



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018



Together with other community members and representatives of the Local Land Services and the Rural Financial Counselling Service, I had the opportunity to meet with Pip Job, New South Wales Drought Coordinator.

The meeting was a fact finding exercise to some extent, but there was a genuine desire to hear the views of those present who were representative of a large section of the shire.

The fact that any emphasis on drought seems to only come when the more heavily populated areas find themselves drought impacted was a source of frustration as quite often by this stage those in the West of the State have been experiencing drought for a considerable time.

While the meeting covered a range of topics the following is a summary of the main issues:-

- The lack of any formalised system to see an area declared as drought impacted as previously existed
- The lack of a policy to identify what assistance may be available following the declaration of an area as drought impacted
- The reliability of the data utilised in the preparation of drought maps
- The fact that you can't identify areas purely by lines on maps and "ground truthing" is essential
- The need to recognise how quickly areas in the west of the state fall into drought conditions
- The impact of the current kangaroo population on available feed
- The need to treat drought as a natural disaster similar to that for flood or bushfire
- The fact that the provision of low interest loans only increases the debt burden
- The fact drought has a significant impact across the broader community not just farmers
- The physical and mental health of those involved is put at risk
- The issues caused to the unsealed road network causing some roads to be untrafficable to large trucks impacting on both stock movements and the ability to truck in fodder
- To look at the possible introduction of a "zonal taxation" rate at a much lower for those businesses, farmers and individuals in the western division to encourage investment in the area and ensure that those on the land can build up a resilience to the issues caused by drought

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Council has received advice that all its applications for funding in round two (2) of the Stronger Country Communities Programme have progressed to the next stage of assessment which is community choice modelling. It is anticipated that residents will be randomly selected to give a few of the various projects.

The projects that have been put forward were as following in order of priority as determined by Council are as follows:-

It should be noted that Council's allocation for Round 2 is \$1,790,442 plus the carryover funds from Round 1 of \$258,362 bring the total allocation to \$2,048,804.

The availability of the funding from the Stronger Country Communities program will mean that a number of projects that have been unable to be completed due to budgetary restrictions will now be undertaken.

Project	Grant Amount
Central Park Refurbishment	\$258,362
Pool (co contribution by Council \$900,000 loan)	\$930,500
Wharf Safety Upgrade	\$60,000
Main Street Development	\$300,000
Pool WHS Upgrade	\$50,000
Village Beautification	\$200,000
Levee Walk Stage 1	\$100,000
Signage Entry to town	\$50,000
SES Shed	\$100,000
Fencing Sporting Precinct	\$352,240
Stage 2 Levee Walk	\$100,000
PCYC Upgrade	\$502,393
2WEB Community Radio Technology Upgrade	\$146,587

If you tally the costs of the projects it far exceeds the \$2,048,804 that is available, and hence the need for Council to submit the priority listing.

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Council has been working with RaRMS to ensure that Bourke Shire continues to be serviced by adequate numbers of doctors and that the reliance of the provision of services by locums is limited. The attraction and retention of Doctors and other Health Professionals is a constant challenge for many rural communities not just Bourke.

Council has recently supported a submission by Cobar Shire to ask the State Government to introduce a range of initiatives that may assist in overcoming the problem. The attraction and retention of Staff has been a regular issue for the Western Division of Councils.

The current situation in Bourke and some of the action being undertaken by RaRMS to alleviate the problems in attracting doctors to rural and remote communities is as follows:-

1. RaRMS maintains full coverage of the Bourke MPS Visiting Medical Officer roster, with the likes of Dr Freddy Chafota, Dr Ben Bartel, Dr Joseph Etta, and Dr Tich Muvirimi all returning in the next month or so.
2. Whilst the use of Locums is not ideal RaRMS are attempting to ensure that the locums utilised are able to visit on a regular basis and hence built up a rapport with patients over that period.
3. Dr Fasiha Sadaf continues to work full time in the RaRMS Health Bourke Medical Centre.

4. RaRMS Health Bourke was one of only 13 practices around Australia to be recently awarded a Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) Targeted Recruitment position, meaning we can offer Doctors looking for a training position, a guaranteed place on the RVTS program from January 2019, subject to their suitability. The first six eligible applicant Doctors across those 13 locations will be awarded a training position from January 2019. RaRMS interviewed three potential Doctors for Bourke, and hope to have at least two of those visiting Bourke in the near future to experience what Bourke has to offer both professionally and socially.

RaRMS will be providing those Doctors an opportunity to meet with a number of local individuals and organisations in an effort to demonstrate how supportive, inclusive, safe, enjoyable and professionally satisfying living and working in Bourke can be.

5. RaRMS is piloting a new program whereby graduate medical students will be employed in three of its practices from July 2018, including one in Bourke. Those medical graduates will be working as Clinical Assistants prior to commencing their internships in 2019, contributing to the care of patients in each location who visit our medical centre. RaRMS hope that by providing those students with a meaningful, paid clinical role in rural general practice, that we will not only contribute to their ongoing training and education, but the Clinical Assistants will also have a positive general practice work experience and that they will be more inclined to consider a career in rural general practice in the future.
6. RaRMS had a meeting with office of the Minister for Rural Health, Bridgett McKenzie on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, in part to discuss the challenges being faced right across Rural and Remote Australia in regards to the Recruitment and Retention of GPs.

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Annette had sister her Sue and husband Paul visit for the weekend and they took the opportunity to look at what the town and district has to offer and they were able to have a look at a cotton gin, PV Jandra, wharf, the Crossley engine, the Outback Show and took part in the Murder Mystery Night at the Library, Back of Bourke Art Gallery, May's Bend as well as trying out a couple of our eateries.

They have visited previously and have been impressed with the town generally and what it has to offer and the effort being undertaken to make the town a tourist destination.

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We visited May's Bend early in the afternoon and there were around fourteen Caravans set up and enjoying the tranquil surrounds of the river. Apparently there are large numbers of caravaners who opt for these types of locations as proposed to the amenities offered by the caravan parks. From my point of view, I would prefer the facilities and comfort offered by the parks.

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The Murder Mystery Nights are run by the staff at the Bourke Public Library, there have been a number held to date, each of which has been successful with good attendances. All attendees have a "part" in the Murder Mystery and are given a role to undertake and are provided with a list of instructions to follow, encouraged to dress to suit the part.

The Murder Mystery last Saturday night had a cast made up from various characters from a number of fairy tales.

Interestingly I was cast as "Hamlet" the pig from Oink Realty and had to dress accordingly.

It was a fun night with everyone getting into the action and enjoying the role playing. Congratulations and thanks to the library staff who go to a lot of trouble to ensure that the nights are well prepared and go smoothly and supports the saying "*Libraries, more than just books*"

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Last week, together with Manager of Environmental Services, Dwayne Willoughby and Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, I met with an officer from the NSW Office of Sport regarding the Local Sport Defibrillator Scheme which aims to encourage sporting groups and other organisations to provide defibrillators in an attempt to ensure that those requiring same have access to the defibrillators.

The NSW government have provided a subsidy of up to 50% or a maximum of \$1400.00 to the cost of these lifesaving pieces of equipment and have also negotiated favourable pricing.

There was an initial round of grants in 2017, there will be another opening up shortly and I would encourage sporting and community groups to consider him installation of one of these machines.

Council will be purchasing at least two (2) units, one (1) which will be installed at the pool and the other will be available for loan for functions where large crowds are expected.

Application details for the grants will be advertised when they are available.

If you are a member of a sporting group who you think benefit from the purchase of these units please contact Councils Offices who will arrange to forward you the grant details as they become available.

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Also in town last week were staff from the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner who were explaining to Council staff the Project called "Easy to do Business" which is aimed at assisting small business navigate the myriad of requirements required to obtain the required approvals to open a small business.

The system has been trialled in the hospitality industry involving, Cafes, restaurants, small bars and focus on outdoor dining, there has been reasonable successful in reducing the number of forms required to be lodged. The trial will be expanded to include housing and construction.

Our Environmental staff looks after the bulk of the regulatory matters can see the benefit of being part of the process and a report will shortly be put to Council seeking approval for Council to participate. "Easy to do Business" is free to all Councils who chose to participate.

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Council has once again committed to be part of the Kidman Promotional Committee Tourist Brochure. Arrangements will be made shortly to again visit those advertisers who have previously purchased advertising in the brochure to once again ask them to consider doing the same in the 2018-2020 brochure.

The Kidman Way which runs from Jerilderie in the South through to Bourke in the North is a very important route as far as Bourke Shire and its tourist trade is concerned. Council is hopeful of securing the required support having a commitment for 10 pages in the brochure.

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The first meeting of the Far West Organisation of Councils involving Bourke, Walgett and Cobar Shire will be held in Bourke on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

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Local Government New South Wales will be conducting one of their Regional Summits in Cobar on Tuesday, 3rd July 2018 and it is anticipated that Representatives from Bourke Shire will attend. It provides a great opportunity to be able to meet with both the President and Board of LGNSW and members of the Senior Staff.

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*Quote of the week!*

*“Peace does not mean an absence of conflicts; differences will always be there. Peace means solving these differences through peaceful means; through dialogue, education, knowledge; and through humane ways.” ~ Dalai Lama XIV*

Ross Earl  
General Manager