



“From the GM’s Desk”

7th February 2019



There has been a lot of comment regarding the plans that are being put in place to supply water to Bourke when the ability to extract water from the river is no longer available.

Council have been making a number of plans and representation in relation to the issue and are at this stage comfortable that the plans in place should provide sufficient water for the domestic requirements of residents and the commercial sector.

Unfortunately the water availability will be insufficient to allow the watering of gardens.

Council have engaged a contractor to drill another Bore approximately 5 kilometres west of the current Walkden’s Bore on the Hungerford Road then pipe this water to Walkden’s Bore for initial treatment prior to it being further transferred to the Bourke Water Treatment Plant.

The pipe has been ordered and work on the extension of the pipeline will commence shortly.

Should the new bore for some reason prove unsuitable there are plans to utilise another bore which should provide sufficient capacity.

The situation is far from ideal; however, it is a situation that many towns now unfortunately find themselves in.

Council has been working closely with the Office of Water and The Office of the Minister for Regional Water Hon Niall Blair MLC and will continue to establish a strong working relationship as we work through this issue.

James McTavish the Cross Border Commissioner for New South Wales has now also been appointed the Town Water Security Coordinator and during my discussions with him last Friday he indicated that he would be visiting Bourke within the next week.

Already we have had representatives from the New South Wales Office of Water come to Bourke to review the drought proofing strategy and weekly meetings are proposed to ensure that all work is on track for the connection of the second bore.

We are currently in uncharted territory as far as water availability is concerned with the river level not been this low since 1944 according to available records. This is certainly an unwanted record.

The Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman has made representations to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to once again try and seek an environmental flow to be made available.

The amount of water held for environmental purposes has also been significantly depleted making the decision around a flow difficult as there are a number of competing demands for the water.

If the opportunity was available it would likely take at least a week to coordinate and a further six weeks to travel from the storages to Bourke.

The situation by then will be critical and as such work on the bore system will continue.

The failure of the foot valve on the pump supplying the raw water requirements to Bourke and the filtered water requirement to Bourke and North Bourke caused some worrying moments for staff last Wednesday. Whilst there was no pumping able to take place from the river, the filtered supply to the town was able to be readily met from existing storage facilities supplemented from the water supply from Walkden's Bore and there were no major issues encountered with the supply.

The work done in commissioning Walkden's Bore and the installation of the pipeline into town has already proved to be of major benefit.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Water and Waste Water team who worked long hours to overcome the problem and the cooperation and support of local contractors who effectively "dropped everything" and made their staff and resources available to assist in rectifying the problem. It was very much appreciated.

I would also like to note the cooperation of all residents in restricting usage and particular thanks to David Sharp of 2WEB who arranged public notification to be made available throughout the night on the radio.

As part of the Drought funding provided under the Federal Governments Drought Communities fund, well known poet comedian Murray Hartin has been engaged to undertake a series of performances across the villages within the Shire and will be performing at the following venues

Thursday 21st February 2019- Byrock
Friday 22nd February 2019- Fords Bridge
Saturday 23rd February 2019- Louth
Sunday 24th February 2019 Wanaaring

All performances will be held at the local Hotels and are free of charge with a free barbeque also being arranged where possible.

All performances will commence at 7.00pm and conclude at 10.00pm

Bourke Shire is pleased to be able to work with the Federal Government in coordinating the performances for the residents of these drought impacted areas.

I was in Mudgee for the weekend and had a chance meeting and chat with Val Heffernan who was a teacher in Bourke in the mid- 70s when her husband Kevin was Deputy Principal of Bourke High School and Ray Dart was Principal.

Val said unfortunately Kevin passed away on the 17th January this year.

Val asked me to pass on her best wishes to everyone in Bourke and I am sure that there are a number of people who would remember Val and Kevin from their days in Bourke.

Last Friday I attended the quarterly Meeting of Regional Development Australia-Orana of which I am now a board Member. It is always an interesting meeting with a number of initiatives discussed and it is also interesting to hear of development and potential development across the region.

The next Meeting RDA ORANA will be held Bourke on the 15th April and the opportunity will be available to provide all members a little insight into the economy of Bourke. We will showcase the town and district to the other members of the Board who all come from varying locations across of the region including Narromine, Wellington, Mudgee, Cobar and of course Dubbo.

Members of the Board are particularly interested in the new Abattoir with a development of this type in a remote area creating a lot of interest. It is hoped to be able to have representatives from the Abattoir Management team to give an overview on the overall operation of the Abattoir as part of the meeting.

The Western Division Conference is only a little over three (3) weeks away and unfortunately we have received advice that the Deputy Premier Hon John Barilaro MP will now be unable to make the conference.

The Hon Niall Blair MLC Minister for Primary Industries Minister for Regional Water and Minister for Trade and Industry will attend the Conference Dinner on the Monday Night and then open the Conference on the Tuesday and will deputise for the Deputy Premier.

I bumped into the Minister in Dubbo on Friday and during our brief conversation he said he was looking forward to the visit.

His schedule has been very busy over the past few weeks and would not be coming any less hectic in the lead up to the election.

Also confirming their attendance are the New South Wales Auditor General Margaret Crawford and the newly appointed Town Water Security Coordinator James McTavish. James is also the Cross Border Commissioner and during my discussions with him last Friday in relation to his proposed attendance at the conference he indicated that he was working on the cross- border proposal in relation to tourism initiative raised by Bourke Shire Council in mid-2018.

Work has commenced on doing vital repair work on the Bourke Wharf with the Contactor Larry Walker from Narromine being assisted by Council staff in undertaking the repairs which is being funded under the Drought Communities Extension Program.

The wharf has become an important feature for Bourke and as such the ongoing maintenance is extremely important.

With Council now imposing level 4 water restrictions I would like to advise that these restrictions generally apply to Council facilities as well. However, the decision has been made to ensure our primary sporting and recreational facilities are kept to a high standard despite the drought conditions and as such water at the Bourke War Memorial Pool, Coolican Oval Davidson Oval and Central Park will remain on the level 3 restrictions as will the Bourke Bowling Club.

It is important for the social well-being of the community that these facilities are maintained. Should Council have to look at the imposition of further restrictions the situation will be re assessed.

The issues relating to the shortage of water is not confined to the Far West with a number of towns including Mendooran and Coonabarabran on high level restrictions.

Tenders for the provision of an Air Service for the Town of Cobar, Bourke and Walgett/ Lightning Ridge will close on the 12th February 2019. It will probably take some time for the assessment of the tenders and the successful tender to get all the necessary infrastructure and resources in place. It is great to think that we are getting that little bit closer to an air service in Bourke for the first time since 2009.

With the extreme weather conditions being experienced during January the crew involved in the rejuvenation project in the Main Street took the opportunity to undertake work on the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre to make more practical to use as a function centre and modify the interior to the suit this purpose.

These works have almost been completed and work will once again recommence in the main street in the coming weeks.

The shortage of water and extremely hot weather has caused a delay in the establishment of any gardens in the main street but once the weather cools and water becomes available this part of the project will be undertaken.

As part of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) Meeting held last Tuesday an exercise developed by Sergeant Karen Bartholomew of the Bourke Police involving the actions to be taken in the unfortunate situation of an accident involving stock transport if such an accident was to occur this would of course would involve a multi-agency response.

With the high level of stock transport through the region an incident such as this is a real possibility and as such extremely important.

All agencies take these incidents seriously and ensure that their reactions replicate the actions taken in a real life situation.

The LEMC have previously conducted exercises in relation to aircraft accidents at the airport and again these exercises are designed to be as lifelike as possible so that all members of the various agencies are aware of potential issues that can arise.

The Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman, and Manager of Corporate Services Leonie Brown together with Commander Greg Moore of the Central North Police District had an opportunity to catch up with the Federal Minister for Families and Social Services Hon. Paul Fletcher MP and Local Member for Parkes and Assistant Minister for Trade Mark Coulton MP last Friday morning.

Minister Fletcher's visit to Bourke was to meet with the Council and then the Maranguka Community Hub Leaders and staff for a briefing on the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project. The meetings were both very positive and Minister Fletcher was pleased that he had come to Bourke to see for himself a project that is making a difference.

Our Local Member Mark Coulton said that the project is a good example of 'place based' social policy which the NSW Police, Bourke Tribal Council, Bourke Shire Council and other Government agencies and not-for-profit organisations are combining in a coordinated effort to support vulnerable families and children and achieving a good outcomes.

It was great to see a sitting member of the Federal Cabinet come out to Bourke and demonstrate a high level of interest in the Maranguka project and the Bourke Community.

All known candidates for the seat of Barwon have been invited to a candidates breakfast on the Tuesday morning of the Western Division Conference and it will be a facilitated session with candidates given the opportunity to detail both their background and plans as well as being asked to respond to a series of questions.

All have indicated their acceptance at this stage with the exception one candidate who is unable to make it to Bourke.

While there is a lot happening on the Council front with water and the Western Division Conference, work still continues on the normal day to day activities of Council with a lot of work commencing on the preparation on the 2019/2020 Operational Plan (Budget).

Council has resolved to adopt the maximum allowable rate increase of 2.7% for General Rates for the preparation of the Budget whilst any increase in water; sewerage or Garbage Charges will be aligned if possible to a breakeven result allowing for depreciation.

There are a number of large projects still being undertaken and others planned to be undertaken shortly not the least being the construction of a new Water Treatment Plant

Quote of the week!

When the well is dry we will know the worth of water- Benjamin Franklin

Ross Earl
General Manager