



“From the GM’s Desk”

13th September 2018



The second meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils (FNWJO) was held in Walgett last Thursday and the Mayors and General Managers of all member Councils were in attendance.

The Meeting received suggestions from member Councils in respect of the strategic priorities to be adopted by FNWJO and these include those from Bourke Shire including water for agriculture, tourism, decentralisation and economic development.

With \$5 million on the table for the development of tourism potential in the area; all member Councils were keen to be able to review the eligibility criteria in relation to this funding and to this end resolved to invite Chris Hanger from the Office of Regional Development to the next meeting. Chris has oversight of the funding and his meeting with the board will assist in gaining a greater understanding of the funding guidelines. This in turn will allow the planning for projects to be undertaken, recognising the importance of tourism to the economies of each of the Shires.

The FNWJO has also been provided with funding of \$250,000.00 to engage New South Wales Public Works to assist Councils in the implementation of Infrastructure Programs. The Board also resolved to meet the New South Wales Regional Manager of Public Works, Gavin Priestley to see how best these funds can be utilised.

All Councils were also keen to progress the tender process for the re-establishment of an air service in Cobar, Bourke and Walgett and to have the opportunity to review the tender documents prior to their release.

It is anticipated that this tender process should be well advanced by the end of October 2018.

Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) met for the last time last Friday with the members voting to dissolve the Organisation, allowing those who have elected to become a member of a Joint Organisation of Councils (JO) to further develop the roles and functions.

The Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance has had a name change and will now be known as the Orana Water Utilities Alliance and will be administered by the Orana Joint Organisation of Councils under a committee structured under 400Z of the Local Government Act.

It was agreed that the Professional Groups which sat under OROC will continue and be administered by one of the Joint Organisation of Councils as well.

There was a degree of sadness at the meeting with members reflecting on the benefits that OROC had provided over the years and the contribution made by so many over that period.

Mayor of Narromine, Councillor Craig Davies offered to host a function to recognise the contribution of OROC and invite to the function some of those who made significant contributions to the success of OROC over the years.

Amongst the Guests at the meeting of OROC were members of the New South Wales Regional Infrastructure coordination Team including Don Murray Nick White, Phillip Anderson Jock Carter and Di Sucur.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation in relation to the Central West Freight Taskforce which is being now led by Michael Kneipp who was previously the Administrator of Dubbo Regional Council following its amalgamation with Wellington Shire Council.

There is a great deal of interest in the project and how it will relate to both the Inland Rail and the Regional Freight Plan that was previously adopted by OROC.

The other guest speaker on the Agenda was Pip Job who is the New South Wales Drought Coordinator who was accompanied by Ken Harrison from the Department of Industry.

Pip gave an insight into the grip of the drought on the state with all but a very small portion of the state drought impacted in some fashion and the fact that this impact not only involves farmers but also those who provide services to the agricultural sector and the retailers in rural based towns. The drought has a whole of community impact.

Pip reported on the efforts being made to try and coordinate the drought relief appeals and to ensure that the funds raised are distributed to those most in need and that any duplication is minimised.

OROC members expressed the need for an effective drought policy to be put in place and suggested that drought be treated as any other natural disaster and not something that is able to be planned for and contingency plans put in place. The availability of low interest loans was acknowledged but it was also acknowledged that putting people further into debt was not the best option.

Bourke Shire Council has forwarded a motion for consideration for inclusion in the agenda for the Annual Conference of Local Government New South Wales in Albury in late October 2018. The motion reads as follows:-

Motion

That the New South Wales Government, as a matter of urgency develop a policy framework which clearly defines when an area is deemed to be in "drought" and also develops a range of measures that provide assistance to farmers and small business impacted by drought conditions including clear criteria which needs to be straight forward and inclusive, so that such assistance can be accessed in a timely fashion.

Note by Council

There is no current mechanism for areas to be drought declared and as such with each drought period comes the question of what indicators are used to determine when the an area is impacted by an extended period of abnormally dry conditions.

Drought conditions should be treated in a similar way to both fire and flood as all are disaster situations.

Often, pleas by the impacted landowners and businesses to have measures put in place to alleviate the financial hardship being experienced as a result of the abnormally dry period, result in that assistance being provided far too late to be effective.

Should loan funding be made available, the repayment period for such loans should be of a sufficient period to enable those accessing the loans to improve their financial capacity to do so.

In the days when organisations such as Rural Lands Protection Board were in existence such policy framework existed and worked effectively. The transition to Local Land Services (LLS) has seen the framework disappear and there is an ongoing debate on what constitutes drought and what should be provided by way of assistance. The delays means that support, if it becomes available, often comes too late for those most impacted.

The Enngonia Races are on this Saturday so if you looking for a good day out, take the trip north and enjoy the friendly atmosphere of a real bush race meeting.

The Inaugural Meeting of the JB Renshaw Oval User Group Advisory was held on Monday night and was very productive with representatives of all the user groups represented. Council was represented by the Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman, Councillor Bob Stutsel. Manager of Environmental Services Dwayne Willoughby and me.

Amongst the strategic priorities identified were

1. A new toilet and amenities block
2. Improved lighting
3. Irrigation system
4. Upgrade to the power supply
5. Shade structures
6. A new pavilion
7. Improved all weather internal road network
8. Painting
9. Signage
10. Arena surface improvement

Construction in the Central Business District (CBD) continues and already there have been a number of positive comments on the way it will look when it is finished in a few months.

The transition to one way traffic has gone relatively smoothly and no significant problems encountered and I would like to express Council's appreciation of the cooperation of all residents.

The Bourke to Milparinka Road via Wanaaring will be closed between Pine View and Gumbalie with traffic being required to detour via Fords Bridge – Snake Gully as I have previously stated, whilst this will present some short-term inconvenience the long-term benefits of a sealed road will be worth that inconvenience.

Council sees the sealing of the Bourke to Milparinka Road as a very important link and will continue its efforts in trying to secure ongoing funding to further improve this road.

Bookings for the use of the Bourke Community Centre (previously known as the Bourke Senior Citizens Centre) will be handled by Council Staff at the Main Office at 29 Mitchell Street. ALL organisations utilising the facility are asked to book their proposed usage so that Council can ensure there is no double bookings and the facility is able to be prepared for requirements of each organisation.

Council received advice from the Minister for Lands and Forestry, the Hon. Paul Toole, MP that it was successful in obtaining funding from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program (CRIFP) for three (3) projects.

The Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries MP made a brief stopover in Bourke on Monday and was pleased to be able to officially announce the availability of the grants and congratulated Council on the ongoing efforts being undertaken to improve community facilities with the Shire

The successful Projects were:-

- \$157,530 for the supply and installation of pool fencing at the Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool Complex
- \$28,380 for the upgrade of the playground equipment at the Enngonia Community Centre Reserve
- \$29,975 for the painting of the buildings at the Bourke Showground

All projects will result in improved community facilities and Council is appreciative of the funding that has been made available.

Council has applied for funding under the Building Stronger Communities Fund and much of this funding, has been identified for improving existing amenities across the shire area and will complement the work already being undertaken by the efforts of the users and Council.

Sport and recreational facilities provide an important role in enhancing the social amenity of rural and remote communities.

Councils that held ordinary elections in September 2016 are required to hold their mayoral elections in September 2018 if their mayor is elected by Councillors.

Councils that held delayed ordinary elections or first elections (following the creation of a new Council) in September 2017 will hold their next mayoral elections in September 2019 if their Mayor is elected by Councillors.

Bourke Shire will hold its Mayoral Election on the 24th September 2018 and at the same time will hold an election for the position of Deputy Mayor and make appointments to the various Committees and also appoint Delegates to the organisations of which Council is a member.

Mayoral Elections by councillors are conducted in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

Amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) by the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016 in August 2016 saw the inclusion in the prescribed role of Councillors under section 232 a responsibility "to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a Councillor".

In support of this, regulations will soon be made for induction and other professional development for Mayors and Councillors.

The Office of Local Government (OLG) has prepared guidelines, in consultation with the sector, to assist Councils to develop and deliver induction and ongoing professional development activities for their Mayor and Councillors in compliance with the proposed regulations.

The Minister for Local Government has released the guidelines so that Councils can familiarise themselves with the new requirements before the regulations are made.

The guidelines are available on OLG's website at www.olg.nsw.gov.au

Under the guidelines, Councils' induction and professional development programs are to consist of three elements:-

- Pre-election candidate sessions – these are to ensure prospective candidates are aware of what will be expected of them if elected (these are not mandatory but are encouraged)

- Induction program – this aims to equip mayors and councillors with the information they need to perform their role effectively over the first few months and has a particular focus on building positive, collaborative relationships between councillors and with staff
 - Professional development program – this is to be developed in consultation with all councillors and delivered over the term of the council to build the skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to be an effective mayor or councillor.
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As a Rotary Member, I attended the Bourke Hospital Fete on Sunday and once again was very impressed with the level of support shown to the fete not only by the Hospital Auxiliary Members but others who assisted on the day.

As part of the day a number of awards were given to volunteers who have given long service to the auxiliary including those who received recognition for 20 years services which is a great effort. It demonstrates that value of volunteerism within our community. Without the level of volunteerism that exists with the Bourke Community a number of services, sports and clubs would simply not exist and this would have a dramatic impact on the amenity of the town.

Council's Auditors are in town this week to undertake an audit of the 2018/2019 Financial Reports. The Audited Financial Reports are required to be lodged with the Office of Local Government by the end of October.

Quote of the Week!

"Be happy with the little you have. There are people with nothing who still manage to smile."

Ross Earl
General Manager