



“From the GM’s Desk”

9th March 2017



The NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon. John Barilaro, MP, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business at the Western Division Conference spoke about the Far West Initiative in detail and with his address leading to media reports that the Far West Initiative may not proceed. However, announcements made subsequent to Wentworth Conference all indicating that the reform process for the Far West will continue.

The initial concept of the Reform of the Far West was to see a “whole of government” (Federal, State and Local) approach taken to the improvement of service delivery in the Far West and to look at ways to increase the sustainability of the eight Councils in the Far West. However, this seems to have drifted into looking solely at the operation of Local Government which was not going to address some of the systemic issues in each of the communities.

The Deputy Premier indicated that he would like to see Councils in the Far West be more involved in developing a model that they would be comfortable with and looked forward to working with Councils in this regard.

The Deputy Premier in his address also indicated that it is anticipated that there will be significant funds available for the improvement to infrastructure in regional and rural New South Wales and encouraged Councils to have “shovel ready” projects in preparedness to take advantage of the availability of the funding. In response to a concern that many Councils, including those in the far west who don’t have the available funds to develop the detailed submissions required to enhance their chances of securing the available funding, the Deputy Premier indicated that this problem was one that would be addressed.

With the expectation that Councils need to adopt a greater lead in any reform process and to be the drivers of the process and not the followers, the Chairman of the Western Division of Councils, Councillor Leigh Byron, has convened a meeting of all Western Division Councils at Broken Hill on the 24th March 2017 as the first step in ensuring that Local Government has an increased involvement in the reform process. While we now have the technology available to negate the long trip to Broken Hill it is felt the first meeting should be a face to face meeting. The Mayor and General Manager of each of the Councils have been invited to attend.

The Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman will be available to discuss issues relating to Council or for issues for which Council may be able to provide some assistance on Monday, 13th March 2017. Mayor Hollman is generally available from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on a Monday, with the exception of the 4th Monday of each Month which of course is Council Meeting Day.

The Mayor and I will be travelling to the quarterly meeting of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) which will be held on Friday, 10th March at Dubbo.

Following the OROC Meeting all members Councils have been invited to attend the launch of Regional Platters. Regional Platters is aimed at connecting the regional agricultural producers and experience with people.

Regional Platters is supported by Dubbo, Gilgandra, Mid- Western, Narromine, Nyngan, Warren Warrumbungle Councils

In Dubbo it is hoped to be able to set aside an hour or so to meet with representatives of the other OROC members who are also involved with the Far West Initiative (FWI) to discuss options leading up to the meeting of Western Division in Broken Hill on the 24th March 2017.

A reminder, that Council will be reverting to Mondays for the conduct of its normal monthly meetings. Meetings are to be held on the 4th Monday of each month commencing at 9.00am unless otherwise determined by Council. Council had previously resolved that the April meeting will be held on Wednesday, 26th April 2017, this change will remain.

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

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 flow in the Darling River continues to drop with only 72 mega litres per day flowing over the weir as of late Monday.

While there is a limited flow it is anticipated that the flow will continue to go over the weir for a little while yet with the cessation of flow over the weir being the trigger point for water restrictions to be introduced.

The rain on Saturday night provided a much needed lift for gardens and pastures and also put a little extra in the weir pool.

The approaches to the Whiskey Creek Bridge on the West Culgoa Road have been recently sealed with around a kilometre of bitumen being laid and the guardrail to be installed shortly.

Work will commence shortly on the sealing of Dunsandle Road which is adjacent to Clara Hart Village in Enngonia. The work will involve around one kilometre of road finishing near the Enngonia Waste Depot turn off. The funding for the project was made available under an Aboriginal Communities Road Safety Programme and will result in a significantly improved road surface and a reduced nuisance and hazards caused by dust.

It was a great start to Senior Citizens Week last Sunday with a barbeque lunch being hosted by Bourke Shire Council and the Bourke CWA at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre Café. Around sixty people enjoy a barbeque lunch followed by some delicious deserts provided by the Bourke CWA and some lucky attendees were the recipients of lucky door prizes.

Councillor Sarah Barton represented Council at the function with the Mayor Barry Hollman and Deputy Mayor Lachlan Ford both being away. Councillor Barton and Councillor Bartley were the cooks for the day and did a great job.

There have been activities all week and Bourke Shire is proud to be actively involved in the provision of Senior's Week Activities for its residents.

The Jandra was successful in meeting all requirements during an inspection earlier this week by the Roads & Maritime Services staff and all should be in readiness for the upcoming tourist season.-

There are already several charters booked for the coming week prior to starting the daily cruising season.

While in Wentworth I had some discussions with the Regional Manager of Public Works, Gavin Priestley regarding the possibility of some of the maintenance contracts for the State Government being split so that local contractors can have the opportunity to submit tenders. While I accept that economies of scale would tend to indicate that the current model *may* give a more economic outcome it does little to help the economies of small town and equally does not provide the opportunities for the local contractors to be able to employ apprentices and retain the young people in the rural areas. We can give all the political rhetoric we like about the small contractors not having the correct systems in place in relation to WHS and Environmental Management the simple fact is they can do the work as cheaply and effectively but are put off by the size of the contracts and the cash flow and other resources needed to be able to gear up to undertake the contracts of such a huge scale.

Gavin was certainly sympathetic to the issue and we will continue our discussions over the next few weeks.

During the course of the conference the Deputy Premier made the comment that in some instances some things don't stack up when subject to a business case but would stack up on a whole of community benefit. Certainly the awarding of these contracts on a more localised basis would be one of these times when the community benefits should be put before a business case.

Quote of the Week!

"A little progress each day adds up to big results"

Ross Earl
General Manager