



“FROM THE GM’S DESK” 18TH APRIL 2019



Bourke Shire Council had the opportunity to host the New South Wales Minister for Water, Property and Housing, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, MP last week as she undertook a visit to a number of towns in the Far West.

Minister Pavey was accompanied by a number of senior staff members from her Department including:-

- Doug Walther - The Minister’s Acting Chief of Staff
- Rachel Connell - Executive Director Water, Department of Industry
- Grant Barnes - Chief Regulator, Natural Resources Access Regulator
- David Harris - CEO, WaterNSW
- Adrian Langdon - Executive Manager, System Operations & Asset Maintenance, WaterNSW
- Dan Connor - Healthy Floodplains Project Manager, Department of Industry

New South Wales Drought coordinator Jock Laurie also met up with the group when they flew into Bourke and the group were able to provide responses to all issues raised. The representatives who made up the group came from all the various sections within the Water Department

Minister Pavey was very approachable and provide a number of people the opportunity to have a one on one conversation with her as well as host a small forum for all those in attendance.

There were a number of issues raised and these included the current drought conditions and the fact that the river in Bourke had not flowed for over 230 days and the resultant issues that this has caused. All those present agreed that climatic conditions were a significant contributor to the problems but also thought that the impact could have been reduced if there was an increased level of storage along the system.

Amongst the suggestions put forward were the construction of additional weirs/regulators, off river storage, increases the height of existing weirs and the potential to utilise underground storage. There was a very strong feeling that a long term solution needs to be sought as quite often once a flow occurs the urgency seems to dissipate and it was critical that action continue to be taken to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the river

Given that she had only been sworn in as a Minister some six (6) days earlier and she had already visited Menindee and Broken Hill it is obvious that Minister Pavey is keen to understand the situation in the Far West and get a feel for the area and the priorities for the residents of the area.

ANZAC Day commemoration services will be held next week across the Shire.

The Dawn Service at Bourke to begin at 6.00am on 25th April with attendees asked to be at the Cenotaph at 5.50am.

The main ANZAC Day Service in Bourke will start at 11.00am on the day and those intending to participate in them ANZAC Day March are asked to assemble at 10.30am outside Diggers on the Darling.

There will be changed traffic conditions for the March in both Oxley Street and Richards Street and residents are asked to be mindful of these changed conditions.

The Enngonia Service will be held at 5.00pm on ANZAC Day at the War Memorial Hall with the contact person being Greg Oates on 68747577.

The Louth Community have for some time now conducted dusk ANZAC Commemoration Service and it will again be held this year starting at 5.00pm. For details in relation to the service you can contact Jane Murray on 68747401

As of Monday, 15th April 2019 the Darling River at Bourke will have stopped flowing over the weir at Bourke for 242 days further extending the previous record created in 2006 of 200 days.

There is a lot of water in some sections of the various rivers in the Far West but at this stage it is unlikely that any significant inflows to the Darling will be obtained.

There was a degree of optimism earlier, but some of the reports I have been receiving is that the extremely dry river beds have not only slowed the flow but also resulted in significant water losses in the process and this has caused the initial degree of optimism to be tempered somewhat.

Residents at Wanaaring are advised that on the 30th April 2019 there is a scheduled power outage between the hours of 8.45pm and 2.45pm to allow Essential Energy Crews and Contractors to safely undertake improvements to the electricity network in the area.

Planning for the Easter weekend is in full swing with the programme now close to being finalised and has been widely circulated.

As part of the now Annual Easter Festivities in Bourke the Wool Bale Rolling Competition and the Parade will once again be held.

If you are thinking of entering a float into the parade or the wool bale rolling please contact Jodi Sontag at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre who will provide you with all the details and any requirement for registration.

A full programme is available at the Council offices and is also available on the Council website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au or visitbourke.com.au

If there is something that you would like to see included in the program please contact Jodi Sontag at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre 68721321 so that it can be included in any further prints of the program and included in the online versions.

Water carting to Byrock continues and I would again ask the residents of Byrock for their cooperation in conserving consumption and utilise the water for internal domestic purposes only.

Council has received a number of enquiries for carting to properties over the past few days as the supplies on many properties runs out.

Bourke Shire Council's Draft Operational Plan (Budget) for 2019/2020 is currently on display with submissions in relation to the Operational Plan able to be lodged any time during the display period which concludes on the 10th May 2019.

Council will consider the Draft Operational Plan for 2019/2020 and any submissions received in respect of the Plan at its Ordinary meeting of Council to be held on the 27th May 2019 prior to its adoption at that meeting.

The next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on Monday, 29th April 2019 commencing at 9.00am. The scheduled meeting date of the 22nd April is of course Easter Monday.

When the Prime Minister, the Hon. Scott Morrison, MP announced that a Federal Election would occur on Saturday, 18th May 2019, it resulted in the Federal Government assuming a 'caretaker role' from 8.29am, Thursday, 11th April 2019.

This means that the House of Representatives has been dissolved until such time as the election result is clear or, if there is a change of Government, until the new Government is appointed., during this time the Government is expected to avoid:

- Making major policy decisions that are likely to commit an incoming Government
- Making significant appointments
- Entering major contracts or undertakings.

The caretaker mode is similar to that adopted by Councils and the State Government prior to elections although whilst having to adhere to the three (3) principals as outlined earlier Councillors continue to hold Office until the midnight before the date of any election.

Bourke Shire Council hosted members of the Board of Regional Development Australia – Orana (RDA) at a small function at the Back O' Bourke Conference Centre last Sunday night. A number of community members were also in attendance. It was an opportunity to meet the members of the Board but also to find out a little more about what the role RDA plays within the region.

RDA-Orana held their quarterly meeting in the Council Chambers on Monday, 15th April 2019.

As the river continues to fall, there is a strong possibility that Bourke will be reliant on bore water for its filtered water supply for domestic and commercial purposes within weeks.

Bourke Shire Council acknowledges that the sodium (salt) level that is in the bore water is higher than desired. Recent testing of the bores shows that the sodium concentrations range from 289 mg/L to 353 mg/L. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines gives a value of 180 mg/L as the concentration at which people are likely to taste sodium in their drinking water.

NSW Health confirms that the water is safe to drink, but Council appreciates that people may be concerned about the taste of the water.

Chilling your drinking water can help reduce the salty taste.

Anyone who may be concerned about sodium in the water and their diet should talk to their Doctor for specific advice. NSW Health has given information to Doctors about patients who may need special attention because of the extra sodium in the drinking water. These include pregnant women, people with advanced kidney disease, poorly controlled high blood pressure, diagnosed heart failure and others who are on a low salt diet.

While on water issues, I would like to publicly acknowledge the cooperation Council has received from all Government Departments involved in the planning for and licencing of our new bores as they have each recognised the urgency of the situation and responded as fast as they could within the regulatory guidelines they are required to work within.

Equally we have been able to secure the services of contractors at relatively short notice all of whom are obviously busy but again noted the urgency.

Notification has been given that the provision of the Environmental Flow that Bourke Shire Council and others have been actively chasing will become a reality with a smaller flow to be released this week and a larger flow in early May.

However, the bad news is that it is unlikely to reach Bourke given the dry conditions and the empty pools and town storages along the river.

This could change with any local rainfall to wet the river bed and we still need to retain a degree of optimism that we will get the required rainfall locally or that the catchment will receive enough to wet the river and allow the river to flow once again

Council has secured information pamphlets relating to water saving initiatives that can be introduced to help households reduce water consumption and eliminate waste. Whilst these publications are particularly of benefit in these drought conditions that are a useful reference and source of information at any time.

Examples of waste of water include:-

- Fix dripping taps - at a rate of 1 drip per second, wastes over 12,000 litres per year
- Fix leaking toilets - a slow barely visible leak can waste over 4,000 litres per year while a visible constant leak can waste over 96,000 litres per year.
- Uncovered pools can lose up to 55,000 litres of water annually, through evaporation, which is a big deal. Using a solar pool cover can help you to stop 97% of evaporation
- Look at the water rating of washing machines when you are next looking to buy another washing machine, look for a machine that have a four or more WELS star rating (The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Scheme).
- Ensure that dishwashers are full prior to starting the cycle.
- A 10 minute shower can use up to 90 litres of water! Try cutting a minute off your shower. Saving hot water not only saves water but energy and money too.

Council has for residents with the shire small water timers that can be used to help monitor the time you are in the shower or use water for other purposes. The timers are basically "egg timers" which are able to be stuck to the wall of the shower recess to provide a guide as to the time taken and then estimate water usage. The timers are free of charge by calling at Council's Offices and are part of Council/s initiative to assist in reducing water consumption during these extremely dry times.

Bourke Shire Council has developed a DRAFT CODE OF MEETING PRACTICE in accordance with section 360 of the Local Government Act.

The Draft Code of Meeting Practice for Bourke Shire Council has been on public exhibition from the 28th March 2019 and remains on exhibition until the 26th April 2019. Submissions in respect of the Draft Code will be received up until 10th May 2019.

The Draft Code of Meeting Practice and any submissions received in respect of the Code will be again considered at the May Meeting of Council on 27th May 2019.

The seminar for Tradespersons Suppliers and Contractors hosted by New South Wales Public Works Advisory and Bourke Shire Council last Tuesday night was well attended and gave an insight into the work that has been done over a period of a few years to try and give locals a better chance of accessing Government Contacts by breaking down the size of the contacts.

Regional Manager of Public Works Advisory Riverina Western, Gavin Priestley was very pleased with the way it went and indicated to the Mayor that by the time they returned to the motel four (4) locals had completed the online registration process.

Gavin indicated that he would be back with follow up briefing sessions to ensure that everyone was comfortable with the process and were able to meet the initial requirements.

There is still some work to be undertaken and Bourke Shire has become the pilot region for the project so it presents an opportunity for the local tradespersons suppliers and contactors to get involved in the early stages. Bourke Shire is pleased to be able to support the initiative and it also forms part of one of the key objectives of the Bourke Aboriginal Employment Prosperity Strategy.

Quote of the week!

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Albert Einstein

Ross Earl
General Manager