



“From the GM’s Desk” 23rd February 2017



The NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon. John Barilaro, MP, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business will be the key note speaker at the Western Division Shire Conference to be held in Wentworth commencing on Sunday, 26th February and finishing on Tuesday, 28th February 2017. Also attending the Conference will be the Member for Murray, Adrian Piccoli and the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Division, Rick Colless MLC.

The Deputy Premier will attend the conference all day on the Monday and join delegates for the Conference Dinner that night. We are fortunate that the Deputy Premier has been able to make his time available to attend particularly given his busy schedule.

One of the questions that will no doubt be asked of the Deputy Premier will be the future of the Far West Initiative (FWI) and if it is to continue, what form it will take and how it will be funded.

The Mayor, Councillor, Barry Hollman, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Lachlan Ford and I will travel to Wentworth for the conference and will be interested to hear the address and comments from the Deputy Premier.

Bourke Shire Council has lodged a number of motions to the conference, some of which are designed to reinforce the existing policy of the Local Government Association of New South Wales whilst others deal with contemporary issues within Local Government.

The Welcome to Bourke Night held on Tuesday at the Bourke Swimming Pool was very well attend with around 80 people in attendance and it was also good to see a number of representatives from the various organisations in town.

The function was hosted by Bourke Shire Council in conjunction with Bourke Rotary Club and representatives of both organisations were on hand to welcome the newcomers to town with each of the new residents receiving an information pack.

At the Western Division Conference in Wentworth I intend catching up with the Cross Border Commissioner, James McTavish to progress the concept of the cross border promotion of Southwest Queensland and Northwest New South Wales from a tourism perspective. The area has a lot to offer and if we can encourage visiting the area each of the towns can promote the attractions of the neighbouring towns no matter which side of the border they are located. I have raised the cross border tourism promotion with Local Member, Kevin Humphries, MP and he provided the suggestion that we look to James as the first contact point.

Dan Simmons resigned from his role at Brewarrina in November 2016 and his last day as General Manager of Brewarrina will be tomorrow 24th February 2017. Dan and I have enjoyed a good working relationship, sharing information and opinions and we have worked together on a number of matters as well as travelling to meetings together. I would like to wish him all the best for the future as he moves back to the central west.

The “red alert” for blue green alae at Louth remains in place and the issue of amber alerts for a number of other locations, including Bourke, a reminder to all residents to exercise caution in those parts of the river.

If we continue to get hot weather and low river flows there will be an increased probability of getting further outbreaks along the river system.

Full details in relation to what the alerts mean for domestic, recreational and stock use is contained on the New South Wales Department of Water website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

The height in the Darling River has been around 4.06 metres over the past few days.

Council staff members regularly monitor the flows and try and estimate the impact of these flows locally and it is anticipated that the flow will continue to go over the weir for a little while yet.

Again, I remind residents to be “water wise” and don’t waste water.

The introduction of the New South Wales Emergency Services Property Levy (ESPL) will see a charge appear on 2017/2018 rate notices to cover the cost of providing emergency services within our community. The charge was previously attached to insurance policies, however, with a number of people electing not to insure, this method was deemed to place an unfair burden on those who did insure and the attaching of a charge to a rate is seen as a more equitable way of providing the funding. I SHOULD STRESS THAT WHILST THE CHARGE LEVIED WILL BE COLLECTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RATES. THE MONEY COLLECTED FOR THE ESPL WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND WILL NOT REMAIN WITH COUNCILS. Councils will levy the charge and collect it and will receive a fee for doing so but it will effectively be on a cost recovery basis.

As part of the charge for the ESPL new Land Values for all Councils have been issued and will be utilised for the levy of the 2017/2018 rates. The new valuations will ensure that there is a consistency of charges for all Councils in relation to the ESPL.

Bourke Shire only had new land values put in place two years ago and the introduction of this latest valuation will see some changes to the rates levied on individual properties.

The total valuation of the Shire has increased dramatically over the past two (2) years and has jumped by around 38% with the total valuation for the Shire going from \$150,000,000 to \$213,000,000.

The biggest increase will be in the farmland category where the average increase is around 45%.

Council's TOTAL rate income for general rate is pegged at 1.5% so the TOTAL rate income can only increase by the 1.5%; however, the rates for individuals will depend on whether or not their valuation increase was above or below their category average.

There are some significant increases to some properties well in excess of their category average and the Valuer General will be sending out valuation notices to all owners which will detail the new valuations applicable to all properties.

Any queries in relation to valuation should be directed to the office of the Valuer General whose contact details will appear on the valuation notice.

Council accounting staff, as well as undertaking their normal duties are also preparing for the change to a new computer software package which will hopefully take place early in the 2017/2018 financial year. Whilst the software will be primarily focussed on accounting applications a number of the modules will be installed that will be beneficial to other departments across Council. The new system will provide the opportunity to more readily access data in a format required by some of the agencies to whom we regularly report.

Local racehorse trainer, James Hatch, will be taking his horse Stoneyrise to Sydney for the final of the Country Championship following its victory in the Western Racing Country Championship Qualifier held at Dubbo on the weekend.

The final of the Country Championship has prizemoney of \$400,000.00 and will be run at Royal Randwick on the 1st April and Stoneyrise will no doubt have the support of lots of local horning racing enthusiasts on this big occasion.

James is based at Hungerford and despite only having a very small team in training has been very successful, and this win and the impending trip to Randwick is certainly a significant milestone in his career.

Stoneyrise had its first race as a maiden at the Bourke Races in 2014.

Quote of the Week!

"You are never too old to set another goal of the dream another dream"

Les Brown

Ross Earl
General Manager