



“FROM THE GM’S DESK”

12TH SEPTEMBER 2019



The meeting held last week to discuss issues relating to the proposed installation of a desalination plant for Bourke went well; will a great deal of cooperation and assistance being displayed by all agencies involved.

The meeting brought together representatives from various agencies including, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Department of Industry Water, Public Works Advisory, New South Wales Health and Bourke Shire Council.

At this stage everything is progressing in the right direction and planning is well advanced.

It is hoped that the plant will be operational prior to the end of the year.

It should be noted that Bourke’s Water Supply is still on river water and has not been changed to a bore supply.

It is anticipated that the transition to a bore supply will involve the blending of the water from both river and bores sources.

As of Sunday, 8th September 2019, the Darling River will have stopped flowing over the weir at Bourke for **386 days**.

The river height at Bourke was 2.80 metres over the weekend and the level of the water is dropping at the rate of a little under one (1) centimetre per day.

Council will shortly be commencing the construction of an additional pipeline from Walkden’s Bore into Bourke to provide for the additional water required and will also be looking at the feasibility of constructing an additional bore to provide some redundancy in the current supply available from existing bores.

A reminder that Level Three (3) Restrictions are in place with no fixed sprinklers allowed and hand held hoses for two (2) hours per day.

A full listing of the restrictions is detailed on the Bourke Shire Website, www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Mark Coulton, MP, Member for Parkes and Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment was in Bourke last week to catch up with constituents and also took the opportunity to meet with Councillors and staff of Bourke Shire

Council over breakfast on Tuesday, 3rd September 2019. There were a number of issues discussed including the future of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, the drought, decentralisation and the Financial Assistance Grants.

We also had the opportunity to thank Mark for his ongoing support in trying to improve telecommunication within the shire and the appreciation of Council for the significant increase in the Roads to Recovery Funding to Councils.

Staff have been busy preparing for the arrival of the Bush Tracker Owners Group that will call Bourke their home for the next 10 days for their Annual General Meeting Muster. The group of around 120 have travelled to Bourke from all across Australia for their get-together. Setting up camp at the Bourke Racecourse, the group will enjoy a packed schedule of events and activities both at their base and around the shire, getting to know locals and donating to local organisations. Please make them feel welcome.

The first face-to-face meeting of the Kidman Way Promotional Committee for the year convened in Griffith last week, with the working group serving to advance discussions and information exchange on the operationalisation of the Kidman Highway network.

The “Breeze into Bourke” campaign run last year in the spring school holidays is almost upon us and is always a popular time of the year with families. With the QLD holidays, commencing a week before NSW we are also aiming to capture this market. The program is intended to not only occupy local families and visitors but to promote and encourage visitors to explore and stay in our region a little longer than they usually would.

The program will again be distributed to local schools, day care centres along with accommodation operators. Hard copies will be delivered to neighbouring shires and made available at the Bourke Visitor Information & Exhibition Centre and will be available for all tablets and mobile phone access. Staff are in the final phase of completing the layout and design for the new Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre brochure before it gets released to the public for advertising in the coming weeks.

The new brochure will see high quality, user-friendly information not only available in a hard copy but also in a digital format. This will address consumer expectations to find visitor information where they want to look – on smartphones, iPads, their laptops as well as traditional brochure and magazine racks.

The September Meeting of Council now be held in Enngonia on Monday, 23rd September 2019.

The meeting will start at 9.15am at the Enngonia War Memorial Hall and will be preceded at 9.00am by a Public Forum during which time residents are able to speak to matters on the agenda.

The announcement that an air service for the towns of Bourke, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Cobar would re-commence was very welcome news indeed and has been extremely well received by members of the community.

Whilst the Cobar service is scheduled to commence towards the end of September the other services are not anticipated to be operating until late November.

Representatives from Air Link who will provide the service to Bourke will be visiting next week to meet with Council and community groups and will ensure that any outstanding matters able to be finalised.

At the launch of the air services in Cobar last week I took the opportunity to invite the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales Adam Marshall MP to be present at the first flight into Bourke and he was very receptive to that invitation pending other Parliamentary commitments.

The Annual Graffiti Day will be held across New South Wales on Sunday, 27th October 2019.

Graffiti Removal Day is a State Government Initiative to inspire people to volunteer to remove and prevent graffiti in their neighbourhoods.

Materials for the day are supplied free of charge, due to the generous sponsorship of Industry and the State Government.

There is an opportunity for local businesses within the Bourke Local Government Area to join the NSW Companion Card program.

A Companion Card is for people with significant and permanent disability that need a carer with them at all times to participate in community events and recreational activities.

The program promotes fair ticketing for people who require an attendant carer and removes one of the barriers to their participation in activities and events – the expense of purchasing an additional ticket for their companion.

Currently there are more than 1700 "Companion Card" affiliated businesses in NSW that are benefitting from access to an extensive and often untapped market of people with disability. The program also provides these businesses with the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to social inclusion, present a positive image within their community, and meet some obligations under anti-discrimination laws.

Further information about the program is available by contacting us directly on **1800 893 044** or via email on info.companioncard@facs.nsw.gov.au

The Careers Expo organised by the Project Officer for the Bourke Aboriginal Employment Strategy, Mick McDowell and the Careers Advisor at Bourke High School, Anna McCorkle went very well with excellent support from employers and agencies.

The Expo gave the students the opportunity to get exposure to a number of vocations many of which may not be an accessible information source within town.

A number of those who hosted stalls travelled a considerable distance to participate and their effort very much appreciated.

I had the opportunity to attend for a short period and spoke to a number of the stallholders and each seemed pleased with the format and a couple commented on the fact that it had grown from last year and will continue to grow if the level of support demonstrated over the past two (2) years continues.

The Tour De OROC is only a few weeks off and will stopover in Bourke on the night of the 9th October 2019 and the Bourke Rotary Club and Bourke Shire Council will host the riders, arranging accommodation and meals.

A fundraising Auction will be held at the Port of Bourke on that evening with great support for auction items provided by Luke Moon of the Port of Bourke Hotel.

Included in the auction are the following items:-

2 large Eskies

1 small esky

1 Kayak seat and paddles

1 Qld State of Origin Gear Bag

1 kid's sleeping bag

1 Sensor light

1 portable barbeque

1 Tackle Box

Bottles of wine

A SIGNED 2019 SOUTH SYDNEY GUERNSEY

A NSW Country Guernsey in Indigenous Design

There are other items to be auctioned as well

I would encourage all members of the community to come along and support what is a great cause. All funds raised will go towards Macquarie Homestay in Dubbo which provides quality and affordable accommodation for those people from the areas surrounding Dubbo who have to visit Dubbo for Medical Treatment or have to accompany a relative seeking treatment. A number of Bourke residents have already utilised the facilities and without an exception have been glowing in both terms of the accommodation and the hospitality.

The four (4) Rotary Clubs in Dubbo have decided that once a month each club will provide a meal for those who happen to be staying at the facility on that night. That is a tremendous gesture by the Clubs and one that I know has been very much appreciated.

There have been a number of people from Bourke who have already utilised the facilities at Macquarie Homestay and without exception all have been very impressed.

The 2019 Annual Conference of Local Government New South Wales will be held next month with both the Mayor and myself attending.

Bourke Shire Council has submitted a number of motions for consideration for inclusion in the business paper dealing with a range of issues.

The Conference will be held in Warwick Farm in accordance with the policy of having a city based conference one year and a rural/regional based conference on the alternate year. Last year's conference was held in Albury.

The conference will see the election of the Board of LG NSW for the next two (2) years.

With the drought showing no signs of abating and the general consensus that the situation could readily recur in the future, Bourke Shire Council is concerned about the lack of a secure water supply for Bourke itself and other villages and towns along the system.

With this in mind Council resolved at its last meeting on the 26th August 2019 as follows:-

"Council coordinate a meeting with all Council's along the Barwon Darling System to discuss the perceived lack of a long term strategy to ensure water security for all towns along the Barwon Darling River System"

Given the tyranny of distance it would be proposed that the first meeting be by teleconference and the Councils could then possibly get together at the LGNSW Conference if needed.

At the August Meeting Council also resolved to write to the State Government seeking consideration of the construction of an additional river storage for Bourke following the passing of the following resolution.

"That Council write to the State Government seeking their urgent consideration of the construction of a regulator or additional weir, including a fish ladder, upstream of Bourke at a location identified as BU8".

The letter to the State Government has been directed to the Minister for Water, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, MP, Council acknowledged the huge strain that has been placed on the State Government's resources as a result of the drought and expressed its appreciation of the allocation of funding made and the assistance provided to date to overcome the problems being faced by Bourke in securing an ongoing town water supply for the short-term.

However, it was also noted the conditions being experienced today will no doubt be replicated in the future and the opportunity should be taken to plan for that occurrence and put into place a strategy to avert or at the very least minimise the impact of the lack of flow within the river system.

A solution to this issue is the construction of an additional storage facility.

Work is continuing to the improvements to the boat ramp area at North Bourke with guard rail having been installed to both delineate the access to the ramp itself and to improve safety.

Whilst the dry conditions and lack of a flow in the river have temporarily suspended most water sports the river with flow again and we will see a resurgence of activity from the water sports enthusiasts.

There are other improvements planned for the area around the boat ramp with an overall aim to see an improved amenity and facilities in what has become a very popular recreational area.

The Bourke War Memorial Pool will be open to the public from 28th September 2019.

Lessee Mark Hollman has been working hard to get things ready for the oncoming season which will be the last for the current pool with plans to build a new pool at the end of the current season. The new pool will be funded from grant funding made available via the Stronger Country Communities Fund which will be supplemented from loan funding raised by Council.

Making the transition from winter based sports to summer based sports, I would encourage sporting groups and other organisations who utilise Council owned sporting and recreation facilities to ensure that they book their proposed usage with Council's Engineering Support Officer.

The booking of facilities will eliminate the possibility of clashes with use and also allow Council staff to ensure that the facilities are prepared in accordance with any requirements.

As long as we are able Bourke Shire Council will endeavour to try and keep the main sporting ovals and Central Park green. However, as the drought bites this task may become increasingly difficult.

Those who go to the PCYC or drive down that way may have noticed that the M.A Davidson Oval gates have been repaired with the missing letters been replaced and the archway given a coat of paint. When funding for a new fence around Davidson Oval becomes available we may be able to once again incorporate this piece of Bourke's history into the new fencing.

As I have mentioned previously, there is a desire to ensure that the sporting complex bounded by Coolican and Davidson Ovals are presented to their best advantage.

Anne Holst, Senior Coordination Officer, Far West who was based at Bourke out of an Office in our building for the past nine (9) months, following Gerry Collins promotion and transfer to Dubbo has finished her temporary contact and has left Bourke.

Anne was involved in a number of projects within the community and was a valued member of the team previously known as the Department of Premier and Cabinet but now known as the Department Planning Industry and Environment under the new structure adopted by the State Government following the last election in March. I would like to acknowledge her contribution whilst in the role and wish her all the best for the future, which I think initially involves sailing around the Whitsundays.

Quote of the week!

"My father always used to say, "Don't raise your voice. Improve your argument." Good sense does not always lie with the loudest shouters, nor can we say that a large, unruly crowd is always the best arbiter of what is right."

-Desmond Tutu

Ross Earl
General Manager