



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018



The Local Government Reform Process continues with the legislation providing for the establishment of Joint Organisation of Councils (JOs) being passed late last year.

The Principal Functions of Joint Organisations will be:-

- To establish strategic regional priorities for the joint organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those strategic regional priorities
- To provide regional leadership for the joint organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.
- To identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental co-operation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.

Joint Organisations will:-

- Align with, or nest within one of the State’s Planning Regions.
- Demonstrate a clear community of interest between member Councils and regions.
- Not adversely impact on other Councils or JOs (e.g. leaving too few Councils to form a JO)
- Be based around a strong regional centre or centres.
- Be of appropriate size and capacity to partner with NSW Government and Commonwealth Government agencies and other organisations.
- Help connect local priorities from local Councils’ Community Strategic Plans with regional planning for growth, infrastructure and economic develop and provide a means of delivering projects across Council boundaries.

JOs are applicable only to rural and regional Councils with the Metropolitan and Central Coast areas excluded at this stage.

Councils in the West of the State will be given the option to be full voting members of JOs within their own or across different State Government planning boundaries. For Bourke Shire Council it means that it could join a JO based in the Far West Planning Region or other area with which it has a community of interest such as the Orana and Central West Planning Region.

Bourke Shire Council held an initial workshop to discuss the options available to it in relation to possible membership of a Joint Organisation and is currently evaluating the information available. A report will be tabled at the meeting of Council to be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018.

A number of Councils have already formed a position on potential membership or otherwise in relation to JOs with a number of Councils expressing concern that the Regulations governing the operation of JOs have yet to be released and that is not likely to happen before the end of

March and the State Government is expecting resolutions in relation to each Council's decision on membership of a JOs to be with the Minister by the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

All members Councils of a JO will be represented on the Board of the JO by the Mayor with each Mayor having equal input and voting entitlement. The Department of Premier and Cabinet will also be represented on the JOs as non-voting members.

Councils can only be a full member of the one JO but can also able to be Associate Member (non-voting) of another JO.

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The Rural Fire Service has continued with its recently adopted practice of conducting a number of Local Government Forums across the state and these had been planned for early December 2017 however some had to be rescheduled due to the clash with the Annual Conference of LGNSW. Initially forums were planned for Orange, Regentville, Greenhills, Wagga Wagga, Armidale and Coffs Harbour, however, following representations from Bourke Shire Council pointing out that the west of the state had been neglected an additional forum will be held in Bourke on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018.

The forum is split into two (2) sections with a morning session intended for Mayors and General Managers focussing on financial matters, approaches to building community resilience and the provision of a brief on the current fire season. The afternoon session will focus on relevant Council Practitioners in the area of firefighting and will cover topics in including Resilience Grants; the Bushfire Environmental Assessment Code and Bushfire Risk Mitigation.

Already we have indications that Coonamble, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Carrathool and Walgett Shire will be in attendance with a number of others expected to join them.

A number of Senior Rural Fire Service Officers including the Chief Financial Officer and Directors will also attend.

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The Western Division Councils in New South Wales will be holding their Annual Conference in Balranald on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The Conference host is Balranald Shire Council headed by Mayor Leigh Byron who is also the President of the Western Division Shires and he has been working hard to put together a program that focuses on the contemporary issues facing Councils in the Western Section of the State.

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Work will commence over the next few weeks in the development of the Operational Plan (Budget) for Bourke Shire for 2018/2019.

The allowable rate increase for General Fund has been set by IPART at a maximum 2.3% for 2018/2019 and it will be up to Council to decide as to what portion of the allowable increase that it will adopt.

Council is continually faced with increases in expenditure at a much greater rate than the allowable rate increase with increases in electricity just one example of increases in cost that have to be absorbed.

As part of the preparation of the Operational Plan for 2018/2019 Councillors and Senior Staff will embark on a tour of the village areas to both see for themselves areas for potential improvement and also discuss with residents of the villages and surrounding areas any issues of concern that may be able to be addressed within the budgetary process.

The time table for these meetings will be finalised at the January Meeting of Council.

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Council in conjunction with Bourke Rotary will be hosting the Annual Welcome to Bourke Night with the tentative date and location being Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at the Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool. All new residents are invited to attend and this includes anyone who has arrived in town in the last twelve (12) months. The evening provides the opportunity to showcase the facilities, sporting and social groups that are within the town and hopefully assist people settle in quickly. As in previous years information packages will be provided to newcomers to our community.

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Nominations are still open for the 2018 Australia Day Awards and will be received up until the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018. As I have said on a number of previous occasions there are many people within our community who give unselfishly of their time to ensure that many of our sporting and social groups operate effectively and also volunteer their time to ensure that the emergency services within town are adequately equipped to handle any emergency situations that can arise. While these people do not look for acknowledgement a nomination and subsequent award does provide an indication as to the value of volunteerism to all communities within the Shire.

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The community has welcomed the news that Bourke will still have a newspaper and in fact may even have two (2) which would come as somewhat of a surprise given the likelihood late in 2017 that we would be left without a paper at all. Had the community of Bourke be left without a newspaper it would have had a detrimental impact in a number of ways not the least being the ability of organisations to be able to publicise events. Whilst accepting that social media continues to play an ever increasing role within our society the reality is that not everyone uses it and there still seems to be a strong reliance on the traditional forms of media, albeit some of the information is accessed online rather than in print.

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The river level in the Darling River is dropping at an alarming rate with the water level dropping to 4.00 metres on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and the flow rate over only 60 megalitres per day with only limited flows upstream. This coupled with the forecast of extremely hot weather over

the next week will mean that there is the real possibility that water restrictions could be introduced very soon.

If restrictions are introduced they will be advertised extensively on the local radio stations. The supply in Byrock storage is still sufficient for at least the next 6-8 weeks depending on the level of consumption, weather conditions and of course any potential inflows.

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Quote of the week!

*"Don't waste your time looking back at what you lost. Move on, life is not meant to be travelled backwards"*

Ross Earl  
General Manager