



# “FROM THE GM’S DESK”

## 18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2019



The Rural Fire Service has introduced an initiative called AIDER which is an acronym for Assistance for Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents. AIDER is a one off free service supporting residents to live safely and confidently in areas where bush fires may start.

The property must be bushfire prone, meaning an area of land that can support a bushfire or is likely to be subject to bushfire attack. AIDER Services may include;

- Thinning vegetation
- Removing leaves, sticks and fallen branches
- Trimming branches from around and overhanging the home
- Mowing or slashing long grass
- Cleaning Gutters

If you think you may be eligible call 02 8741 4955.

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Work continues on the Wongareena Plains section of the upgrade of the Main Road 405 (Wanaaring Road) with the formation of 12.5km of subgrade being completed.

Pushing of gravel required has been completed at Folly’s Tank Pit.

The sealing work continues with a further 4.5 kilometres of seal to be put down on Wednesday, 17th July 2019.

In addition to the funding provided by the Fixing Country Roads Program, Council has allocated a further \$800,000.00 from the Regional Road Repair Programme.

The project is possibly the largest job undertaken by Council Staff in the last couple of decades and has created considerable employment opportunities with additional staff having to be recruited to supplement the workforce available via the permanent complement of staff.

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For those who are interested in keeping abreast of the amount of work that has been completed to date and the amount for which funding has been allocated to date on the Wanaaring Road the following breakdown will provide some valuable information.

### **Wanaaring Road Statistics**

Total Length – 181.12 km

Total sealed before Fixing Country Road Project commenced – 49.49 km

## Fixing Country Roads Works – Sealing Completed

Stage 1 Gumbalie – 12.75km

Stage 2 Poison Point – 19 km

## Fixing Country Roads – Works in Progress

Stage 3 Wongareena Plain – 12.5 km

## Fixing Country Roads – Works to be started

Stage 4 Goonery to Barrakee – 20 km

## Roads to Recovery Funding- Sealing Completed

Wangamanna Section – 1.5 km

## TOTAL WORKS COMPLETED OR FOR WHICH FUNDING HAS BEEN ALLOCATED – 65.75 KM

This leaves a balance for which funding will need to be sourced of 65.88 kilometres.

Council staff have lodged an application for a further \$8.5 million which if successful will allow for the reformation and sealing of another 35 kilometres.

The possibility of having the road to Wanaaring sealed was a dream a few years ago but is something that is well within reach of completion if similar levels of funding can be obtained.

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On the Rural Local Road Network (RLR) a full formation grade has been undertaken on, RLR 29 Emaroo Road, whilst the roads in the Louth area are being prepared for the significant increase in traffic due to the Louth Races which are scheduled for the 10th August 2019. Maintenance grading is currently underway on RLR 3 Twin Rivers.

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Work has been completed on the shared pathway on the levy between the Wal Mitchell Wharf Precinct with 250 metres completed with stage two (2) involving 350metres of pathway between Darling and Tudor Streets scheduled to commence in a couple of weeks.

These are the first two (2) stages of a walk that will hopefully see the linkage of the Wharf to North Bourke via the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre.

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As of Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Darling River will have stopped flowing over the weir at Bourke for 332 days.

The twelve month mark is the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2019 which is looking to become a reality unless there is some significant rain over the next few weeks.

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The current level of water restrictions remains on Level Two (2) and will remain on that level for at least another couple of weeks given the current rates of usage, levels of evaporation and minimal inflows.

The height of the weir at Bourke was 3.12 metres over the weekend and that was a drop of approximately three (3) centimetres over the past week.

The relaxing of restrictions has allowed residents to be able to water their established trees and plants and this was very well supplemented by the 15 millimetres of rain last week.

As I have said previously the outlook is not good so Council will be monitoring the water situation closely and taking action to ensure that water is used wisely.

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The next Ordinary Meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 and will commence at 9.15am.

Persons who wish to address Council on any matters on the agenda can do so at a public forum convened each meeting day commencing at 9.00am.

Persons wishing to speak are encouraged to contact the Executive Assistant to the Mayor and General Manager, Kai Howard-Oakman on 026830800.

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At 11.00am next Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> July, the Bureau of Meteorology will be broadcasting a live Webinar on drought conditions around the country. This will include a closer look at the impacts of drought on water resources. One of the areas of focus is the northern Murray-Darling Basin. It's an interactive format and participants can submit questions before and during the Webinar.

The link to the webinar is here is the link - <http://ow.ly/1Pjb50uT9Cz>, everyone is welcome.

In other interesting information supplied by the Bureau it appears that the rainfall in the Namoi, Castlereagh, Condamine-Balonne, Warrego and Paroo basins is the lowest for 30 months. Rainfall in the Border Rivers and Gwydir is the lowest for 24 months.

Little wonder we have such severe drought conditions.

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Australia Post has announced the launch of the 2019 Australia Post Community Grants program.

[The program](#) offers grants of up to \$10,000 for eligible projects that help people connect with each other to address local needs.

Funding may be awarded to eligible recipients, to support initiatives that:-

- help people connect with each other through group activities (e.g. volunteering programs, civic engagement and environmental activities);

- reduce barriers to participation in community life (e.g. transport, ability to pay, or access to community spaces); and/or
- Develop skills and leadership capability to strengthen social and community networks.

To be eligible, organisations must:

- be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation
- provide community benefit
- be located within Australia
- provide services within Australia
- have an ABN (see the [Australian Business Register](#) for more information)
- have an Australian bank account that corresponds to the organisation's ABN (individuals are not valid account holders).

If you have a community group or organisation you think would benefit from a grant of up to \$10,000 and meets the eligibility criteria, please let them know about this opportunity. Please note, Government entities, sole traders and educational institutions are not eligible.

You can learn more at [auspost.com.au/grants](https://auspost.com.au/grants)

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The Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock, MP has announced a number of legislative changes that will impact on Councils.

These include:-

- Councils have until 1 October 2019 to resolve to enter into arrangements with the Electoral Commissioner, or an electoral services provider, to administer the 2020 ordinary council elections, and have until 1 January 2020 to enter into these arrangements (**commenced**).
- Councils formed in 2016 will be having their rate path freeze extended until 1 July 2021, unless they resolve to apply to the Minister to vary the existing rates path freeze determination and the determination is varied (**commenced**).
- The tendering threshold, below which councils do not have to undertake a competitive tendering process, has been increased to \$250,000. However, the threshold for contracts involving services provided by council employees at the time of entering the contract remains at \$150,000 (**commenced**).
- The Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 has been amended with the intention of allowing councils to report on their obligations under that Act in their own annual reports under the Local Government Act 1993, rather than by the current requirement to table a special report in Parliament (**commenced**). Councils should also note that further changes to relevant legislation and regulations will be made to facilitate this.
- Councils can procure the services of pre-qualified disability employment organisations approved under the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912, without having to go to tender (**commenced**).
- Councils should also note that the Minister intends to enable, by a future regulation, councils to access the National Prequalification System for Civil Construction (Roads and Bridges) Contracts after further consultation.
- Councils are able to delegate regulatory functions to another council, and to joint organisations of which they are not a member, with approval of that council or joint

organisation. Further, joint organisations will be able to sub-delegate regulatory functions to their committees, in addition to their Executive Officer (commences by proclamation).

- Regulations are able to be made to exempt councils from the need to publicly notify fees relating to certain defined commercial activities and from the need to determine those fees based on an adopted pricing methodology. This will ensure councils are not placed at unfair disadvantage during commercial negotiations (commences by proclamation).
- Regulations are able to be made to prescribe a scheme for mutual recognition of council approvals for regulatory activities issued under section 68 of the Act (commences by proclamation).

We all live in a rapidly changing world and it can become difficult at times to keep up with these changes however it is imperative for the smooth operation and legislative compliance that staff keeps abreast of the changes.

In a previous column I noted that the President of Local Government New South Wales, Linda Scott had said that in part of one of their recently released reports IPART found that at the time of writing that report, which would have been in 2015 or 2016, councils had around 120 regulatory functions, involving 300 separate roles that are set down in 67 State Acts administered by 31 State Government agencies.

The change to the structure of the State Government has again seen a change as to the various reporting mechanism and though not significant the changes do result in the groupings of responsibilities under various Minister and there are changes to the lines of responsibility.

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Like many businesses Bourke Shire had to upgrade communication technology to cater for the introduction of NBN. The transition was relatively smooth and with our reliance on telephone communication it was important that it did.

The transition was certainly a team effort and it was good to receive the following note from the principal of the installation firm in regards to the quality of our network and the assistance provided

*"The state of the network, the quality of each site, the pre-prep work and the help you have provided is unparalleled.*

*We do a number of regional councils and the difference between Bourke Shire's LAN, infrastructure & mapping is by far and away light years ahead of them all.*

*So again thank you, I know our guys on site appreciate it and it is really nice to work with a true professional."*

It is not often that Council receives positive comments such as this so it is nice to be able to pass the comments to the staff involved – a job well done.

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The 2019/2020 rate notices will be issued shortly with the first instalment due on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

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The Mayor Councillor Barry Hollman and I will be attending an Extraordinary Meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils to be held in Dubbo on Friday.

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The environmental Flow whilst providing a good flow at Brewarrina will not reach Bourke with the level of water flowing across the Brewarrina Weir declining significantly late last week.

It took the Northern Fish Flow two (2) months to reach Brewarrina over the dry river bed. The flow travels much slower when the river bed is so dry than when it is wet. For example, in the same time period of two (2) months, a similar sized flow of water for the environment from the same dams in 2018 (the Northern Connectivity Event) had made it past Wilcannia, over an additional thousand river km's downstream of Brewarrina. Additionally, the seepage into the river bed is much higher when it is dry: initial calculations of the 'losses' between Collarenebri and Walgett show that they are about five (5) times greater for the current Northern Fish Flow than the 2018 Northern Connectivity Event.

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Bourke Rotary Club held its Annual Changeover Dinner on Monday with Pat Canty to take over the Presidency from Leonie Brown and Kristy Kennedy assumes the role as secretary of the Club whilst Lisa Crothers continues in the role of Treasurer.

Whilst only a relatively small club the Bourke Rotary Club members have certainly ensure that they achieved one of the objectives of Rotary; in providing valuable service to the community.

In her Annual Report, outgoing President, Leonie Brown detailed some of the projects which have been undertaken over the past twelve months and the fund raising activities which have been conducted to allow much of the work in the community to be undertaken.

Later this year Rotary will partner with Bourke Shire in the local coordination of the Tour De OROC which will raise funds for the Macquarie Homestay.

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Whilst the tourist season got off to a relatively slow start, there seems to be an increase number of tourist coming to Bourke and many of them are electing to stay for extended periods.

Bourke's reputation as a destination continues to grow it is important that as a community we enhance the town's reputation as a friendly and welcoming community.

As I have mentioned previously, Bourke's iconic status in Australian folklore make it a "must see" destination for many people who wish to experience the outback area of the state.

Whilst the inability of the PV Jandra to be utilised due to the extremely low river levels that have been experience over the past few months has meant the temporary loss of one of the major tourist draw cards attractions it has also meant that we have been able to ensure the other attractions and places of interest are promoted and visitation to these increased.

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*Quote of the week!*

*There are two (2) days in the year that we cannot do anything – yesterday and tomorrow.*

*Mahatma Ghandi*

Ross Earl  
General Manager