



“From the GM’s Desk” 8th September 2016



The Local Government Elections will be held this Saturday, 10th September 2016.

Details in relation to the location of polling places, times for voting as well as a list of candidates is available from the website www.votensw.info

There will be polling places at:-

- Bourke
- Enngonia
- Wanaaring
- Louth

Pre-Poll Voting facilities continue to be available at Council Offices at 29 Mitchell Street from 8.30am – 4.30pm today (Thursday) and tomorrow (Friday).

Voting is compulsory.

Whilst there is Absentee Voting available in the Local Government Elections, persons enrolled for Bourke Shire can also vote in Cobar as the Returning Officer is located in Cobar and additionally the Sydney Town Hall has facilities for voting in respect of all Councils across New South Wales who are conducting elections.

Not all Councils will be having election as some have recently been merged and others have been identified for possible merger and the elections for each of those type of Councils has been deferred.

It you are not registered to vote in Bourke but elsewhere in the state you should check to see if your Council has an election on the 10th September 2016 by going to www.votensw.info

The current Councillors will cease to hold office at midnight on the 9th September 2016 with the Councillors for the next quadrennial term commencing office once the poll for the election to be held on Saturday, 10th September is declared which will probably be towards the later part of next week judging on previous years.

The position of Mayor where the Mayor is elected by Councillors also becomes vacant at midnight on the 9th September 2016 and will remain vacant until the next Mayor is elected.

The much anticipated Discussion Paper in relation to the Far West Initiative was released on Friday, 26th August and can be accessed by visiting the website <http://www.nsw.gov.au/far-west-initiative>

As part of the process in ensuring that all residents have an understanding of the concept of the Far West Initiative and have the opportunity to have input the Office of Local Government (OLG) have indicated that they would be undertaking an extensive consultation process which will see meetings held in the vast majority of towns and villages within the area covered by the Far West Initiative.

The timetable for the consultative process has yet to be released; however, I understand that the intent is still to finish the consultation period on the 14th October 2016.

Once the consultation details for Bourke Shire has been finalised Council will ensure that they are available via its website.

The President of Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW) Keith Rhoades and Chief Executive Donna Rygate were due to visit Bourke on the 14th September 2016 and meet with the Mayor, Councillors, myself and other managers. However, due to the recent changes in relation to the term of Mayor that position will be vacant and it is highly likely that the result of the election will not be determined by that date. Unfortunately, Keith Rhoades is himself now unable to make the trip with Donna to be accompanied by one of the Policy Advisors from LGNSW.

Leonie Brown, Manager of Corporate Services and I participated in two (2) Seminars earlier this week to learn little more about the proposed Emergency Services Property Levy (ESPL) which will be introduced on the 1st July 2017.

What this means is the Fire Services Levy which is on property insurance policies will be removed from those policies and will be collected by way a of charge on the annual rate notice. The idea behind the concept is to ensure that persons who have elected not to be insured bare a portion of the costs associated with the funding of the emergency services which attend fires whether or not the owner of the property is insured.

It should be clear to all that this levy while it will be placed on the rate notice **IS NOT A LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHARGE BUT A STATE GOVERNMENT CHARGE** and all funds collected will go to the State Government to assist in the funding of emergency services.

Councils have until the end of the year to classify land to meet requirements in regard to the classification of land and persons with vacant land will be able to make application to have their land classified as such after April 2017.

Whilst the intent is for the changes to be in place by the 1st July 2017 there is still a number of issues to be worked through, and how Councils will be compensated for the additional work involved, being one of those issues.

Councils will each receive "initial funding" of \$4000 plus \$1 per head of population to assist with the work required in the classification exercise. When you consider Councils in the eastern suburbs of Sydney have a population density of over 8,000 person square kilometre compared to Bourke Shire's 0.7 persons per square kilometre there will need to be an adjustment as clearly the costs for the less densely populated areas will be significantly higher and Treasury have indicated that they will assist Councils so that they will not be out of pocket.

Councils in the west of the state will continue to highlight the additional financial costs to them due to the amount of travel involved.

There is a considerable amount of work to be done and it will again put additional strain on the limited resources of small Councils such as Bourke.

The Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill 2016 No. 38 (NSW) was assented to on 30th August 2016 and Gazetted on the 2nd September 2016. The provisions of this Act will amend the Local Government Act 1993 No. 30 (NSW):-

- Mayors elected by Councillors on or after 30 August 2016 will hold office for two years.
- All mayors and Councillors are required to take an oath or affirmation of office before they can perform their functions and duties.
- Determination of the organisation structure of a Council is by the governing body of the Council, in consultation with the general manager for senior staff positions and by the general manager for the remainder of the structure
- Expenses and facilities policies are to be adopted by a Council within 12 months of the term of a new Council and policy amendments are no longer required to be specifically notified to the Office of Local Government.
- Countback provisions will not be available to fill casual vacancies occurring in the office of a Councillor following the 2016 ordinary elections.

These are some of the Phase 1 amendments with others to be put in place over time.

Council has received advice from Telstra that as a result Council's representation that they will not be removing one (1) of the two (2) phones located adjacent to the Post Office as they had initially planned.

Council has sought a review of the Telstra decision based on the fact that Bourke had no reception for some mobile networks which caused problems for a number of tourists in town coupled with the fact the maintenance of the two (2) existing phones would provide a much higher degree of insurance against breakdowns.

While the phones will not be removed Telstra will be replacing the pedestal that holds both cabinets.

As mentioned last week Council will be hosting a function to recognise the contribution to both Bourke Shire and Western New South Wales made by Andrew Lewis during his period of 14 years as a Councillor of Bourke Shire Council and in particular the last eight (8) years when he served as Mayor. The function will be held at the Back O' Bourke Centre on Saturday, 24th September 2016 between 6.30 and 9.30pm.

An invitation is issued to all those who would like to attend and recognise Andrew's contribution to our community and RSPV's should be given to Council by 16th September 2016 by phoning 68308000 or via email bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au

Quote of the week!

"When life gives you a hundred reasons to cry, show life that you have a thousand reasons to smile."

- Unknown

Ross Earl
General Manager