



## “From the GM’s Desk” 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017



Manager of Tourism and Development, Phil Johnston, represented Bourke Shire Council in Dubbo this week during the Productivity Commissions review into the Telecommunications Universal Services Obligations. These obligations at present outline a minimum standard that should be met in regards to our fixed phone network and is investigating what the potential impact might be if these obligations are reduced or removed. While the effect of removing the obligations may be negligible where there is good broadband and mobile services the effects will be significant on regional and remote areas that do not enjoy the same level of services. Bourke Shire Council has submitted a written response to the draft review with others such as the ICPA, CWA and Regional Development Australia speaking in front of the commission earlier this week.

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The New Splash Park at the Bourke War Memorial Olympic Pool has been opened and it has been very well received by all members of the community.

While there was a slight delay in finishing the project, I am sure that the wait has been well worth it and with the temperatures in the forties during the week it will be very well patronised.

The construction of the Splash Park was identified as a community priority in the Community Strategic Plan.

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Another project completed over the past week has been the resealing and renewal of line marking at the Bourke Airport which encountered some delays due to the wet weather. The project was well managed by the Airport Supervisor, Matthew McCorkle and involved the closing of the strip for several hours on end and still making provision for planes from the RFDS and other to be able to land. A project involving the airstrip is often quite complex.

The next stage in the airport upgrade will be the installation of new lights which will commence this month.

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The Western Division Councils in New South Wales will be holding their Annual Conference in Dareton of the 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017; the Conference Host is Wentworth Shire Council. A number of Ministers have been invited to attend; however, with the changes to cabinet their ability to attend may be impacted by prior commitments. The Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Lachlan Ford and I will be attending. It is hope that the New Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton MP will be able to find the time to attend.

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One of the speakers at the Western Division Conference will be James McTavish the NSW Cross Border Commissioner and his acceptance to attend is timely on two (2) counts.

The first being the issue this week, of the Statement of Principles and Priorities for Cross Border Collaboration in the 2016-2019 period was announced by the New South Wales and Queensland State Governments in a joint statement.

The second being the fact that Bulloo Shire who are based at Thargomindah and have written to Council seeking the formalisation of a Memorandum of Understanding between Bourke and Bulloo Shires in relation to tourism. The increased cooperation between the two (2) Councils was discussed when Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman and Councillor Victor Bartley attended a meeting of Bullo Shire at Hungerford last year.

Bourke Shire Council has also has discussions with Paroo Shire based at Cunnamulla via their Mayor, Councillor Lindsay Godfrey. It is fair to say that cooperation between Councils should not be restricted to within your own state, with the opportunity to have regionally based initiatives that cross state borders is well overdue.

It would seem a good project for the Outback Shires Alliance (Bourke Walgett and Brewarrina) to meet with their cross border neighbours in Bulloo, Paroo and Balonne Shires.

We will look forward to progressing these opportunities prior to the 2017 tourism season.

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Work will commence over the next few weeks in the compilation of the Operational Plan (Budget) for Bourke Shire for 2017/2018. At the last meeting Council resolved that the budget be prepared on the basis of adopting the 1.5% maximum increase in General Rate announced late last year by IPART.

The low level of increase will make the budget extremely tight and the management team will be doing everything possible to identify efficiencies and savings.

Over the next three (3) weeks, Council will be seeking input from residents on any items that they would like to see considered for inclusion in the Operational Plan and these could range from major projects to requests for financial assistance from small organisations with the shire. Additionally, any suggestions for the increase or decrease in service levels will be given consideration all requests should be in writing for the attention of the Manager of Corporate Services.

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Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman and I had the opportunity to welcome riders who took part in the Fred Hollows Foundation WOW! Ride, which finished up in Bourke last Friday. Over 30 motorcyclists braved the heat and long distance to undertake the ride and in doing so were able to raise around \$12,000 for the Fred Hollows Foundation.

All riders were impressed with the presentation of Bourke and the suggestion has been made that Bourke should try and further capitalise on the Motorcycle Tourism. No doubt this opportunity will be evaluated at every opportunity.

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The details contained with the submissions in relation to the Far West Initiative are being evaluated and a summary was to be referred to the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Paul Toole, MP for his review and decision. No doubt the statements that have been made in relation to the Local Government Reform Process and in particular as to whether proposed amalgamations of identified Councils will continue may have some bearing on the timing on future announcements in relation to the Far West Initiative. Hopefully the new Minister will be attending the Western Division Conference in Dareton and will be in a position to provide a further update during the course of the conference.

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Council has commenced its review of the Community Strategic Plan with Community Meetings taking place late last year and further meetings of interest Groups taking place over the next few weeks. An advertisement detailing the times and dates of those meetings will be in today's edition of the Western Herald. These interest groups include disability services, youth, aged care, arts and sporting groups.

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Council in September resolved to hold its meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the Month. However, it has been identified that these dates may not prove suitable to all Councillors in 2017 and as such consideration may be given to reverting back to a Monday or identifying another day. Due to the Western Division Conference clashing with the proposed date for the February Meeting it will be brought forward until the 21<sup>st</sup> February commencing at 9.00am

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Council in conjunction with Bourke Rotary will be hosting the Annual Welcome to Bourke Night on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017 at the Bourke Swimming Pool. All new residents are invited to attend and this would include anyone who has been in Bourke less than twelve (12) months. Given there are a number of new people in town it provides the opportunity to showcase the town and the facilities, sporting and social groups that are available. It would assist with catering if intending attendees could notify Letitia Tiffen, Council's Community and Governance Officer at Council.

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Council will be joining with Councillors and staff from Brewarrina in attending an Asset Management Workshop in Bourke on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Each of the Councils has a significant amount of assets and when roads are included Bourke Shire has over \$200 million in assets and Brewarrina would be not far behind. The management of these assets is extremely important and for Councils with low rate bases and a large number of competing priorities the allocation of funding can be a challenge. The workshops are an initiative of the Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (LMWUA) and aims to give Councillors a greater appreciation of their role and the complexity involved in asset management.

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Congratulations to all the recipients of awards in the 2017 Australia Day Awards and a big thankyou to everyone who submitted nominations.

Winners of the awards below:-

AWARD	RECIPIENT
Citizen of the Year	Michael Keenan
Young Citizen of the Year	Claire Hand
Sportsperson of the Year	Jacinta Smith-Robins
Young Sportsperson the Year	Sophie Bowden
Community Service through Employment	Weefah, Jeffrey and Charlie
Community Event of the Year	Bourke's Ain't Caught Nuffin Fishing Club

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In December, Bourke Shire Council received advice that the proposed increase of around 27% in relation to the contribution to the Rural Fire Service will be offset by a one off transitional grant to enable Councils to be able to better budget for the increase. The increase will be effective in the 2017/2018 financial year. Council has resolved to once again point out to the Rural Fire Service that increases of this magnitude are unsustainable for small Councils. Council will be seeking the support of the other impacted Western Division Councils in their attempts to seek a revision of the new funding formula.

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Quote of the week!

*"Be the reason someone smiles today"*

Ross Earl  
General Manager