



“From the GM’s Desk”

8th December 2016



Bourke Shire Council hosted the Board Meeting of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) last week with the visiting members given the opportunity to visit the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre and then join together for a meal on Thursday evening. A number of Bourke Shire Councillors also took the opportunity to join with the members of the OROC board for the evening and discuss issues relating to Local Government within the region. It is likely that the Board of OROC will only meet in each of the member Council areas once each four (4) years.

During the evening the opportunity was taken to make a presentation to ex- Bourke Mayor, Andrew Lewis in recognition of his contribution to OROC whilst being Mayor of Bourke with Andrew having been one of the vice – chairs of OROC. Another recipient of a presentation on the night was Stewart McLeod, the retiring Director of Technical Services at Dubbo Regional Council, for his dedicated service to the Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (LMWUA). Stewart was largely responsible for bringing the LMWUA from a fledgling organisation to being an organisation which has become both highly regarded within all tiers of Government and often cited as an example of how significant outcomes can be achieved through collaboration of a number of Councils working together for the benefit of all concerned.

The meeting of OROC was also the Annual General Meeting of the Organisation and saw elections conducted for the leadership team of OROC resulting in Councillor Rex Wilson OAM, Mayor of Warren being elected as Chairman and Councillor Doug Batten, Mayor of Gilgandra being elected as Deputy Chairman. There is still one Deputy Chair position to be filled and that will be done at the next meeting of OROC scheduled for Mudgee on the 10th March 2017.

The meeting had a very full agenda with speakers including Kevin Pugh from NSW Treasury speaking on the introduction of the Emergency Services Property Levy (ESPL) which will see the funding for the emergency services within NSW taken from a levy on insurance policies and included on rate notices. This will have a considerable impact on Local Government both in terms of land classification and other preliminary work together with the administrative burden in levying and collecting the levy. The concept behind the charge is to ensure that all properties contribute to the cost of providing emergency services in the State.

The members of OROC also heard from the Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries MP on a number of issues including the Local Government Reform process, the Far West initiative, infrastructure funding and road funding.

The meeting of OROC in Bourke coincided with the Bourke Community Consultation meeting conducted by the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) and the recently announced amendments to the Plan which will see a reduction of water to be recovered as part of the plan. The Chair of the MDBA Neil Andrew was invited to speak to OROC given all Councils had a strong interest in the MDBP both from the perspective of being major users of water in their own right but also as advocates on behalf of their community, many of who have a strong reliance on water for agriculture.

Whilst in Sydney last Friday week, I took the opportunity to have discussions with both the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the consulting firm which was responsible to a large degree for coordinating the last tender process in relation to the establishment of an air service for Bourke and Walgett. Whilst our local Member Kevin Humphries, MP was in town last week I also took the opportunity to follow up on these discussions with him. Mr Humphries and I will continue to work together on this important project and which will hopefully result in the securing of a much needed air service for this part of the state.

The meetings in relation to the review process for the update of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) continued during the week with meetings conducted at Louth, Byrock and Bourke.

The remaining community consultation meetings will be held today, 8th December 2016:-

Fords Bridge	9.30am
Enngonia	1.00pm

There will be other meetings held early next year with these meetings targeting specific groups within the community including, the rural sector, youth services, children's services, aged services and disability services to mention but a few.

These meetings will be advertised and I would encourage members of the public to attend the meetings and provide input into the future direction that should be taken by Council on behalf of our community and in particular to have an input in their particular area of interest and/or concern.

Mayor Barry Hollman reminds residents that each Monday he will be available to meet with members of the community between 2.00pm and 4.00pm at the Council Offices to discuss any issues of concern.

Nominations are now open for the 2017 Bourke Shire Australia Day Awards. Nominations will be accepted up until 11th January 2017.

Please take the time to nominate someone and ensure that the unsung heroes within our community are recognised.

Although there is still a while to go before nominations close we are moving into the festive and holiday periods and the reminders issued through the Western Herald won't be available and it is easy to miss the closing date.

Don't say "someone" will nominate a person, **be that "someone"!**

As in previous years there will be some changes in the operation of Council over the Christmas-New Year period. The Council Offices, Library and Service New South Wales Office will shut from the afternoon of the 23rd December and won't re-open until the 3rd January 2017. A full list of any changes to Council's normal operations have been advertised in the Western Herald and are also on Council's website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

Councils in NSW are required each year to produce an Annual Report by the 30th November following the close of the preceding financial year. Bourke Shire Council has completed and lodged its Annual Report with the Minister for Local Government and copies of the Annual Report are also available for viewing at Council's Office, Bourke Public Library and on the website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

The decision by IPART to fix the allowable rate increase for Councils for 2017/2018 fixed at 1.5% has raised concerns that the increase falls well short of the increases in expenditure faced by Councils which are estimated to be double the proposed rate increase.

In light of the small increase available to Bourke Shire Council and the increased call for additional services and the cost of providing its existing services, Council will be carefully monitoring its current levels of expenditure. Council's management team will be looking for increases in efficiencies and economies to ensure it is able to continue to provide its current level of services across the Shire. The continued pressure on Council's budget is also being felt by all Councils across the state as we continue to be asked to do more with less.

A reminder to all residents that Bourke Shire Council now has its own Facebook page!

<https://www.facebook.com/bourkeshireCouncil>

The Facebook page will complement the information currently available on the website and will include such things as road condition reports, Council's Events, notification of planned water outages and seek feedback in relation to planned activities.

I would like to congratulate Gerry Collins who works with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and is based out of Councils Offices on her recent award. Gerry was the recipient of one (1) of two (2) individual Secretary's Awards given to the staff of DPC by their Departmental Secretary. It is a very prestigious award and the awards were announced and presented at a ceremony attended by the Premier of New South, the Hon Mike Baird, MP.

The award was given to someone who embodies the Department of Premier and Cabinet's "Secretary's Award for Living Our Values Individual Award".

Given the size of the DPC and the responsibilities and functions undertaken by members of the staff it certainly speaks volumes for the Gerry's work ethic and performance in her role. It is good to see that the work and achievements of persons in rural and remote areas are recognised.

Quote of the week!

"Live as if you were going to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were going to live forever."

Ross Earl
General Manager