



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019



The February Council Meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday 18th February 2019 due to the Western Division Conference being held on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019

The Meeting will commence at 9.00 am and as always open to the public.

A public forum is conducted each Meeting Day at 10.00am to allow members of the Public to detail any issues, concerns or other matters to Council as a whole. Should anyone wish to address Council it is preferable that they notify that intent to the Executive Assistant to the Mayor and General Manager prior to the meeting day so that any background information, applicable may be available.

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Given the relatively short time frame available to have the second bore to supplement Bourke’s water supply constructed and commissioned Council staff have been working continually on the project to ensure that there are no unforeseen barriers.

To this end the first a series scheduled weekly meetings involving, Bourke Shire Council, Public Works Advisory, New South Wales Department of Industry – Water and New South Wales Health was held on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

There is a great deal of coordination that is required coupled with obtaining of all necessary approvals and licences.

At this stage I am confident that the project is on track and the bore will be operational before the end of March which is the time that ready access to the river supply will become problematical.

As I have previously indicated we are in relatively uncharted territory and the hot weather looks like being with us for at least another few weeks.

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Council continues to lobby to obtain an environment flow in the Barwon Darling from water held in storages in the North of the state.

Council has written to both the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Jody Swirepik and the Minister for Regional Water Hon. Niall Blair MP in an effort to try and facilitate a flow similar to the flow received in April last year dubbed the "Northern Connectivity Event." The facilitation of that flow was a result of a collaborative effort by both State and Federal Government and was hugely successful and appreciated by all those along the Barwon Darling System who were able to benefit.

I am in at least daily contact with those who are reviewing the request for a flow and understand the difficulties and risks associated with a decision but equally highlight the dire state of the river and its social, economic and environmental impacts on the towns and residents along the river system.

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As I write this column the height in the Darling River at Bourke is 2.30 metres which is well below the previously lowest height of 2.58 recorded on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

This low was during the longest cease to flows at Bourke Weir of 196 days - 20 September 2006 to 4 April 2007.

According to the records held by Department of Industry the current period of cease to flow as at Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019 is 177 days.

In an earlier column I took the cease to flow date from the date water restrictions were imposed but the cease to flow date according to Official Government records is 18<sup>th</sup> August 2018

This period would be much greater had it not been for the Environment Flow.

However, we unfortunately are still rapidly approaching the record cease to flow period with only a significant rain event locally being able to provide the necessary inflow in such a short time frame to negate any chance that we will avoid reaching this unwanted record period.

If we were fortunate enough secure an environmental flow it would be at least six (6) weeks before it made it to Bourke.

The "Northern Connectivity Event" in 2018 involved the collaborative efforts of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, The NSW Office Environment and Heritage both of whom at that stage held water in storage. Of course New South Wales Water had responsibility for the release of water and the coordination of its passage through the Northern River system and delivery into the Barwon Darling.

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Although difficult to predict it would seem likely that Bourke will be on level five (5) restrictions in early March 2019 but could be as early as the end of this month.

The river level as at 11<sup>th</sup> February was 2.30 metres having dropped from 2.45 over the past ten (10) days. Utilising this as a guide the river is dropping at around 1.5 centimetres per day. The level of evaporation on a decreasing weir pool will impact on the ongoing drop and hence the timing of the introduction of the higher level restrictions is difficult to determine.

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Water restrictions apply to BOTH filtered and raw (non- potable) and the ongoing cooperation of residents in abiding by the restrictions is appreciated.

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The focus to date has been to secure an ongoing supply for Bourke but at the same time we need to look at the longer term solution to try and mitigate the chances of the current situation recurring and this could take a number of forms including but not limited to increasing the amount of storage e.g. additional Weirs along the River, increasing the capacity of existing weirs as is being proposed at Walgett and Wilcannia the purchase and storage of sufficient water for say three (3) environmental Flows and holding that in existing storages.

Locally there has been the suggestion of an additional weir that could be located at a site called BU8 and there will be the opportunity to further progress these options once the current situation is under control.

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As part of the Drought funding providing 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 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019- Byrock  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019- Fords Bridge  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019- Louth  
Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> 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.

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With Council now on level 4 water restrictions I would like to advise that these restrictions also generally apply to Council facilities. 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 watering of the Bourke War Memorial Pool, Coolican Oval, Davidson Oval and Central Park will remain the same as applied on the level 3 restrictions. This will also apply to the Bowling Greens at 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.

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The Western Division Conference at Bourke later this month has attracted a number of excellent speakers with a wealth of knowledge on topical issues facing Local Government in New South Wales.

Minister for Regional Water Hon. Niall Blair MLC will represent the Deputy Premier Hon. John Barilaro MP at the conference. He's contacted us in advance to apologise for not being able to attend.

The presence of the Minister for Regional Water will create a lot of interest with water issues including the lack of flow in Barwon Darling System a cause of great concern to many of the Councils which have indicated they will be attending the conference. The lack of flow in the river system has meant that many towns within the region are having difficulties in maintaining normal water supplies.

Councils attending include Western Division member Councils of Balranald, Bourke, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Walgett and Wentworth together with Gilgandra, Warren, Carrathool, Bogan, Coonamble, Warrumbungle, Brewarrina, Moree Plains and Mid-Western Regional Council based in Mudgee.

The large attendance has stretched accommodation in Bourke, but everyone has been catered for which has been a welcome boost to the town's hospitality industry.

Councillor Barry Hollman Mayor has said he was delighted with the response by all sectors of the broader Local Government Community and was pleased with the way arrangements for the conference had progressed to date.

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Council staff have commenced the preparation of the 2019/2020 Operational (Budget) and the opportunity exists for organisations and individual to submit requests for support, nominate

projects or make suggestions in relation to the level of service currently provided by Council so that these may be considered as part of the budgetary process.

While Council has limited discretionary funds available it aims to ensure that the expenditure of these funds reflects the views of the broader community and is consistent with the established priorities within the Bourke Shire Council Community Strategic Plan.

Submissions in respect of the above should be sent to the General Manager Bourke Shire Council PO Box 21 Bourke or delivered to the Council Offices 29 Mitchell Street Bourke by **Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2019**

Enquiries in relation to Budgetary Process should be directed to the Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown.

The Draft Timetable for the Preparation and Adoption of the 2019/2019 Operational Plan has been prepared and is detailed below

January 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Preparation Commenced
March 15 <sup>th</sup>	MANEX Meeting to Finalise Preliminary Document
March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Draft Document Distributed
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting of Corporate Service Committee to consider preliminary document
March 24 <sup>th</sup>	Draft Document to Council for approval to proceed to advertisement
April 11 <sup>th</sup>	Period of Public Notices Commences
May 16 <sup>th</sup>	Closing Date for Submissions to be lodged
May 27 <sup>th</sup>	Submissions presented to Council for consideration
May 27 <sup>th</sup>	Subject to any amendments the Operational Plan is to be adopted
June 13 <sup>th</sup>	Final Document published and distributed

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Should you need to contact Bourke Shire after hours for emergencies such as water breaks you can do so by phoning the Duty Officer 0419 722 055 who will arrange for the appropriate person to respond to the situation to be contacted.

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With the winter sports season soon to be with us all groups are reminded to ensure that they book the oval for both scheduled training and organised games.

Bookings are essential to ensure that the sporting grounds are prepared for the event and also to avoid clashes.

Davidson Oval in particular has a high level of usage and it is important that everyone is offered the opportunity for use.

There are now lights on Coolican Oval which although not being good enough for night matches, do provide sufficient lighting for training purposes.

Queries in relation to Ovals and their usage should be directed to Lynette Gooch Council's Engineering Support Officer on 68308000

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The road construction crews have commenced work after the Christmas break and the focus is again on the reconstruction and sealing of the Wanaaring Road and work is progressing ahead of schedule which is extremely pleasing .

Council staff are actively trying to secure additional funding to allow further work to be undertaken as the sealed section works its way closer to Wanaaring.

There have been numerous positive comments to date and the road has made a huge difference for those who are regular users.

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While widespread rain has been non-existent for some time there have been some isolated storms across the shire with Byrock being the beneficiary of one such storm and negating the need to cart water to the village in the short term.

Areas to the south of Louth also received a good fall late last week which necessitated the closure of the road on both sides of the river below Louth

The road on the west side will require some significant work to repair a wash out.

Let's hope that the frequency of the storms increases and the rapidly depleting water supplies across the shire are able to be replenished.

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As part of the Western Division Conference to be held in Bourke a candidates forum involving all the known candidates for the seat of Barwon will be held at Diggers on Darling over breakfast on the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

At this stage the National Candidate Andrew Schier, The Country Labour Candidate Darriea Turley and The Fishers Farmers and Shooters Party Candidate Roy Butler have indicated their attendance whilst the Greens Candidate Eve-Lyn Kennedy and Independents Phil Naden and Owen Whyman are unfortunately apologies for the event.

In addition to the candidates there will be other representatives of the various political parties in attendance

Each of the candidates will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and detail their motivation for standing, and their priorities for the electorate of Barwon. This will be followed by a question and answer session.

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I would like to say "Welcome to Bourke " to anyone who has moved to Bourke over the recent holiday period and look forward to meeting up with as many as I can.

Planning is underway for the annual "Welcome to Bourke" function with a date in early March to be confirmed.

Quote of the week!

*"Water is the lifeblood of our bodies, our economy, our nation and our well-being." -  
Stephen Johnson*

**Ross Earl**  
**General Manager**