



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018



On Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018, the Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, Councillor Victor Bartley and I joined with the Mayor of Walgett, Councillor Ian Woodcock and General Manager, Don Ramsland and Michael Boyd General Manager of Central Darling Shire in meeting with the Minister for Regional Water, the Hon. Niall Blair, MLC and two (2) of his advisors on Monday night during the Western Division Conference held at Balranald.

Our discussions centred around the need to ensure that any flow from an environmental water release made available by the Commonwealth Environment Water Holder, which will come from NSW State Government Storages will be transferred via the facilities owned by the NSW Government. It was essential that the support and cooperation of the State Government was obtained to ensure the smooth passage of the flow through the various water resource areas involved.

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Following the election at the Conference of the Western Division Councils of NSW, Councillor Dave Gallagher of Broken Hill City Council has been elected to the position of President and Mayor, Councillor Leigh Byron, Balranald Shire Council who is the immediate past president has been elected to the position of Vice President for the ensuing 12 months.

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The residents of Hungerford and those utilising the Hungerford Road will be pleased to hear that Council will undertake the sealing of around five (5) kilometres of that road at Youngerina Hill which has been identified as one of the inferior section of that road. The works will be undertaken as part of the 2017/2018 works program.

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The additional funding provided by the Roads to Recovery Programs provided by the Federal Government has allowed Bourke Shire Council to bring forward some of the road works that had been included in the 10 Year Financial Plan. Some of these works included sealing sections of roads which had previously been identified as major trouble spots. It is obvious from the comments received during the recent round of village meetings that the strategy has met with the approval of those living in the rural areas of the shire. They recognise the limited resources available to Council which has such a huge road network to maintain.

The increase in Roads to Recovery Funding has been appreciated by Council and all other western area Councils. In a motion submitted to the Western Division Conference at Balranald it was proposed that the Federal Government be thanked for the increased funding and given the outcomes achieved, that they give consideration to maintaining the funding at the increased level.

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The annual round of visits to the villages within the Shire to undertake the Community Consultation Meetings finished up with a meeting in Ford's Bridge last Thursday. The meetings were well attended and provided some valuable feedback to Councillors and staff. Both Councillors and staff appreciated the opportunity to speak to residents regarding their concerns they were also able to review a substantial part of the road network for which Council is responsible.

There were a number of constructive comments made at the meetings, by and large the reaction to the work being undertaken and the service provided by Council, was met with approval.

As expected, there were a number of issues raised, Council will take these on board and where possible include the matters for consideration for funding in the 2018/2019 budget which is currently under preparation.

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For the first time in my five (5) and a half years in Bourke Level 2 Water Restrictions have been put in place, which is indicative of just how dry the situation is across much of the catchment and indeed the state.

Level 1 restrictions come in when the water stops going over the weir at Bourke which is at around 3.95 metres and Level 2 restrictions come in when the river level at Bourke drops to 3.5 metres which has taken a little over five (5) weeks from the initial introduction of water restrictions. Much of the drop in water level is due to evaporation with the weir pool at Bourke being approximately 40 kilometres long and given the very hot summer we have experienced the rate of evaporation has been high.

Whilst we hopefully won't go to Level 3 Water restrictions the trigger point is when the river gets to 3.00 metres which should take much longer than the drop to Level 2 took, as the weather cools and increased restrictions are in place.

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Clean Up Australia day will be held this Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2018. To coincide with this important Community based event Bourke Shire Council will conduct a Tip Fee - Free Weekend this coming weekend (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2018) to assist residents who are keen to participate in this important Annual Event.

The Day will also provide the opportunity for residents to clean up their yards in preparation for the Easter weekend and get rid of unwanted clutter.

It should be noted the Tip Fee Free Weekend applies to **Residential** properties **ONLY**, no commercial or building waste will be accepted free of charge. The following items will **NOT** be accepted free of charge tyres, batteries, asbestos, liquid waste chemicals and building and commercial waste.

Bourke Shire Council is pleased to be able to support Clean Up Australia and encourages all residents to join in "Clean Up Day".

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I had the opportunity to meet with the Chief Executive Officer of Rural and Remote Medical Services (RaMS), Shane Hatton, last week regarding a few matters, he indicated that they are very pleased to have been able to maintain a level of stability in the Doctors servicing Bourke which has had benefits for both them as an organisation and the Community of Bourke.

RaMS are actively trying to recruit a fourth permanent doctor for Bourke to bring the complement of permanent Doctors in Bourke up to four (4) which is the ideal level. At times when the Doctors are on leave or undertaking professional development RaMS will backfill these positions with Locums.

RaMS are also trying to ensure that all four (4) Doctors will be able to have Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights at the hospital to further enhance the service level available to our community.

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The Far West Algal Coordinating Committee released their latest report last Friday, with the following areas within or adjacent to Bourke Shire subject to an alert. All testing locations within Bourke Shire are currently on an Amber Alert and thus far have remained unchanged.

Bourke Wharf	Amber Alert
Bourke Boat Ramp	Amber Alert
Bourke Weir	Amber Alert
River at Rose Isle	Amber Alert
Louth	Amber Alert
Tilpa Weir	Green Alert

There are presently no Red Alerts in place for the Far West Region.

An explanation of what the respective alerts mean is on the Water NSW Website [www.watarnsw.com.au/water-quality/algae](http://www.watarnsw.com.au/water-quality/algae)

Stock and domestic water users in Amber Alert areas should be on the lookout for surface scums and consider alternate water sources if available.

Presently the river systems in the far west are experiencing very low flows, these low flows coupled with the summer weather conditions, are likely to promote algae growth.

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Council received correspondence from the Acting President of the Louth Chamber of Commerce, seeking Councils support in joining Brewarrina, Central Darling, Cobar, Broken Hill and Bogan Shire in their efforts to regain and protect the low flows on the Darling River System.

Councillors acknowledged that the issue is complex as are the changes proposed to the Murray Darling Basin Plan involving the amendments to the recovery of water to be made from the Northern part of the Basin.

Councillors were keen to get a far better understanding of the situation and to this end resolved as follows:-

*"That Council convene a workshop including a panel of suitably qualified and experienced persons to provide Council with a background on the changes to the licence provisions since the introduction of the 2012 Water Sharing Plan and also the impact of the Senate decision not to support the reduction of the recovery rate from the Northern Basin from 390gl to 320gl".*

Preliminary work has been done on the convening of the workshop which is likely to be conducted in the second or third week in March with the Council keen to expedite the initiative.

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Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman travelled to Mudgee on the weekend to watch grandson Charlie Hollman represent Western Division under 16 Rugby League team in the curtain raiser to the St George versus South Sydney Charity Shield match held last Saturday night. Charlie is following in the footsteps of his grandfather who himself represented Western Division in 1974.

It is great effort to represent the Division and in particular when you live in the far west section of that division and every trial, training session and match involves a considerable amount of travel.

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Work continues on the organisation of the Easter Weekend in Bourke with arrangements for most events being finalised.

Any queries in regard to the Easter weekend should be directed to Jodie Sontag at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre. Jodie has the role of bringing the program together and has done a great job to date.

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*Quote of the week!*

Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.

George Bernard Shaw

Ross Earl  
General Manager