



“From the GM’s Desk” 14th March 2019



Contractors are currently finalising the installation of a pipeline from the newly constructed bore back to Walkden’s Bore and the upgrading the pumping facilities at Walkden’s Bore. This will enable the water to be transferred into the Bourke Water Treatment Plant and then reticulated around town when the ability to pump from the river ceases which is expected to be within the next 60 days.

Work has also commenced on a third Bore which is part of the overall drought proofing strategy designed in association with DPI – Water. It is designed to spread the extraction of water from the aquifer over a larger area.

Council is confident that the works undertaken to date will provide sufficient water for the domestic and commercial needs of the town.

As part of the access to the bore water Council has had to secure licence entitlements to extract water from the aquifer to supplement the existing licence held for Walkden’s Bore.

The works involved will ensure there will be an ongoing availability of water to residents. It has taken considerable resources and time and has involved a team effort from Council staff working closely with a number of Government agencies who have been extremely helpful and have gone out of their way to provide assistance.

To maximise the benefit of the water in the river system and to ensure that there is sufficient water to enable the pumps servicing the town to operate effectively, a pump has been installed in the river bed to pump water upstream. While there is still water in the river and weir pool it is spread over a large area and the use of the pump will allow greater water access.

Work is progressing well on the repairs to the Bourke Wharf which had shown signs of significant deterioration and has involved a little more work than first anticipated. The Bourke Wharf area is one of the primary tourist spots with town and the work being undertaken was vital to protect this asset which of course is also a reminder on the days when Bourke was a very large inland river port.

In what may be his last visit to Bourke as Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries MP was in Bourke last Tuesday and made a couple of very significant announcements.

The first was the provision of \$7.5 million for the construction of a new police station in Bourke and the second was the announcement of a further \$4.6 million for a continuation of the reconstruction and sealing works on the Wanaaring Road.

The road funding will allow for the sealing of approximately another 20 kilometres of the road and will involve the section from Barakete to Goonery.

This latest funding brings the total funding to almost \$16 million available to date for the Road and has been very much appreciated change to the travelling public of that area. If the work progresses as hoped, it may mean that there will be a sealed road the whole way between Bourke and Wanaaring which will have significant benefits socially and economically not to mention the untapped tourism potential.

The Darling River at Bourke stopped flowing over the weir on 17th August 2018 and as of Monday 11th had ceased flowing for 206 days well in excess of the previous longest period recorded since 1944 from when accurate records are available for the current weir structure. The previous record was 200 days.

This is a seventy five (75) year period which gives a good indication of the severity of drought conditions

With no rain in sight and still no flow in the river this unwanted record period of "cease to flow" unfortunately is likely to continue to grow.

It is important to note the record we are talking about is only for the post 1944 period when accurate records are available. Equally important is the fact that this period would have been substantially greater had it not been for the Environmental Flow dubbed "the Northern Connectivity Event" in April last year which provided a flow of over two months.

Plans are underway for the Bourke Easter Weekend Celebrations with the format similar to that as in previous years with the now Annual Back O Bourke Picnic Race Club meeting again being held on Sunday 21st April 2019.

Other activities planned are a Colour Run on Good Friday, a parade and wool bale rolling on Saturday Morning and an Old Boys Rugby Match of the Saturday afternoon and a Sunrise Pancake Breakfast and Church Service on the Sunday morning.

A new innovation for this year will be a Blues and Blue Grass Mini Festival on the afternoon of Good Friday with a number of Bands already indicating their attendance and former local artist Toshi McIntosh will be back in Bourke for the day to perform.

The Blues Festival will be a family friendly event and will form part of the Drought Community Extension Program and will be available free of charge.

It is planned to be held at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre

In addition to the planned activities there are a number of reunions planned for the weekend which should ensure good crowds are in attendance for all events.

The draft program will be distributed this week and I encourage everybody to get involved and be part of the Easter festivities.

There was some suggestion that perhaps in light of the drought condition that the Easter activities may not be held. The organisers feel that with the seasonal conditions that we are currently experiencing it is important that the event is held to provide an outlet from the impact of the drought and additionally demonstrate the ongoing resilience of the people in the west of the state despite the adversity and hardship being faced.

The new bores will mean that there will be water available for all domestic and commercial needs and arrangements have been made for bore water to be trucked in to assist in the staging of some of the events.

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the need for a long term solution in relation to the water supply issues in the far west of the state.

Bourke Shire Council has acknowledged the increased demands placed on the finite water supply however, equally acknowledges the economic and social benefits that could flow from an increased level of flow in the river system.

Bourke Shire Council experienced the benefits that were derived from the horticultural industry in and around Bourke before it was devastated by the millennium drought.

To this end Council feels that with the apparent dry periods expected to be part of life it may be advantageous to resurrect some of the larger schemes proposed over the past few years. This includes a recommendation from the Western Division meeting;

That the State Government adopt a bipartisan approach looking at opportunities for ensuring the long term supply of Water in Western New South Wales. These opportunities should not exclude ambitious projects of the scale of the Snowy Mountain Scheme which has reaped considerable benefit for the State

Note from Council.

Ideas such as the diversion of water from the eastern seaboard have been discussed as deemed impractical. With improvements in technology and construction techniques it is not unreasonable to look at revisit these options for water security.

The recent drought coupled with predictions of increasingly dry weather with the phenomena of global warming makes this a very important issue.

The increase in productivity in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area based on the provision of a secure water supply is evidence of the economic benefit of such schemes.

The lands are fertile and productive in the west of the state and there is a need for the addition of water. The availability of water would lead to increased productivity of the communities; generate employment, leading to population growth and sustainable communities.

Water carting will commence this week to Byrock with the groundwater supply there almost exhausted.

The water to be carted is for domestic purposes only and the use should be restricted to internal use and care should be taken to ensure that there are no leaking pipes that may adversely impact on the amount of water available for use.

In periods where water has needed to be carted previously the residents of Byrock have been diligent in ensuring that they have been frugal with their use of available water supply. They were all very conscious of the amount able to be carted and Council is anticipating a similar level of cooperation from the residents.

Carting will continue until there is sufficient water in the storage to allow pumping to recommence from that source.

The next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on the 25th March 2019 commencing at 9.00 am in the Council Chambers 29 Mitchell Street Bourke .

A public Forum is conducted each meeting at 10.00am to allow members of the public to raise issues with Council.

Councillors, Partners and Senior Staff attended a small function at the Bridge Inn last Tuesday Night to acknowledge the service provided by the retiring Member for Barwon, Kevin Humphries MP. Former Mayor Andrew Lewis also attended having worked closely with Kevin over his eight years at the helm.

Despite having a huge electorate and the biggest in the State Kevin always made the effort to visit all parts of his electorate himself and at Bourke we were fortunate he made time to speak to Council regarding any issues we might have had at the time.

Mayor of Bourke Shire Councillor Barry Hollman in presenting Kevin with a gift acknowledged the support that Kevin had provided Bourke Shire during his tenure as Member for Barwon and wished both Kevin and Lindy all the best for life post politics and trust it is happy and healthy.

Council will continue to try and maintain the major sporting and recreational facilities in town whilst there is still some water available in the river. Watering will continue on Davidson and Coolican Ovals, the Bourke Swimming Pool Central Park and the Bourke Bowling Club Greens each of which form a big part of providing much needed social amenity for the town.

Bourke Shire Council Corporate Services Committee will be meeting today, Wednesday 13th March 2019 to review the first draft of the 2019/2020 Operational Plan (budget) which is once again a relatively tight budget. Council has had a significant boost to its ability to undertake a number of smaller projects through funding such as the Drought Communities Extension Project and The Stronger Country Communities funding. The work on the Wanaaring Road, as one of Councils larger projects will continue to keep the road construction crew busy for at least the next twelve months.

Once the review of the budget has taken place by the committee any amendments suggested or required will be made and a further draft will be presented to Council at its meeting scheduled for the 25th March 2019. It will again be considered and amended if required then approved for public exhibition in accordance with the requirement of the Local Government Act 1993.

The Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool is open until the 31st March 2019 when it will then close for the season.

Work has commenced on the concept plans for the new complex and work is planned to commence on the construction of the new pool in March 2020 and it is hoped that it will be ready for use for the 2020/2021 season.

It is proposed to undertake the construction works during the winter months to minimise the impact on pool users.

Council has received numerous positive comments regarding the new playground and toilet facilities located at the North Bourke Oval and there has been a good utilisation of the facilities by both locals and visitors.

Much of the funding received by Council over the past twelve months from various sources has been utilised to consolidate and improve our existing assets.

Council has been very successful in its application for grant funding over the past few years and this has resulted in an ongoing improvement of its asset base. Whilst Council has sourced the bulk of the grants there have been others which have been obtained by community groups.

Council is conscious of its ability to be able to maintain assets once established and to this end looks at "whole of lifecycle costs" when determining priorities as it needs to ensure that it has the ability to maintain any new assets going forward.

A photographic Exhibition entitled the - Art4Ag Photography Exhibition is currently in Bourke.

It is a body of work developed to celebrate our farmers and National Ag Day.

Featuring images from 18 farmers and locals across the Far West region, each exploring their interpretation of Australian agriculture and its farmers.

The exhibition explores the theme of #growforgood within the industry.

The display is free of charge at the Bourke Shire Council Chambers from the 4th- 28th March 2019 during normal office hours when the Council chambers is not in use.

This is a project involving Outback Arts, Bourke Arts Council and Bourke Shire Council

Quote of the week!

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ross Earl
General Manager