



“From the GM’s Desk” 18th February 2016



The next meeting of Council will be held this Monday, 22nd February at 9.00am in the Council Chambers at 29 Mitchell Street, Bourke. A Public forum will be held at 10.00am and all members of the public have the opportunity to raise issues with the Council. Although not essential persons who would like to address Council are asked to contact Kai Howard-Oakman by calling 68308000 or by email at khoward@bourke.nsw.gov.au so that any information that may be required can as far as possible be made available.

The Minister for Local Government the Hon. Paul Toole, MP had a busy week last week with two (2) Councils, Auburn and Murray being temporarily suspended.

This week will be reasonably busy with the visits to Louth and Wanaaring on Tuesday followed by the launch of the Connect Family Mental Health Support Service and a meeting with Mark Coulton the next morning. Wednesday will involve meeting with the Australian Government Census Team Representatives prior to the Bourke Community Meeting. On Thursday I will be going to Enngonia followed by Ford’s Bridge for the lunchtime Community meeting there then back to Bourke to travel to Dubbo for the GMAC meeting early Friday.

Amongst the issues raised at the community meetings at Louth and Wanaaring were:-

- The need for going improvement of the road network
- The need to extend the Louth Air Strip
- The Fact that the Bourke to Wanaaring road was the only real link for the people of Wanaaring and those further out further and the residents need sealed road access.
- The need for the halls in the villages to be maintained highlighting the importance of these facilities to the social amenity of each of the villages
- The need for ongoing efforts to seek an improvement to mobile phone services.
- An assurance that the propose cuts in electricity industry will not impact on the ability of staff in the remote areas to respond to power outages.
- Councils to maintain the highest level of productivity in order to give ratepayers best value for their rates.
- The benefits of establishing a Fresh Water Research Centre along the Darling.

At the meetings Council representatives indicated that it would look to include where appropriate to include the issues in budget deliberations or advocate on behalf of the community when the issue was the responsibility of another tier of Government.

The time was also taken to thank the community members who help Council in the maintenance of facilities in the village areas. Without this help Council would be unable to provide the level of service that is currently available.

There has been some speculation as to a possible change to the date of the next Local Government Elections, however, advice received last week indicates that the elections for all Councils will at this stage be scheduled for September.

The next meeting of Barwon Darling Water will be held on the 30th March at Diggers on the Darling in Bourke. The ongoing availability of water along the river system is a concern for all users and not simply irrigators. Barwon Darling Water is an important forum for water issues within the area and the meetings are also attended by representatives of the various state government organisations who have an impact on the way in which the allocation of water is determined. Bourke Shire Council is a regular attendee at these meetings, with the Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis and Cr Jack Bennett being Councils delegates.

Council held an Extraordinary Meeting on Friday, 12th February to review some of the requirements of the Deed of Agreement that needed to be entered into prior to the \$10 million dollars being made available under the National Stronger Regions Fund. Council resolved to have its legal representatives review the Agreement which in accordance with normal business practice.

Advice will also be provided to CAPRA Developments Pty Ltd regarding Councils ability to be able to supply the quantities of water required for the abattoir and the ability of Council to provide facilities to handle some of the waste material to be generate once the abattoir is in full production.

Together with the Deputy Mayor, Cr Barry Hollman, I attended a ceremony held adjacent to the grave of the late Fred Hollows to mark the 40th anniversary of the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. Professor Fred Hollows pioneered much of the work in this field and it was in the communities of Bourke and Enngonia that much of the early work was undertaken. It was good to see Gabbi Hollows and two (2) of her daughters back for the occasion along with Ray Martin who was Chairman of the Fred Hollows Foundation for over 10 years. A number of other people who were involved with this important project all those forty years ago were also in attendance and the enthusiasm and commitment to the task seems as strong today as it was no doubt way back then.

Council was pleased to be able to assist in the coordination of the visit.

Some interesting statistics were mentioned during the ceremony and the number of people who have benefitted from the work done by the Foundation on a world -wide basis being quite staggering with a figure of 7.5 million people coming to mind.

Also among the visitors was Andreas Buisman who was the sculptor responsible for work on the stone that marks the grave of Fred Hollows. Andreas whilst based in Austria still spends a lot of time in Australia. He was accompanied by his wife and two children who are visiting Australia.

The eight (8) Councils involved in the Far West Initiative have for some time now been looking at a more effective means of communication. The fact that there is around 1200 kilometres between some of the Councils means that travel for a one (1) day meeting can involve at least three (3) days if not more and also proves to be expensive. Bourke Shire have on behalf of the group been looking at the option of utilising video conferencing facilities which could be an effective alternative in some instances and negate the need for excessive travelling. The State Government have also indicated that they are looking at benefits and there is the possibility of funding being made available to assist in the provision of these facilities.

The first meeting for 2016 of General Manager's Advisory Committee (GMAC) which serves as an advisory body to the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) will be held tomorrow and I will be travelling down to attend. No doubt the potential merger of two of the member Councils, Dubbo and Wellington, will figure prominently during discussions.

The Mayor, Cr Andrew Lewis has accepted an invitation from His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley Governor of New South Wales to attend a reception function in Dubbo tonight. Bourke had the privilege of hosting the Governor last year and it will provide an opportunity for Andrew to renew his acquaintance with the Governor and Mrs Hurley.

A number of residents take pride in the public areas adjacent to their homes and maintain the nature strips and lanes. I noticed on Sunday morning Mitchell Street resident Bernie Reed mowing the nature strip outside the neighbouring properties which is great to see. It certainly enhances the appearance of the streetscape.

Quote of the Week!

“Wake up with determination got to bed with satisfaction”

Ross Earl
General Manager