



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017



The heat certainly hit the western part of the state with a vengeance last week, with record temperatures being experienced across many regions including Bourke. As I sit down to write this column temperatures in excess of those experienced last week are predicted for this week and all air conditioners will no doubt be working overtime. The high temperatures have combined with the very low rain fall to make it very difficult for those in the farming sector who are rapidly running out of feed and water.

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The lack of rainfall and high temperatures has seen the depletion of many water storages including the town supply for Byrock. As foreshadowed over the past couple of weeks it is anticipated that carting will need to commence shortly to Byrock. The ground water storage at Byrock is almost at the point where pumping is not practical, the situation is being monitored on a daily basis.

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Council has received approval for a subsidy to offset the cost of carting water once the pumping of water reaches that critical point, and is grateful for the quick response received from the Minister for Regional Water, the Hon. Niall Blair, MLC and the Officers of the New South Wales Offices of Water to Councils application for the subsidy to be made available.

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The PV Jandra is currently out of action following the failure of the 415 volt generator last week. The PV Jandra is currently undergoing the required preparatory work prior to the removal of the main diesel engine and the generator. The Jandra was built in 2000 and has done a considerable amount of work during that time and the breakdown whilst not expected was probably inevitable at some stage.

Given the extensive work that will be required, the opportunity has been taken to evaluate alternative systems that have come onto the market over the past few years.

The concept of diesel electric propulsion is not new with the idea originating over 100 years ago. However, the range of electric motors with variable speed drives expands each year and presents an opportunity to review reliable and cost effective alternatives to the current system in use.

Similarly, the more efficient diesel engines have also come onto the market providing the opportunity for Council to evaluate all options with a view to:-

- Reducing fuel consumption and ongoing maintenance costs
- Improve safety

- Reducing noise and vibration with a corresponding improvement in passenger comfort
- Improved speed and manoeuvrability

The fact that the PV Jandra is out of commission does impact on the availability of the tourist attractions within Bourke and it is hoped to be able to undertake the required repairs/ upgrade as soon as possible.

The failure of the engines has also enabled an early commencement on the schedule maintenance on the vessel to ensure that it ready for the 2018 Tourist Season.

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The Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool opened last weekend with good crowds in attendance. The Splash Park continues to be well received by the younger members of the community and it provides an opportunity for parents to be able to get the younger children used to the water in a very safe and family friendly atmosphere.

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Along with a number of Mayors, other General Managers and Industry Leaders from across the Orana Region, I attended the launch of both the Orana Freight and Logistics Capability Study and the Orana International Freight Feasibility Study held in Dubbo on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> September. The Launch was convened by Regional Development Australia Orana (RDAO) and hosted by the Chairman of RDA Orana, John Walkom. The study was officially launched by the Member for Dubbo, the Hon. Troy Grant, MP who is also the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

There have been a number of projects of a similar nature proposed over the years which have not significantly progressed, however, with the increased economic ties of Australia with China and developing economies such as in India there is certainly an increased awareness of the opportunities that these markets present and the impact that air freight connectivity could have on rural economies.

The increased congestion at Sydney Airport both in terms of available timeslots for landing and the access for large vehicles has probably also increased the awareness for alternatives.

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The hot weather experienced last weekend and that predicted for this weekend has seen the Rural Fire Service (RFS) actively creating an increased awareness of the dangers that fire presents and encouraging everyone to be very conscious of the risks presented. While the level of fuel in the west is relatively low, the risk of fire still exists and those people who have had the opportunity to watch the news over the past few days would be aware of the huge number of fires that the state has experienced already this year and we are still only at the edge of the fire danger period. I would ask all locals and visitors alike to be mindful of the dangers presented by fire and take extreme care and at all times abide by the conditions and restrictions imposed.

We are grateful for the ongoing efforts of the thousands of volunteers in the RFS across the states who give freely of their time to assist in the fire -fighting efforts and their safety should not be compromised by irresponsibly actions of those who chose to ignore warning given.

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Manager of Works, Peter Brown travelled to Griffith last Thursday to attend a briefing session in relation to the funding which is being made available under the Safer and Secure Water Supply Programme that is one of the funding streams available under the Regional Growth Fund. The seminar was attended by Councils from across the southern and western section of the state. The availability of safe and secure water supplies for all areas within the shire is vital for their existence and Council has a number of projects for which it will consider lodging applications for funding and these are all part of a longer term strategy to secure water supplies within the Shire area.

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Whilst in Dubbo earlier in the week I also had the opportunity to join with the Chair of OROC and with representatives from other Councils from OROC for a meeting with Don Murray and Nick White. Don Murray who along with Ken Gillespie forms part of an Infrastructure Review Team reporting direct to the Premier regarding Infrastructure projects within Regional New South Wales. The team are particularly interested in identifying regionally significant projects as well as identifying any problems associated with the expedient undertaking of works for which funding has been provided.

The Mayor of Bourke Shire Council, Councillor Barry Hollman together with Councillor Phillip O'Connor Mayor of Brewarrina Shire has previously issued an invitation to both Ken Gillespie and Don Murray to visit our areas and I again issued that invitation.

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Next week I will be again in Dubbo attending a meeting of the OROC, General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) and following that have a meeting scheduled with representatives of the company who will be undertaking the Human Resources Project for which Funding was obtained under Round 2 of the Innovation Fund made available via the Office of Local Government. The project is being undertaken in conjunction with Brewarrina Shire and Walgett Shires and is aimed at ensuring that all documentation meets contemporary standards.

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The Tour De OROC rides into Bourke next Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and the riders will be accompanied into town by Mayor Barry Hollman and Manager of Roads, Mark Gordon. The riders are expected in Bourke around lunchtime and it would be good to see a few people welcome them to town. The riders will have an easy day that day with only the ride from Brewarrina to be undertaken. The next couple of days will be a little harder with Nyngan the next stop and after the night in Nyngan the riders will head to the finish line in Dubbo.

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On the Thursday evening there will be a fundraiser at the Port of Bourke Hotel and everyone is invited.

The two (2) previous Tour de OROC have raised a total in excess of \$200,000 and it is hoped to add another \$100,000 from this years' event.

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### **Quote of the Day!**

"Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes".

Jim Carrey