



“From the GM’s Desk” 29th June 2017



The meeting between Bourke Shire Councillors and staff with representatives of the Western Local Health District did little to provide any hope of the re-opening of the Birthing Unit in Bourke in the foreseeable future. A combination of a shortage of suitably qualified Doctors, Midwives and inherent risk factors were detailed as the reasons behind the decision. Whilst citing a shortage of doctors and midwives, the reality is, it is the difficulty in attracting the required staff to this part of the State.

The “Model of Care” which has been developed for Bourke to provide ante natal and postnatal care has apparently been replicated across the Local Health District (LHD) in communities without birthing facilities. While the “Model of Care” has been the subject of discussions and presentations amongst practitioners is not at this stage available as a succinct and easy to read document. The representatives of the LHD are committed to making information on “Model of Care” available so that it can be given to expectant mothers together with other information. This will assist in their understanding of the services available and importantly how to access the services.

The cost for families having to travel and stay in Dubbo was raised as it has been on numerous occasions previously. Despite a number of worthwhile initiatives being put in place the fact still remains that women and families are bearing additional costs they would not have to bear if the birthing unit in Bourke was operational. This is effectively passing the cost from the State onto individuals.

The shortage of and difficulty in attracting qualified staff is not unique to Bourke nor the Health Industry and there needs to be a realisation incentives need to be introduced to attract staff rather than have to rely on agency staff as many remote country hospitals currently do.

While Council and the LHD are and will remain at loggerheads over the re-opening of the birthing unit they may be well served in working together to see if the staff shortages cannot be addressed.

Other Government agencies have introduced such incentives with success and there seems to be considerable merit in introduction of similar incentives for the hospital system. One of the difficulties is that it would seem that each LHD operates independently of each other unlike most other Government agencies who work under a single banner.

Following the Council meeting last week Councillors and Senior Staff took the opportunity to visit the site of the new abattoir to see what progress has been made on the construction works to date. There has certainly been a lot of concrete been poured, earth works undertaken and the installation of the infrastructure required for the holding yards well advanced. The proposed target date for the commencing of process is still at the end of 2017 or early 2018 and there is still an expectation that the works will be completed in time for that commencement date.

Accompanying Councillors and Staff on the inspection was Megan Dixon, Chief Executive Officer of Regional Development Australia (Orana). Megan was in town on other business and took the opportunity to join Councillors for lunch and then accompany them on the inspection.

Bourke Shire Council has been successful in obtaining a \$40,000.00 grant to undertake a “Bourke Aboriginal Heritage Study”. The funding has been made available under the 2017-2018 NSW Heritage Grants Program.

Bourke Shire Council is one of only seven (7) Councils to receive funding under the Local Government Heritage Planning Studies Stream of the 2017/18 Heritage Grants Program. The collective value of the grants approved under this stream was \$214,200.00

The concept of painting one of the water towers in town to reflect some of Bourke’s more iconic products, features or history has been again raised. John Snelson a former Deputy Mayor of Bourke Shire has written to Council recently to suggest that the work be considered. Mr Snelson provided some suggestions as to possible themes and during the course of the meeting it was noted that Coonamble are currently having a mural painted on one of their water towers. While no firm decision has been made further enquiries will be made and consideration be given in conjunction with the scheduled painting of the reservoirs.

Mayor Barry Hollman and I joined with other members of the Western Division Council’s Executive and their respective General Managers in meeting with the Deputy Premier, the Hon. John Barilaro, MP in Sydney on Tuesday to discuss a new Strategic Direction for the Western Division.

While in Sydney we also met with the Legal Officer for Local Government New South Wales, Bruce McCann regarding a few issues. It is good to be able to avail ourselves of the opportunity to once again utilise the services provided by Local Government New South Wales and speak to the specialist staff they have available.

The Western Division Councils meet tomorrow in Cobar for the Mid Term Meeting and the Mayor, Barry Hollman, Councillor Dorrington and I will be representing Council.

Keith Rhodes the President of Local Government New South Wales will be amongst the speakers and it will be an opportunity to get an update from him in relation to the status of the Local Government Reform Process and also the impact on Local Government of the recent announcements contained within both the Federal and State Governments Budgets.

Bourke Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027, the Delivery Programme 2017-2021, the Operational Plan 2017-2018 and the Disability Inclusion Action Plan have all been adopted by Council.

All these documents are available on Councils Website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au in accordance with the legislative requirements.

A reminder of the two (2) workshops being held to assist Council in the development of a Master Plan for Sport and Recreational facilities in Bourke. The first of the two (2) workshops will be held at the Bourke Shire Council Chambers on Wednesday, 5th July 2017 the second will be held on Wednesday, 19th July 2017. The workshops will commence at 5.30pm and finish by 7.30pm. It is

important that we get a good representation of all sections of the sporting community to be involved in this planning process if it will provided the required blue print for the future.

Bourke Shire Council's road crews have been busy completing shoulder widening upgrading on the Kidman Way. Over three (3) kilometres of widening has been completed at this stage with a further 10 kilometres expected to be completed next Friday, 30th June 2017. Plans are in place for the Road Crews to undertake some long awaited maintenance grading on the West Culgoa, Ellavale and Eureka Plains roads early in the new financial year.

The installation of the guard rail on the approaches to the new Cuttaburra Bridges should be finalised this week and finally mark the completion of the timber bridge replacement program. As I have said previously is a tremendous achievement and something that the current Council and previous Councils should be very proud of.

Work has commenced on the construction of a new waste disposal cell at the Bourke Waste Management Facility (WMF) and it is expected to be finished over the next few weeks and should provide adequate capacity for the Bourke community's requirements in relation to rubbish disposal for the next four (4) to five (5) years.

A number of positive comments have been received from various agencies on the way in which the Bourke Waste Management Facility (WMF) is designed and operates and credit goes to the Environmental Services team.

Staff from sections of Bourke Shire have held a number of fund raising events for Breast Cancer research utilising the theme "real Men Wear Pink" and over \$2000.00 has been raised which is tremendous effort and has involved a raffle of a load of wood plus barbeques and other donations. Well done to all who helped in the coordination of this fundraiser and those who generously contributed.

Quote of the Week!

"Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious".

Stephen Hawking

Ross Earl
General Manager