



“From the GM’s Desk”



13th December 2018

On the evening of Friday 14th December Bourke Shire Council in association with other organisations are hosting Christmas Markets in the wharf area starting at 6pm and concluding around 9.00 pm

There will be something for everyone so come along and enjoy the festive spirit of Bourke.

Stall holders who wish to be part of this fantastic promotion are invited to contact Jodie Sontag at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre for further details. Stall holders should register PRIOR to the evening.

Included on the night will be the official switching on of the Christmas Tree lights by Mayor Barry Hollman as part of the “Light up Bourke Campaign” being promoted by Council.

The evening will conclude with the Carols by Candlelight which is always a popular event.

The last of the village community consultation meetings took place last Wednesday with a meeting held at Louth in the morning and Wanaaring that afternoon.

Both meetings were well attended with some very constructive comments and suggestions being brought forward.

I feel that whilst everyone within the Shire would like to see additional funding provided for road works and other services and facilities there is a general acceptance that the large area covered by the Shire makes this difficult.

It was pleasing to be able to visit the villages and listen to the residents suggest projects for each of the villages that could be funded from both the Strong Country Communities Fund (SCCF) and the Drought Communities Fund. Funding has been approved for village based projects from the SCCF and funding for projects submitted under the Drought Communities Fund also including funding to undertake works in the villages.

The last of the Community Meetings will be held in Bourke early in the New Year and as far as budgetary provisions allow the projects and services suggested will be included in discussions when formulating the 2019/2020 Operational Plan (Budget).

I am pleased to advise that all the projects submitted by Council under the Federal Governments Drought Communities Extension program have been successful and Council staff are working on

getting the planning for each of the projects finalised as quickly as possible so that the benefits of the funding can start to flow into the community. These include:

- Bourke and District Community Stimulus of \$200,000;
- Toilets at Bourke Cemetery of \$25,000;
- Back O' Bourke Regional Function and Conference Centre projects of \$150,000;
- Wharf Employment Project of \$60,000;
- Central Park – Be Active, Social and Safe of \$259,000;
- Bourke CBD beautification of public spaces employment program of \$180,000; and
- Drought Events – Social and Economic Stimulation of \$60,000.

In good news for the Louth community the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has announced that through the generous support of a philanthropic donor they have received funding for the construction of medical facilities in the towns of Tilpa, Louth and Innamincka to service those towns and the surrounding district.

Concept plans for the Louth facility have been developed for Louth to enable community consultation.

The proposed medical facility is likely to include start of the art technology.

Initial discussions indicate that the new facility will be built adjacent to the Tennis Courts and also involve the relocation of the existing RFDS building to the Tennis Court area.

A decision of the future use of the existing hall will need to be made, but it would appear that it has reached the end of its economic life and funding should be sought to replace it as soon as practical rather than undertake the major repairs as this will be an ongoing financial drain.

A masterplan which has also being developed involves the relocation of the Bourke Shire Worker's Camp facility from behind the tennis courts to the site of the hall and it is proposed that permanent facilities would be installed.

It is hoped that the planning stages will be well advanced early in the New Year as the RFDS are keen to start construction once all approvals are in place.

Council will work closely with the Louth Chamber of Commerce in the planning stages of the project and will also be looking at opportunities to be able to source funding for the construction of a new hall at Louth.

Halls and sporting facilities are essential for the creation of social amenity for many rural and remote towns and if we are to try and attract people to live and work in these areas.

The first planning meeting to discuss the 2019 Easter Celebrations in Bourke was held last Wednesday evening with a good response from the community considering the relatively short notice and number of other activities happening in and around Bourke.

There was a general consensus the 2019 events will basically mirror those of the past few years and try and build upon the successful format. One addition will be the "Day on the Dirt" music festival planned to be held on the Friday and work has commenced on securing artists to perform.

Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries made a trip to Bourke on Tuesday to announce funding to be provided to MUDA Aboriginal Cooperation (MUDA) for the establishment of an Art Studio and Retail outlet which will be located in Oxley Street.

There has been a considerable amount of work gone into this project which will significant benefits for the local artists and will also provide an addition tourist attraction.

A similar facility operated successfully earlier in the year and the new funding provided will enable a similar operation to commence with improved facilities.

I attended my first meeting as a Board Member of Regional Development Australia – Orana (RDAO) which was held at Gorree Park Wines in Mudgee on Monday.

It was interesting and I have a bit of a steep learning curve to ensure that I am aware of the various projects and initiatives that are taking place or being planned involving RDAO, however, look forward to trying in assisting in attracting new development and expanding existing businesses with the large area covered by RDAO.

Bourke Shire Council have been advised by the Auditor General that Hills Rogers Assurance Partners (Hills Rogers) have been appointed to carry out the annual audit of Bourke for a period of four years with an option to extend for a further two years. This appointment commences for the financial year ending 30th June 2019 which of course is the current year. The Auditor General is still ultimately Council's Auditor.

Hills Rogers are currently Council's auditor.

As part of the tender process Council was grouped with a number of other Councils and these include Walgett Shire Council, Castlereagh Macquarie County Council, Bogan Shire Council, Bourke Shire Council, Brewarrina Shire Council, Warren Shire Council, Coonamble Shire Council, Balranald Shire Council, Wentworth Shire Council, Central Darling Shire Council and Broken Hill City Council.

Nearly all of these Councils will be attending the Annual Conference of Western Division to be held in Bourke and I have indicated that the opportunity may exist to be able to get together during the Conference to discuss the Auditor General's approach to the audit process.

The Mayor and I have represented Council at some of the Annual Presentation Nights at the local schools over the past week and it has been good to be able to witness the acknowledgement of a number of the students for their academic achievements as well as sporting achievements. A number of students were recognised for their service to the school and the community and it is tremendous to see our younger members of the community actively contributing to the town in such a positive way.

At the Annual Presentation Function at Koinonia Christian Academy the Board Chairman Alan Amos highlighted to parents and students, some of the major issues impacting on the school and the community over the past twelve months. One of those issues was the extended drought conditions.

Alan had a long career in the area of water management and has an extensive knowledge of the river and drew upon that knowledge to provide some interesting facts. He indicated that during his forty years in Bourke he had seen numerous changes in the flows to the river due to the impact of drought and indicated that the lowest he has seen the weir at Bourke was at 2.81 metres which was in 1995. He said that the current level of the river is at 3.20 metres and with the current levels of usage and evaporation he would anticipate the weir to drop to 2.81 around mid- January 2019 if there are no significant inflows.

Once the water level drops to below 3.00 metres we will see the introduction of Level 3 water restrictions and based on the information supplied by Alan this is likely to occur between Christmas and the New Year period.

The lack of water flow in the river is a real concern socially, economically and environmentally and we can only hope that we see some significant falls in the catchment in the very near future.

Council has once again received funding to assist in the coordination of a "Holiday Program" in January to provide activities for the children within the town for the annual school holidays. Council will be working with the local PCYC and other agencies and will be looking to replicate the success of previous programmes.

Members of the Youth Engagement Project (YEP) a Melbourne based organisation will hopefully once again be involved with the organisation supplying volunteers to assist local agencies deliver the programmes. The volunteers are high school students and they come up in groups of four (4) for a

period of two weeks. The YEP have been coming here for a few years now and their assistance is very much appreciated and the fact that these volunteers are prepared to give up their holidays is commendable.

A reminder to all residents that Council does not meet in December with the next scheduled meeting to be held on 21st January 2018 which has been brought forward due to the 4th Monday being the Australia Day Holiday. The meeting for February has also been brought forward to the 18th February 2019 as the 4th Monday will be the first day of the Western Division Conference to be held in Bourke.

Residents of Bourke and North Bourke are reminded that level 2 water restrictions have been effective from Friday 2nd November 2018.

The use of fixed sprinklers is now limited to one (1) hour per day either between the hours of 7.00 am to 8.00 am or 7.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

Hand held sprinklers can still be used at other times.

The washing of paved areas and motor vehicles can only be undertaken using a pressure cleaner or buckets and filling of new swimming pools is prohibited in accordance with Councils adopted policy.

Should the river level drop to less than 3.0metres level 3 restrictions will come into force which will mean water can only be done by hand for two (2) hours per day and a number of other tighter restrictions will also come into force.

These will be notified as required.

Nominations are called for the 2019 Australia Day Awards and will be received up until midday on the 14th January 2019. The form for nominations is slightly different from previous years and persons nominating people for an award should ensure that they included all relevant details to assist the judging panel in their deliberations.

Nomination forms are available from Bourke Shire Council, Bourke Library or on the Council website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

Arrangements for the operation of Council over the Christmas period have been advertised in a previous edition of the Western Herald.

Details of changes in the operation of Council's services and facilities are detailed in the advertisement and are also on Council's website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

Quote of the Week

“Share your smile with the world. It's a symbol of friendship and peace”. Christie Brinkley

Ross Earl
General Manager