



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 22nd March 2018



At Bourke we are experiencing a much welcomed and much needed flow in the Darling River with water starting to flow into the weir pool overnight on Saturday and the level in the weir pool continues to increase albeit, slowly. More water is expected from the flow in the Culgoa and it is hoped that the water will spill over the Bourke Weir mid- week and reach the lower parts of the river system.

It is difficult to determine exactly how much water will come into the system as a considerable amount will go towards filling the dry river beds.

There is a high degree of interest in the flow which could hopefully lead to a suspension of water restrictions for Bourke and North Bourke. Not only has the low flow resulted in the introduction of restrictions it has also seen an increase in the salt content of the water and this has also caused problems for gardeners.

Council will continue to work with our neighbouring Councils, the Commonwealth Environment Water Holder’s Offices and the Minister for Regional Water, the Hon. Niall Blair, MLC to try and secure an environmental water flow for the system. This will assist in a obtaining a continuous flow into the lower parts of the river system.

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The exact makeup of any Joint Organisation (JO) of Councils to be established in the Orana Region is far from being determined with Dubbo Regional Council the largest centre within the region announcing on Friday that they would not be joining a Joint Organisation of Councils. Their decision will raise the question as to the definition of what constitutes a strong regional centre with each proposed JO supposed to be based around a strong regional centre according to the guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government.

Dubbo Regional Council joins with Brewarrina Council in making the decision not to be part of a JO with Brewarrina some time ago having resolved that they would not being part of any JO.

Coonamble Shire has also indicated that at this stage they are unlikely to be a participant in the process.

At this stage only Mid-Western Regional, Warrumbungle, Gilgandra, Narromine, Bogan and Bourke Shires have resolved to be part of a JO.

Bogan Shire Council had previously agreed to joined a JO based on the current footprint of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) subject to all other member Councils of OROC committing to membership of an Orana based JO. As such they may reconsider that decision in light of the decision of other Councils not to be part of a JO.

This may be the case with other Councils as well.

Warren, Cobar and Walgett Shire are still to formally resolve their individual positions but will need to do so before the closing date of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018.

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While there has been a difference of opinion among some of the OROC Councils regarding their potential membership of a proposed JO there was a strong agreement by all Councils in relation to their ongoing membership of OROC.

The commitment of all Councils to their ongoing membership of OROC is a clear endorsement of the way in which OROC operates and the benefits that have been achieved by all member Councils.

The success of OROC has been evident in a number of areas and in particular cost savings through bulk purchasing and joint advocacy being two of those achievements. The low costs involved and the level of cooperation of support given to each other are two of the areas which are generally highlighted.

The level of cooperation extends to the various professional groups who operate under the OROC banner.

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The week beginning 19<sup>th</sup> March promised to be an extremely busy week for Bourke Shire with Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March seeing Council being involved in multiple meetings and public consultation events.

In the morning Council representatives have been invited to attend a meeting by NSW Department of Industry - Lands and Water in relation to the recently developed Water Reform Action Plan. This plan will to ensure that the State Government provides an equitable and transparent approach to the management of water for current and future generations.

As part of this commitment the NSW Government has released four (4) consultation papers to seek community feedback on. These are:-

- Water measurement and metering
- Transparency measures
- Better management of environmental water
- Fold plain harvesting

While the morning session is on an invitation basis only there is also an afternoon community consultation event between 1.30-4.30pm and members of the public are welcome to attend.

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Also in town on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 is the Australian Government Productivity Commission who will be undertaking a new inquiry in relation to the Murray Darling Basin Plan to look at the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basin Plan and Water Resource Plans.

The Mayor, Councillor Hollman and I have been invited to meet with the Productivity Commission on the Thursday afternoon prior to the public forum which is scheduled to be held between 4.30 and 5.30pm.

The review is required by the Water Act 2007 and is part of the five (5) year review process.

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At 5.00pm on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 at the Council Chambers at 29 Mitchell Street representatives of the Board of Directors and staff of Destination Country and Outback New South Wales will be in Bourke to discuss the Draft Destination Management Plan.

The visit is one of a number which is being scheduled across the state with others planned for Parkes, Cowra, Orange, Lithgow, Broken Hill, Dubbo, Moree, Armidale, Tamworth, Mudgee, Cowra and Cobar.

As you can see from the towns listed, Country and Outback New South Wales covers a very wide area and it is important that the Bourke and Far West Region are able to unlock any potential promotional and funding opportunities that may be able to be provided.

I would encourage all those who have an interest in the tourism industry to attend.

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Bourke Shire Council staff conducted a Staff Health and Wellbeing Day on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and it was attended by all available staff with Councils Offices, Library, Waste Management Facility and Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre opening late on the day to provide those staff the opportunity to attend.

There was a strong emphasis on both physical and mental Health on the day and given the high incidence of mental health issues that seem prevalent in rural areas it seem to be very appropriate.

A key feature of the day was the play "Carpe Diem" which is a contemporary portrayal of everyday Australia Males dealing with issues of health, grief, loss and depression. It stressed the importance of professional care in times of crisis and highlights the importance of mateship and looking out for each other. With the rising incidence of depressions and suicide amongst Australian males a project of this nature is germane, encouraging open and honest conversation and increased awareness.

The play was a professional production starring well known Australian actor Chris Pidd and was brought to Bourke Shire and the community the previous evening by the Primary Health Network and Oz Help and Council is very appreciated of the support of the Primary Health

Network and Oz Help in promoting awareness of both physical and mental health. Each employee of Council also had the opportunity to participate in an "on-line tune up" with a number of questions to be answered and depending on the answers Ozhelp offered to provide additional support.

In addition to the play there were a number of other excellent speakers and all employees were able to have a free health check- up courtesy of the staff at Bourke Community Health.

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The National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG) will be hosting an exhibition of photos by locals from Bourke taken in conjunction with NALAG's recent Photographic Story Telling Work Shop. The Opening is scheduled for a 10.30am start with the opening at 11.00am on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018 with light refreshments to be served. The venue will be the Bourke Men's Shed.

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A reminder that the Bourke Public Library will be hosting three (3) authors on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and it will provide the opportunity for Bourke residents to meet with the authors and discuss with them their books and motivation for writing those books.

The authors who will be coming will be Jennifer Cowley who wrote "Grandpa's Hat, Toni Grant who wrote "Serpent Song" and Donna Falconer who wrote "My Time- through breast cancer and beyond"

Each of the authors will be at the Library between 3.30 pm and 5.30 pm and will then be guest speakers at the Meeting of Bourke Rotary Club on Monday evening.

I would encourage residents to come along and have a chat to these three (3) accomplished authors.

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The Far West Algal Coordinating Committee released their latest report last Friday, with no changes to the previously advised notifications which are as follow:-

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

There are presently Red Alerts in place at both Wilcannia and Caulpaulin.

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

The current flow in the river should assist in the reduction of the presence of blue Green Algae; however, the hot weather experienced over the weekend would have not helped the situation.

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Council would appreciate the notification of any incidence of **dangerous situations** involving Council owned or controlled facilities being by contacting Council during office hours on 026830800 or if the situation is afterhours and is viewed to require **emergency** response because it poses a high degree of risk of an accident or injury occurring then the concern should be relayed via Councils Duty Officer on 0419722055.

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Council's Corporate Planning Committee met last Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 to review the Draft Operational Plan (Budget) for 2018/2019 and with the minor amendments made at that meeting the Committee have recommended that the Operational Plan go to Council so that it can be approved for advertising.

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Grant Leslie the General Manager of the Australian arm of the Balmoral Group who is consultancy group working for the New South Wales State Government was in town last Wednesday night to speak with representatives of the business community. The Balmoral Group are working on developing of a Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) for a number of Regions across the State.

Bourke Shire Council has been grouped with Coonamble, Warren, Bogan, Walgett Brewarrina and Cobar Shire in what is to be known as the Western Plain Functional Economic Regional (FER).

There was a good attendance at the workshop with a number of positive suggestions put forward and a good level of contribution by those present who were representative of a wide range of businesses in the district. The REDS is part of the Regional Growth Fund and will no doubt play a role in the allocation of the funding to be made available to Regional New South Wales once the funds from the sale of the NSW state Government share of the Snowy Mountains Scheme becomes available. It is important that all Councils have a continued input into the strategy to ensure that the needs of this part of the State are recognised.

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Amanda Carnegie from the Department of Planning and Environment will address Council at the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018, Ordinary Meeting in relation to a project being undertaken by the Department of Planning and Environment to allow Councils and communities better understand the factors contributing to population change and the implications created for both Council and the community.

The project was a priority action detailed in the Far West Regional Plan and Bourke Shire Council was asked to be the first pilot Council in the project. The project once finalised at Bourke will form the template for other Councils in the Far West Planning Region.

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*Quote of the week!*

*"One kind word can change someone's entire day"*

Ross Earl  
General Manager