



“From the GM’s Desk” 23rd March 2017



Council received a press release from the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) indicating that they are increasing their regional presence and links with basin communities and opening offices in Toowoomba, Albury-Wodonga and Adelaide. The MDBA chief Executive Phillip Glyde said that within the next two (2) years about 10 percent of MDBA staff or up to 30 employees were expected to voluntarily relocate to the new regional offices.

I certainly applaud the attempt to increase employment in regional centres and think that the move to regionalise some of the government agencies is a great initiative and reverses the seemingly imbedded policy of centralisation of many government departments.

However, given that the staff are currently based in Canberra, I do have some difficulty in coming to terms with the determination that Adelaide is now classified as a regional centre.

The MDBA are also employing a network of Regional Engagement Officers (REOs) in a pilot program that will run until October 2017 and then will be reviewed. Bourke Shire Council has agreed to host a Regional Engagement Officer and Jen Mackay has been appointed by the MDBA to take that role. Bourke Shire will assist in providing administrative support.

Council staff are in the process of collating the results of the consultation sessions in relation to the Councils Community Strategic Plan and have identified some issues that seem to have a common thread across most of the meetings and these include, the need for an air services, education, health, community transport, improved sporting facilities and facilities which are accessible at all times. Also included was the need for improved toilets facilities across the shire.

In the consultation process the best attended meeting was that facilitated for the youth of the town with some very constructive suggestions coming from the meeting and it is good to see the younger members of the community taking an active interest in determining the future of our town.

Mayor Barry Hollman will travel to Broken Hill this afternoon to attend a meeting of the Executive of the Western Division Councils at Broken Hill on Friday, 24th March 2017 to look at options for the Far West Initiative and all Council Mayors and General Managers of member Councils are also invited to attend.

During our meeting with the Member of Barwon Kevin Humphries, MP, last week the issue of the Far West Initiative (FWI) was raised and Councillors and staff present were given the clear message that the proposal would not be continuing.

Given the meeting was largely to discuss the FWI the focus could quickly change to the role that the Western Councils may take.

The Executive Officer of Western Division, Ruth Fagan has tendered her resignation and will finish up once the wrap of the 2017 Annual Conference is complete. Ruth wears a number of hats including being a Councillor on Cowra Shire and an executive member of Local Government New South Wales, is a member of the Joint Regional Planning Panel and these coupled with her business interests means that Ruth found herself stretched for time. I would like to acknowledge Ruth's contribution to the Western Division Councils whilst she held the position of Executive Officer.

Mayor Hollman is generally available between 2.00pm to 4.00pm of a Monday to discuss any issues with residents, except the 4th Monday of each Month which of course is Council Meeting Day.

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.

The March Meeting will be held this Monday, 27th March 2016.

The flow in the Darling River continues to increase and was certainly helped by the rain on Monday. The increased flow should mean that water restrictions will not likely to have to be considered in the short to medium term.

While you can put significant amounts of water on your garden from the river it is nowhere near as effective as rain water in bringing a garden and lawns to life.

The Manager of Tourism and Economic Development, Phil Johnston attended a briefing session in relation to the allocation of the first round of the funding from the \$300 million announced under Restart NSW regional Growth- Environmental and Tourism Programme. The funding from the first rounds Fund amounts to \$100 million and will no doubt be keenly contested. The briefing provided prospective applicants the objectives of the initial round and the requirements for the expression of interest process to ensure that you are given the best opportunity to progress to the next stage which will require a more detailed application.

Annette and I represented the Bourke Rotary Club at the Annual Conference of Rotary District 9670 at Dubbo over the weekend which brought together representatives from large parts of New South Wales. There were around 500 people involved in the Conference in varying capacities and it was a great opportunity for the Dubbo Clubs led by South Dubbo to showcase the city which they did very well. The Conference was held at the Dubbo Regional Theatre and it is certainly a great venue with first class facilities.

A reminder that the Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool will close for the current season on 31st March 2017. The Splash Park is still proving very popular with children and parents and has been a welcome addition to the pool facilities.

One of the inclusions in the 2017/2018 will be the preparation of a strategic master plan for Council's sporting and recreation facilities. The plan in the first instance will focus on the precinct from Davidson Oval through to Cooligan Oval and Central Park, however, will reference all sporting and recreational areas. With the strong possibility that as part of the Restart NSW funding to regional NSW for the upgrade of sporting and recreational facilities it is important that we have "shovel ready" projects able to be submitted for funding. Equally important is that we have a coordinated approach to the provision of sporting facilities so that we are able to enjoy a high standard facility which are regularly utilised.

Residents will have or will shortly receive new valuation notices for their property from the NSW Valuer General. The new valuations were required to assist in the introduction of the Fire and Emergency Services Levy (FESL) which was previously known as the Emergency Services Property Levy (ESPL). Anyone who has concerns about the land value or property information should contact the Valuer General. Also if someone wishes to lodge an objection to the valuation applied they should contact the Valuer General's Office with details in relation to contacting the Valuer General being on the reverse side of the valuation notice.

The visit by the Local Member Kevin Humphries, MP last week was well received, with Kevin always keen to keep Councillors and Staff informed of what may be happening at a state level and in particular any issue that may impact on Council. Kevin was able to respond or provided an update to a number of issues raised by Council and the informal meetings are very beneficial.

The program for the Easter Weekend Activities is all but finalised with plenty of activities planned for the weekend and there will be something for everyone. One highlight will again be the Sunday Races with a full program planned.

Quote of the Week!

*"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference
Winston Churchill"*

Ross Earl
General Manager