



## "From the GM's Desk"

### 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018

The consultant who was in town to look at the North Bourke Bridge and give his opinion on what work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the bridge is deemed safe for the public to access is going to present Council with options. The bridge, if fully restored to its initial condition, would be able to cater for trucks, however, that is unlikely to ever be required and there is an option to make it accessible to light traffic or alternatively simply pedestrian traffic. The costs of each will be a significant determining factor in the decision making process.

Whilst he was in town the consultant also reviewed the structure of the wharf, as any structure that is subject to the variances in river heights and flows can be impacted structurally, it is important that the structural integrity is periodically subject to an assessment.

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Tourist numbers have been slowly climbing over the past few weeks with large numbers of caravanners and others coming to Bourke or passing through. I understand that accommodation has been at a premium on a number of occasions with some people unable to get accommodation.

The value of tourism to Bourke cannot be understated and Council recognises that value and is continuing to try and develop the "Tourist Product" that the Shire has to offer.

One of the first tasks of the newly appointed Manager of Tourism and Events will be to undertake a review of our tourist product and marketing strategy to identify areas which may be improved.

As I mentioned in a previous column the work that has been done by National Parks and Wildlife in relation to the development of the National Parks both in terms of access and facilities, has been excellent and hopefully will continue to improve these National Parks and increase tourist visitation. National Parks and Wildlife take a strong interest in the Darling River Run Promotion and are currently coordinating the review of information on the Darling River Run.

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The 2018/2019 Financial Year promises to be an exciting one for Bourke Shire Council with a number of projects to be commenced and or finalised. Included in these is the construction of the New Water Treatment Plant, the commencement of work on the Wanaaring Road and the Main Street Redevelopment. The projects are being undertaken with funding provided under the Stronger Country Communities Fund which will hopefully see a dramatic improvement to a number of the sporting facilities within the town, including the construction of a new Olympic Pool.

Bourke Shire is very appreciative of the funding that has been made available from the State Government from the Regional Growth Fund which became available from funding obtained via the lease of the Electricity Poles and Wires.

The recent announcement that the State Government had sold its share of the Snowy Mountains Scheme to the Federal Government and the proceeds from that sale will be utilised to improve infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales is also welcomed and Bourke Shire will continue to monitor grant opportunities.

Council still has a number of grant applications involved in the assessment process and hopefully we will see a positive outcome from these applications.

The funding that has been allocated to re-establish an air service for the towns Cobar, Bourke and Walgett or Lightning Ridge was very welcomed and during the course of the next twelve (12) months we will have the ability to once again to fly to Sydney.

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Bourke Shire Council is excited about the prospect of once again having an air service. In his announcement in relation to the establishment of a Joint Organisation of Councils based in the South and North of the Far West Planning Region the Deputy Premier announced that funding would be provided to those Councils electing to participate. Included in the funding package was funding to assist in the re-establishment of an air service for the towns of Bourke and Cobar as well as Walgett or Lightning Ridge.

The re-establishment of an air service is something that the Councils have worked on for some time in conjunction with the Local Member Kevin Humphries

There is a considerable amount of work to be undertaken to get the air service up and running and obviously the first step is to secure an airline.

It is likely that this will be undertaken via a tender process which will be co-ordinated by The Department of Premier and Cabinet Regional with the assistance of other relevant Government Agencies including the Department of Transport.

Given the funding was provided as part of the funding for the establishment of Joint Organisation of Councils, it is also anticipated that the Far North West Joint Organisation will be provided the opportunity to review the tender specifications as well as being part of the assessment process.

At this stage there has been no discussion of the frequency of the services to be provided and there may be the options included in the tender specifications to cater for these.

One of the criteria that Council would like to be included is that the costs of the seats are affordable to the average resident and this could impact on the frequency.

No doubt at the first meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation air services will be discussed

A representative of Department of Premier and Cabinet attends all meetings of JOs as a non-voting delegate.

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The Meeting of the Bourke Business Group last Monday was well attended and I think that those present got a lot out of the meeting which was intended to bring members up to date with a number of projects and in particular those involving Council.

The meeting included the local launch of the Youtube videos to try and encourage people to live and work in the Orana Region which were developed by Regional Development Australia – Orana (RDA Orana). The Chief Executive Officer Megan Dixon was in town and conducted the launch and also detailed some of the work which has been undertaken by RDA Orana and encourages any of the local businesses to access the services of RDA.

One of the videos focussed on Bourke and it was good to see the local persons featuring in the video speaking so passionately about the advantages of living and working in Bourke.

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The Establishment of the two (2) Joint Organisations in the Far West of the State was formalised with the proclamation by the Governor last week and the publication of that proclamation in the Government Gazette last Friday.

The Far North West Joint Organisation consists of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett whilst the Far South West Joint Organisation involves Balranald, Broken Hill, Central Darling and Wentworth

The proclamation expands the State's joint organisation network to 13 new regional bodies comprising 81 councils.

Work can now officially commence on the establishment of the JOs with the Far North West JO set to have its first meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018 in Bourke.

General Manager of Cobar Shire Council Peter Vlatko will act as the Returning Officer for the first meeting and will prepare the agenda and conduct the election of the first Chair.

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The next Ordinary Meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday 23rd July 2018 commencing at 9.00 am in the Council Chambers 29 Mitchell Street Bourke. A Public Forum will be held at 10.00am. Whilst not essential, people wishing to speak at the public forum are encouraged to contact Kai Howard Oakman, so that if necessary, background information may be researched on the issue on which they wish to speak.

Items for possible inclusion in the business paper should be with Council no later than Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

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The work done by Bob Stutsel and Glen Curtis with the assistance of others on the gardens established within the blisters at the corner of Mitchell and Richard Streets has certainly lifted the appearance of this section of the town and has drawn a lot of favourable comment from both visitors and locals alike. Bob's work also extends to the area around the Men's Shed and the "Little Birdy" complex and again has received considerable favourable comment.

I would encourage all residents to try and keep the nature strips adjacent to their property neat and tidy as it certainly enhances the appearance of the town and as it is said "first impressions count".

I have spoken to a number of visitors to town and they are generally impressed by the green parks and cleanliness of the streets and anything that can be done to provide an ongoing improvement to that image is welcomed.

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Bourke Rotary Club will hold their Changeover Dinner on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> July; however, there will be actually little change with President Leonie Brown remaining as President for the next twelve (12) months whilst Secretary Meredith Thompson and Treasurer Lisa Crothers will remain in their roles. Pat Canty has been elected Vice- President. The changeover will be attended by Steve Cowley the Assistant District Governor who will be representing the newly appointed District Governor Brian Coffey.

Rotary play an important role in many communities and Bourke is no exception with Rotary organising the Street Parade and Wool Bale Rolling as part of the Easter Festivities, undertaking their turn on the roster for Meals on Wheels, hosting the Welcome to Bourke Event, providing the Australia Day Breakfast, hosting Senior Citizen functions during Senior Citizens week and at Christmas time amongst other things. Rotary source their funding from hosting trivia nights, catering at Enngonia Races plus catering on other occasions.

Rotary are involved in many other activities which all benefit the community and have done so for the past sixty one (61) years.

Bourke once boasted three (3) strong service clubs, however, due to a variety of reasons service clubs in many towns struggle to keep up strong membership and Bourke is no exception.

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Council will be issuing its rates notice for the 2018/2019 rating year and would like to make residents aware of the following.

- Notices will be issued mid-July
- To improve efficiency Council will for the first time be using an external mailing house for printing and posting
- Your annual notice will have a new modern design
- Council is now able to provide an email copy of rates notices. – There will be a flyer detailing this with the annual notice. Please return the flyer with your email address to Council if you would like to take advantage of the new service.
- Due dates will be
  - instalment 1 - 31.08.2018,
  - Instalment 2 - 30.11.2018,
  - Instalment 3 – 28.02.2019,
  - Instalment 4 – 31.05.2019
- It is Council's policy to send overdue notices approximately 14 days after the due date.

- It is Council's policy to then refer the matter to an external debt collection agency if the overdue amounts remain unpaid and no contact has been made regarding the establishment of suitable arrangements for payment including a payment plan. Legal action may follow without further notice. The cost of legal action is borne by the ratepayer so it is important to keep in contact with Council.
  - Legal action is only instituted as a last resort.
  - Please contact Council if you are having difficulty paying rates on time.
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One of the decisions made at the meeting of the Bourke Business Group was not to conduct a Christmas Shopping Promotion this year.

The Promotion has been conducted in previous years in an attempt to try to ensure that residents "shopped locally" during the lead up to Christmas.

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Council has finally completed the sealing of Youngerina Hill on the Dowling Track. This area was a notorious area that presented locals and travellers alike many delays over the years.

The 5.3 km of seal was completed with funding of \$400,000.00 from Regional Road Repair Program and \$400,000.00 from Council Block Grant.

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Council will complete another 5.5 km of widening on the Bourke to Brewarrina Road this week and will result in a much better road for all.

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The Coronga Peak Road at Byrock was given a long awaited maintenance repair grade and I would like to thank the regular users of this road for their patience, however, the dry conditions prevented work taking place any earlier.

Quote of the week!

*Your choice of people to associate with, both personally and business-wise, is one of the most important choices you make. If you associate with turkeys, you will never fly with the eagles. - Brian Tracy*

Ross Earl  
General Manager