



“From the GM’s Desk”

12th April 2018



Bourke Shire Council, late last week received a Financial Assessment and Sustainability Report undertaken by T-Corp for the New South Wales Office of Local Government.

One of the key components of the report is the Financial Sustainability Rating (FSR).

The FSR is an assessment of a Council’s capacity to meet its financial commitments in the short, medium and long term. The FSR for each Council has been determined based on the review and consideration of a Council’s historical performance against a set of benchmark indicators. The rating methodology consists of seven (7) FSR categories. The FSR is calculated using weighted benchmarks according to the relative importance of each benchmark in terms of a Council’s financial capacity and sustainability.

The seven (7) categories are:-

- a. Very Strong
- b. Strong
- c. Sound
- d. Moderate
- e. Weak
- f. Very Weak
- g. Distressed

In 2013 Council was deemed to be weak, however, over the past few years and due to a considerable amount of work on behalf of Council at all levels has seen that rating improve to sound in the report issued in 2017.

The other rating applied to Councils by T-Corp in their reports was the Outlook for each Council.

The Outlook assigned to Council is T-Corp’s assessment of the potential movement of Council’s FSR within the next three (3) years. The outlook methodology consists of three (3) categories. A positive Outlook indicates that a Council’s FSR is likely to improve in the short term, whilst a Neutral Outlook indicates that the FSR is likely to remain unchanged. A Negative Outlook indicates that a Council’s FSR is more likely to deteriorate and is a sign of a general weakening in performance and sustainability.

Bourke Shire Council’s outlook has gone from negative in the 2013 report to neutral in 2017 report.

Bourke Shire Council's Draft Operational Plan (Budget) for 2018/2019 is currently on display with submissions in relation to the plan able to be lodged any time during the display period which concluded on the 6th May 2018. Council will again consider the Plan at its Ordinary meeting of Council to be held on Monday, 28th May 2018.

Bourke P&A Show is on Saturday, 28th April 2018 and I encourage residents both, to keep the day free and also to take the time to enter something in the numerous categories that are available, from arts and craft through to the fleece competition. There is the opportunity to be involved and the old adage of "that it is not whether you win or lose but participation that is the important thing" and in doing so ensuring the ongoing success of the show.

There is a good flow continuing in the Darling River and the water in the system it is hoped will reach Menindee Lakes although it is difficult to determine the amount of water that will be received as the water is flowing across a very dry river bed. The water has reached Tilpa and is making its way slowly towards Wilcannia.

The situation in around Wilcannia was getting quite bad with the lack of flow combining with the hot weather resulting in red alerts for blue-green algae being put in place.

The flow at Bourke has steadied dramatically and whilst there is little water coming from the upper catchment at this stage it is hoped that water restrictions won't have to be considered for a couple of months depending of course on rainfall in the catchment.

The Councils of Walgett, Bourke, Brewarrina and Central Darling Shires are continuing their representations to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to have an Environment Flow made available immediately as it will serve to complement the flow already in the river system and maximise the benefit derived from the flow.

The Councils have been pleased with the cooperation and assistance provided by both Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the State Government and the willingness of both to provide information.

Bourke Shire Council has received its signed Funding Deed in respect of the projects to be undertaken under the first round of funding provided under the Stronger Communities Fund with projects under this round focussing on North Bourke and Davidson Oval. A playground and toilet facilities are planned for North Bourke whilst Davidson Oval will see improvements to both the lighting and canteen.

Council is still preparing detailed cost estimates for projects to be submitted under round two but they will include improvements in Central Park and at the Bourke Swimming Pool.

There has been a lot of positive comment regarding the Easter weekend and many people already looking forward to the event next year. At a debrief amongst Council staff, a few suggestions for improvements were made but were basically of a minor nature but will further assist in the smooth running of the event next year.

One of the more common comments was that how green and clean the town looked despite just coming off 10 weeks of water restrictions.

As the reputation of the Bourke Easter weekend grows hopefully will the crowd, which will be a tremendous boost to the economy of the town.

One of the suggestions put forward for next year was the possibility of having an outdoor concert on the Friday night with live bands and perhaps even a high profile performer. Work on this concept will continue over the next couple of months as generally there is a considerable lead time to confirm bookings.

While still to be confirmed negotiations are continuing to secure an "Outback" themed show to complement the attractions already available. For the past three (3) years an outback show has performed at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre and has been well received by the visitors and locals alike.

The key to attracting and retaining visitors to the town is both to have plenty of activities for them to do but importantly provided a warm welcoming and friendly environment. Everyone in the community can assist by offering directions and advice if asked. If you are unsure please refer them to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre.

The Library at Bourke although relatively small offers a large range of books, audio visual material and magazines to cater for all ages and interests. If you haven't been to the library why not drop in and see what they have to offer. In most instances if the Library doesn't have the book you may be looking for they can in most instances arrange for an inter-library loan.

While on Library services Local Government NSW's have welcomed the opposition's announcement to increase library funding to \$50 million and will be calling on all parties contesting the upcoming NSW state election to match this commitment. No doubt library funding will become an issue over the next twelve months as we move towards the next State Election scheduled for March 2019.

I note that Local Government New South Wales is again calling on the State Government to consider providing the total funding for pensioner rate concessions.

Under the current scheme, eligible seniors receive a discount on their combined ordinary Council rates and waste service charges, up to a maximum of \$250 per annum.

The NSW Government funds roughly 55% of the annual \$78.5 million concession cost, with Councils left to fund the remaining 45%.

Councillor Linda Scott, President of Local Government New South Wales said in a recent press release that NSW is the only state in which pensioner concessions on rates are not fully funded by the State Government.

Local Government has to absorb cost to the tune of around \$64 million each year, with some Councils being asked to forgo up to \$1 million in rates revenue.

While making it clear Local Government NSW and member Councils support these concessions for pensioners strongly feels that the concession should be funded by the State Government.

Sunday, 8th April marks the beginning of Seniors Week with a barbeque lunch at Renshaw Oval being provided by Bourke Shire Council and the Local Branch of the CWA. There are activities planned for everyday during this week with the exception of Saturday which provides the opportunity for a rest day prior to the final function being a luncheon hosted by Bourke Rotary and Bourke Shire Council on Sunday, 15th April once again at Renshaw Oval. The hosting of the Senior Citizens Week activities is very much a whole of community affairs with a number of organisations contributing.

A copy of the program is available at both the Council and the Bourke Public Library and has been advertised in both local papers last week.

Please note that booking to all events is preferable to enable catering to be organised and transport to be coordinated. It is not too late to book for the remaining function and you can do so by contacting the Council on 068308000.

If you have a relative, friend or neighbour who you think would enjoy the day out mixing with fiends at one of the functions why not encourage them to attend and offer to drop them off and pick them up.

The new kitchen facility at Renshaw Oval looks very impressive and certainly adds to the functionality of the main pavilion and provides the opportunity for functions such as those planned for Senior's Week to be held.

ANZAC Day is only two (2) weeks away and good crowds are once again anticipated at both the Dawn Service and at the March and service later in the morning. There seems to be an increased awareness and appreciation of the sacrifices made by those who went to war to preserve our freedom evident amongst all sections of our community.

The number of Ex-Servicemen marching in this year ANZAC Day March will be bolstered by the attendance of a number of Vietnam Veterans who served with local resident Kevin Gascoigne and have chosen Bourke as the venue for their reunion this year.

In addition to the Bourke Services there will be services at Wanaaring, Louth and Enngonia.

A number of meetings are scheduled to take place this week at which Council will be represented and these include the workshops being conducted by the New South Wales Department of Planning entitled "Bourke Building Future Communities" which will be held at the Council Chambers with the first at 1.00pm and the second at 5.00pm on Tuesday, 10th April 2018.

Also on Tuesday, 10th will be the fourth meeting of the Barwon Darling Stakeholder Advisory Panel which brings together representatives of a number of groups and Government Departments.

Local Government is one of the interest groups represented along with Barwon-Darling Water, Local Land Services, Murray Darling Basin Authority, Australian Floodplain Association, the Commonwealth Environmental Holder and the Western Lands Advisory Council. There is also representation from the State Government Agencies who are the coordinators of the meetings.

Quote of the week!

"No act of kindness, no matter how small is ever wasted"

- Aesop

Ross Earl
General Manager