



“From the GM’s Desk”

29th March 2018



In welcome news for those living in Bourke and North Bourke and in particular the keen gardeners, water restrictions were able to be lifted in those areas early on Sunday morning.

The restrictions have been in operation for around 10 weeks with Level I restrictions first put in place on the 15th January 2018 and level 2 restrictions then put in place on the 22nd February 2018. With a flow in the river being received the restrictions were reverted back to level 1 on the 15th March 2018.

The much anticipated flow in the Culgoa River made its way into the Darling River late last week with a significant amount of water estimated to between seven (7) and 10 thousand megalitres expected to flow into the Darling River and over the Bourke Weir the next few days. While it is difficult to accurately determine the flow and how far it might get along the river system it is hoped that there is enough water in the flow for it to reach Wilcannia.

Whilst restrictions have been lifted I would still encourage residents to be mindful that water is a scarce resource and to use it wisely.

The Mayors of Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke Shire Councils and Administrator of Central Darling Shire Council have again joined together in issuing a press release asking the Commonwealth Environment Water Holder’s Office to urgently consider the release of environmental water they currently hold to facilitate an environmental flow along the Barwon Darling System.

They have highlighted that with the river bed already wet from the recent flow, it would be an ideal time to provide an environmental flow to maximise the benefit of the water as the bulk of the water would flow downstream and not be absorbed into the previously parched river bed.

The press release also highlights the importance of giving the whole river system a significant flush. This will help eliminate the problems currently being experienced with Blue –Green algae particularly below Wilcannia and the build- up of salt. Areas along the system were still in need of water for both domestic supply and the watering of stock.

As detailed in last week’s column the exact makeup of any Joint Organisation (JO) of Councils to be established in the Orana Region is still some way from being finalised.

Bourke Shire Council had previously resolved to be in a JO on the 6th March 2018; however, the resolution was subject to a rescission motion which was considered at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on the 26th March 2018.

The rescission motion was passed which means that Bourke Shire Council will now join with Brewarrina, Coonamble, Bogan, Warren Shires and Dubbo Regional Council who have each indicated that they will not be forming a JO at this stage.

Walgett Shire Council have sought additional time before making a decision and are also seeking clarification of part of the Act.

Mid -Western Regional, Warrumbungle, Gilgandra, Narromine, and Cobar have resolved to be part of a JO based in the footprint of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils.

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.

The Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, Manager of Works, Peter Brown and I attended a meeting convened by NSW Department of Industry - Lands and Water in relation to the recently developed Water Reform Action Plan. This plan will ensure that the State Government provides an equitable and transparent approach to the management of water for current and future generations.

The meeting brought together representatives from Local Government, Irrigation Groups, Community Representatives and representatives from a number of State Government agencies, the Murray Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holds Office. 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
- Flood plain harvesting

There were two (2) sessions with the morning session aimed at the primary stakeholders whilst afternoon session was opened to all community members.

Mayor, Councillor Hollman and I had the opportunity last Thursday to meet with the Australian Government Productivity Commission who was also in town on Thursday, 22nd March 2018. The Productivity Commission are undertaking a new inquiry in relation to the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) to look at the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basin Plan and Water Resource plans. The meetings were part of the five (5) year review of the MDBP and it was encouraging to have the Commission take the trouble to visit Bourke and get the feedback locally.

One of the issues we raised was the fact that the study in relation to the social and economic impact of the Plan is to our knowledge still to be finalised despite the plan being in operation for over five (5) years.

Last Thursday night the General Manager of Destination Country and Outback New South Wales, Rhonda Taylor was in Bourke to discuss the Draft Destination Management Plan of that Organisation. She was accompanied by Mitchell Gunn Regional Tourism Development Manager, Nicole Chandler Business Development Manager, Country & Outback NSW Destination Network who services our local region and is based in Dubbo and Board Member Marie Russell from Tilpa who has been active in tourism for a long period and a strong advocate for the outback.

There was a good representation from local tourism industry representatives and there was also four (4) representatives from Brewarrina Shire. During the course of the meeting the Brewarrina contingent highlighted details of their recently established local tourism committee bringing together representative of Industry and Council. This is something that perhaps that Bourke Shire Council will consider as it is important that those within the industry are able to have a conduit into the decision making process as how to best allocate the promotional budget that Council has allocated to ensure that we continue to expand what is a very good tourism product.

Bourke Shire Council was represented by the Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, Councillor Robert Stutsel and myself.

The Far West Region of the SES held a Conference in Bourke over the weekend and included representatives from across the region including Broken Hill and Tibooburra plus staff from the regional office. The Conference was attended by the NSW SES Commissioner, Mark Smethurst DSC.AM and it was certainly very good of him to make the trip out west for the conference.

Mayor Barry Hollman and I accepted the invitation issued by the Regional Controller for the Far West Region Graeme Craig and Local Controller Steve Walsh to attend their Conference dinner on the Saturday night. It was a great opportunity to meet with the SES representatives and of course the Commissioner.

Council at Monday's meeting approved the Draft Operational Plan (Budget) for 2018/2019 for advertising. The Plan is to be advertised for a minimum of twenty eight (28) days during which time members of the public are able to make submissions and prior to adopting the Plan Council is required by the Local Government Act to consider any submissions received. The closing date for submissions will be the 6th May 2018. Council will again consider the Plan on the 28th May 2018.

Residents utilising the CBD will have noticed the new banners which have been erected in the Oxley Street recognising Anzac Day which of course is the 25th April 2018.

Council Road Reconstruction and Maintenance teams have been busy despite the lack of moisture available. A team is currently undertaking a road widening project on the Cobar Road on behalf of the Roads and Maritime Services utilising gravel being carted from the Kinchella Pit.

Work has continued on the Wanaaring Road with two (2) graders addressing the worst sections of the road from Wanaaring to the intersection of RLR 13 which is the Lansdowne Road.

The two (2) graders will now commenced a maintenance grade undertake of the Lansdowne Road, starting from the intersection of the Wanaaring Road and continue through to the intersection of RLR 10 Tooralé Road.

It is hoped to be able to commence work on the sealing works on the Wanaaring Road prior to the end of the financial year. This work will be financed from funding made available following Council's successful application from the Fixing Country Roads Program.

Over the past few years I have included a quotation at the end of my column each week and one I have used previously is as follows:-

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago
– Warren Buffett

It is a source of frustration for both the Parks and Gardens and Town Services staff, that when they plant trees the incidence of mindless vandalism that some within our community display in damaging and removing these trees. Those responsible could well take heed of the quotation.

If you see people damaging trees or committing similar acts of vandalism please don't hesitate to contact the police as these people are destroying community assets and incurring unnecessary expense.

The Bourke Swimming Pool will close for the season on the 31st March 2018.

Depending on the outcome of the current round of grant applications to be lodged over the next few weeks under the Stronger Communities Fund, the pool could be in line for a major upgrade over the next few months. With the pool over sixty years old it is time to look at the upgrading of the facility as funding allows. The pool is a valuable community asset and given the extremely hot conditions experienced in Bourke is regarded as an essential facility within our town.

A Master Plan for the re-development of the pool complex was developed some time ago and the slash park was one of the early stages of the redevelopment plan. The redevelopment of the Master Plan has provided Council with the opportunity to have a "shelve ready" projects, complete with cost estimates which is a great help in the preparation of the grant applications.

Everything is in place for another Easter weekend in Bourke with events planned across the weekend. The local press has published details and these are also available at the Tourist Information Centre located within the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre or on Council's Website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au or the visit Bourke website www.visitbourke.com.au

Annette and I will be joined by our three (3) Australia based children over the Easter weekend with daughter Jaimie and sons Cameron and his wife Kristina and Brenton and his partner Stephanie all coming out to visit Bourke and to enjoy the Easter festivities. Our other daughter Gillian and her family live in Canada and we hope to travel over later this year to catch up.

A reminder, regarding the need to book the use of Council owned facilities, when you wish to use Council facilities to conduct an event, whether a one off event or as part of a regular competition.

Bourke has good facilities and with a little planning can adequately cater for the needs of most organisations. However, there will be times where clashes may arise and to minimise the impact of these clashes early advice will be of great assistance.

As part of the Stronger Local Communities Fund Council will be installing additional lighting at Coolican Oval plus upgrading the lights in Davidson Oval. This will increase the facilities for night training and also improve lighting for night games. Utilising the new technology will also hopefully assist in reducing the cost of lighting.

Quote of the week!

Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship. Buddha

Ross Earl
General Manager