revenue as a result of the 1.8% rate increase for Brewarrina Shire. Both Councils will be seeking to have the figure reviewed. Increases of contributions of that level cannot be sustained by Councils.

Representatives from the Rural Fire Services were at the meeting of the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) of Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) last week in Dubbo and the indications were that increases would not be as dramatic.

Bourke Shire will be seeking the support of the member Councils of OROC in its presentations to have the calculation reviewed; however, preliminary indications are that the new methodology will be introduced regardless of any representations. The issue is compounded by the fact that this methodology will be also used in future years and it will be an additional ongoing cost.

Council has also been advised that it has been successful in its application for funding under the 2016/2017 Safer Roads Aboriginal Safety Works 2016/2017 Programme obtaining a grant of \$315,000.00 to undertake works at Enngonia. The work to be undertaken under the programme includes the shoulder widening in Clara Hart Street, the Shoulder widening from Clara Hart Village to the Waste Management Facility and the Shoulder widening from Clara Hart Village to the cemetery. The works will also entail the sealing of approximately one kilometre of the roadway leading to the village.

Council Engineering staff will undertake the work in conjunction with other works planned in the area in accordance with its established works schedule.

The success in obtaining this grant builds upon the grants already received recently and will go a long way towards enhancing the amenity and facilities within the towns and villages in the Shire and improve the efficient and effectiveness of the operation of Council generally.

There has been a good level of inquiry to date in relation to documentation regarding the tenders being called for the construction of the Splash Park at the Bourke Swimming Pool Complex and it is hoped that we will get a good response when tenders close. Following the opening of the tenders received and the subsequent assessment by staff and our consultant architect a report will be prepared that will be referred to the July meeting for a decision on the successful tenderer so that work can commence as quickly as possible.

A mid-year meeting of Western Division Councils will be held in Cobar on the 11th July 2016 and Bourke Shire Council will be represented by Mayor, Councillor Andrew Lewis, Councillors Jack Bennett and Cec Dorrington and myself. One of the items on the agenda is the proposal for a Fresh Water Research Station in Bourke which is a project being championed by Councillor Bennett. Also on the agenda will a concept involving the diversion of water from the Clarence River on the NSW north coast to the west of the state which is a project that has been around for some time. The project has again been put up for consideration by Griffith City Council given the ongoing issues in relation to the flows in our river system, the cutbacks in allocation and the social and economic impact caused to many towns as a result. Bourke Shire Council has resolved to support the undertaking of a feasibility study into the project.

Mayor, Councillor Andrew Lewis and I will be travelling to Gilgandra tomorrow (Friday) to attend the quarterly meeting of the Orana Regional Organisation of Council's (OROC). It is likely that OROC will become a Joint Organisation of Councils if the current direction of the State Government is followed. Bourke Shire Council will seek to retain its affiliation with OROC despite being identified as a member of the Far West initiative.

The "Discussion Paper" in relation to the Far West Initiative (FWI) is due to be released this week to members of the Far West Initiative Advisory Committee and then to the public next week. As with all these things the release date is a projected date only, however, it would appear that the release is imminent.

Congratulations to Mark Coulton on his re-election as member for Parkes following the Federal Election held on the weekend. Council has enjoyed an excellent relationship with Mark and we look forward to continuing this relationship over his next term of office.

The Enngonia Races are on this Saturday and it is generally a great day out with a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere. It is a credit to the small community of Enngonia that they are able to stage such an event. No doubt the committee will be looking at the weather forecast over the next couple of days with a number of meetings being cancelled due to rain over the past few years. If you enjoy a good day of racing or simply a good day out, get up to Enngonia for the races this weekend.

Quote of the week!

"There is no such thing as public opinion. There is only published opinion

Winston Churchill"

Ross Earl
General Manager