



“From the GM’s Desk” 26th April 2018



Local Government NSW welcomed the announcement that the NSW State Government has introduced a Low Cost Loans Initiative.

The scheme allows councils to borrow money from TCorp, at a subsidised cost, for infrastructure that supports new housing supply.

Under the initiative the NSW Government will refund 50% of the cost of council's interest payments on loans that enable housing developments to proceed - such as roads, sports fields, community centres, drainage, playgrounds, or land acquisition.

The subsidised loans are only open to councils that meet the State Government's 'Fit for the Future' requirements, and have Local Environmental Plans that contain adequate residential zoning that aligns with strategic planning targets such as Regional or District Plans.

Councils deemed "unfit" under the Government's 'Fit for the Future' amalgamation process are not eligible for subsidised loans. At this stage it is unclear if all Councils earmarked for membership of the now defunct Far West Initiative will also be ineligible as they did not undergo the “Fit for the Future” assessment process, however, I have sought clarification of this eligibility status from the Office of Local Government.

Late in 2016 Morrison Low a Consultancy firm engaged by the Office of Local Government undertook a review of Councils Asset Management system which included an inspection of a sample of Council assets. This was undertaken to determine the accuracy of Councils internal assessment of the condition of the assets.

The review was primarily focussed on asset management practices, systems and processes. Bourke Shire has \$234 million worth of assets and it is essential, these are effectively maintained and provision made for their replacement once they reach the end of their life cycle

Based on their recent experience across the asset management practices, systems and processes of councils in NSW, Morrison Low has determined that Bourke Shire has an “average” ranking when compared to other NSW councils. Bourke Shire Council continues to allocate resources to ensure that Council's asset management practices reflect best practice.

The release of water for the Environmental Flow that was announced early last week commenced on the 17th April 2018 with the flow expected in the upper reaches of the Barwon by early to mid-May and then reach Bourke in the last week of May 2018. The current embargo applicable to the Barwon Darling finishes on the 28th April 2018, however, it is anticipated that embargo will be extended for the period of the flow.

The level at the Bourke Weir last Friday was 4.00m with the likelihood that the flow will further decrease over the next few days, however, it is hoped that a small flow will remain. Should the water stop flowing over the weir, restrictions may need to be introduced until the environmental flow reaches Bourke.

The announcement in relation to the environmental flow was warmly welcomed by all sectors of the community along the river system. The flow will make a significant improvement to the environmental health of the river and in particular to those areas that have been without a flow for an extended period. There will be also positive social and economic impacts that will result from the flow being made available.

Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman has written to each of the persons who have indicated that they will be nominating as candidates for the seat of Barwon in the New South Wales State Election which is scheduled to be held on the 23rd March 2019, inviting them to visit Bourke.

Councillor Hollman has indicated Bourke Shire Council looks forward to the opportunity of meeting with each of the candidates as they make their way around the electorate and having the opportunity to discuss with them issues impacting on our community.

To this end, Council will be compiling a list of matters which it sees as priorities for both Bourke and the seat of Barwon, once completed it will be forwarded to each of the candidates for their information and consideration

Already the National Party have pre-selected Andrew Schier from Gilgandra as their Candidate, the Shooters and Fishers Party have endorsed Roy Butler from Mendooran, Country Labor have endorsed Darriea Turley from Broken Hill who is currently the Mayor of Broken Hill City Council with Phil Naden also from Gilgandra standing as an independent. Phil recently held the role of CEO of the Bourke Aboriginal Health Service.

Bourke Shire Council has enjoyed a good working relationship with the current member Kevin Humphries MP and looks forward to establishing a similar relationship with his successor following the election.

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 concludes on the 6th May 2018. Council will again consider the Plan at its Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held on the 28th May 2018.

It's Showtime with the Annual Bourke Show to be held this Saturday. From all reports, there is already a great deal of interest and a good range of displays already booked in as well as a strong Side Show Alley.

Please show your support for this great community event which will provide something for people of all ages and interests.

A welcome addition to the attractions at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre in 2018 will be nationally acclaimed horseman Paul Clarkson who will be providing a show on a daily basis. The format of the show has yet to be finalised. My understanding is that Paul has an innate ability to work with animals of all types and I am sure that this ability will be clearly displayed in his show.

Once the starting date for the show is finalised it will be advertised throughout the community. The show will provide another source of entertainment for the visitors to our town.

Bourke Shire Council has erected a plaque mounted on a sandstone rock in Percy Hobson Park.

The erection of the plaque is to acknowledge the achievements of Percy Hobson and provides a little more information in relation to his achievements and in particular the fact that he was the first Indigenous Australian to win a Gold Medal at the Commonwealth Games.

There is a considerable amount of work undertaken by volunteers within our community and Council is very appreciative of the contribution this level of volunteerism makes to our shire in a number of ways.

The work done by Ian and Nan Langdon-Smith in planting and caring for the trees along Tancred Way and Fred Hollows Way has been recognised and the trees continue to prosper. The maintenance and watering of the trees has involved a small but dedicated bunch of volunteers including Chris Ware, Glen Curtis and Michael McNeill whose efforts in ensuring that the trees continue to get watered, have no doubt assisted in the high level of survival of the trees.

The tree planting program has been extended to include the North Bourke Oval and also Renshaw Oval with a considerable amount of effort being put into these projects.

Bob Stutsel and Glen Curtis have together been largely responsible for the planting and maintenance of the gardens at the corner of Mitchell and Richard Street which provide a great addition to the streetscape. Bob also maintains the lawns around the Men's Shed area as well as the flower displays within the Little Birdy area.

Shirley Booth for a number of years assisted with the watering of Jones Park.

There are numerous other examples of volunteerism throughout the shire and each and every one of those helps to make Bourke Shire a much better place to live.

The recent festivities over Easter were an excellent example where people put in countless hours to make sure that everything was adequately prepared and this included the preparation required at the racetrack which needed to be accord with the high standards set by Racing NSW to amongst other things ensure the safety of the horses and jockeys. The presentation of both the track and ancillary facilities was subject to many positive comments from all those within the racing fraternity who were in attendance over Easter with a number indicating that they were comparable to other tracks who race much more regularly than Bourke and hold TAB meetings.

Rachel Connell has been appointed to the role of Executive Director, Water in our Lands & Water division.

She was previously with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), where she was the Deputy Director General, DPI Strategy & Policy Division and DPI Forestry Division.

With the strong focus on water issues across the State I am sure that we will have the opportunity to meet with Racheal over the coming months.

There were a series of meetings held earlier this week in relation to the new Abattoir; these were convened by Darling River Goat Exporters, involved organisations both within Bourke and from outside Bourke.

The meetings were primarily to;

- Provide an updated on the construction process for the new abattoir
- Introduce their recently appointed Plant Manager - James Turner
- Introduce their recently engaged Workforce Recruitment partner
- Introduce their recently engaged Training partner
- Advise of the proposed recruitment process, contact details, timing etc.
- To seek input on any initiatives to enhance the potential to secure local input and interest from our communities.

As we move closer to the operational date of the Abattoir there will be a considerable amount of work needed to be undertaken and a large degree of coordination required.

It is only three years since the proposal to establish the abattoir in Bourke was first raised and much has been achieved in a relatively short period.

As previously advised the Manager of Tourism and Economic Development Charles Ligget has resigned. Charles has now advised that he will finish up with Council on the 4th May 2018 and arrangements are currently being put in place for the transitional period until a new person is appointed.

Council recently advertised for people to undertake casual roles at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre including the Tourist Information Centre and have secured the services of a number of people who will supplement the services provided by current team in providing accurate and friendly advice to our visitors and encouraging them to stay a little longer in our town. As they say "first impressions count" and the provision of a warm welcome to our town is a very important ingredient to developing and maintaining a successful tourism industry, which provides so much to our local economy.

Council is continuing to focus on making Bourke a "Tourist Destination" and looking at opportunities in this regard. Council is receptive to ideas which people may have to further develop the tourism industry.

Quote of the week!

You can't have a million-dollar dream with a minimum-wage work ethic." – Stephen C. Hogan

Ross Earl
General Manager