



“From the GM’s Desk 5th March 2020



Advice as to the renewal of my Contact of Employment

At the Council Meeting held on Monday, 24th February 2020, I formally advised Council that I will not be seeking an extension of my current contact which expires of the 12th October 2020.

The decision to retire is obviously not an easy one and after almost 50 years in the workforce it will be a major change for both Annette and me.

We intend moving back to the home we have in Mudgee and probably look to travel a little both in Australia and Overseas.

While the date is some time off, I thought it would give Council plenty of time to undertake the recruitment process. The recruitment process that will be undertaken by the current Council and will be finalised well before my finishing date.

There are still a few projects I would like see finished or commenced and I will be working towards this end over the next few months.

Reflecting on my career in Local Government, I note that I have worked for 10 Councils including four (4) County Councils as an employee and as a contractor for a number of others whilst I operated my own consultancy business.

Bourke Cricket

Congratulation to the Fords Bridge Cricket team who won the Bourke Senior cricket competition on Saturday afternoon. From what I have heard it was a very competitive game and the Two Waterholes were very strong contenders but “Fordsie” was too strong on the day.

There was a good crowd in attendance to support the teams and it is always good to see crowds supporting teams in Grand Finals and generally results in a great atmosphere.

Upgrade at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre

Work is progressing well with the upgrade to Building One (1) at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre. The extension frame work and lining is just about complete. The internal works will begin in the coming weeks this will include tiling, fit out of the café and installation of the new counter. The works also includes an outdoor deck and paved area that will be well received by visitors and locals I am sure.

It is expected that the works will be completed by the end of May, this is a little later than anticipated but the wait will be worth it. The temporary office is working out at the present time and we thank everyone for their patience while this upgrade is being undertaken.

The local team that are undertaking this work are doing an excellent job, the team is led by Chris Ware. The skills gained by the REDI crew on this project will allow these staff members the opportunity to gain employment in a number of industries.

Planting Main Street

Now that the Darling River is flowing and is expected to flow for a longer period, Council staff are preparing to commence the planting of some larger trees and ground cover to prepare the area for Easter. This will bring the street to life with some colour and trees added.

The team who are currently undertaking the work at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre will complete this work. They will first have to complete the final installation of the irrigation system. Works on this project will commence in approximately two (2) weeks.

Mitchell Highway

Flooding in the Warrego River has caused some delays to travellers going through Bourke to Cunnamulla on the Mitchell Highway this week.

It is expected that the same could happen between Enngonia and Barringun if the predictions of the current heights are correct.

Council is working with Transport for NSW to monitor the floodwaters affecting the Mitchell Highway North of Bourke and will continue to do so until all floodwaters have passed.

Updates are available online at www.livetraffic.com

Request for Embargo to be lifted

Mayor of Bourke Shire, Councillor Barry Hollman has written the New South Wales Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPEI) to review, as a matter of urgency, the need for the embargo on the Barwon-Darling River System south of the Culgoa Junction, which was announced on Friday, 28th February 2020.

Councillor Hollman said he and his Council had wholeheartedly supported the need for an embargo on the entire river system to ensure that the river received a much needed flush and recharge and was conscious of the need to achieve the target inflow into Lake Wetherell of 60-70,000 mega litres.

The target of 60-70,000 megalitres should be easily reached and exceeded and consideration should be urgently given to allowing irrigators below the Culgoa junction to be able to extract water in accordance with the licence entitlements.

Figures released by Water New South Wales via their Operations Update have indicated that up until 28th February 2020, 70,000 megalitres had passed Bourke and this water coupled with the flow over the weekend means that in excess of 100,000 megalitres has passed through Bourke with no access yet being made available for extraction with the lifting of the previous embargo restricted to the area above the Culgoa junction.

Councillor Hollman said he and the Council were very aware of the importance of the irrigation industry to Bourke and the positive impact it has on the economy of the district and the employment opportunities it provides.

He said that it has been many years since the industry had a full allocation of water and it was important that the opportunity that is now available to re-invigorate the industry is not lost. The review of the current embargo needs to be undertaken immediately if the opportunity to pump water is going to be available to irrigators downstream of the Culgoa Junction.

During the periods of extended drought conditions, the Bourke business sector has suffered a significant downturn and the opportunity now also exists for them to receive a much needed boost via improved agricultural activity.

Councillor Hollman highlighted the fact that there is only a relatively small window of opportunity to be able to take advantage of the flows that are currently available and it is important that this window of opportunity was not lost.

Desalination Plant

Work has commenced work on the installation of the desalination plant to reduce the salinity of the bore supply when it is required to be utilised. The unit whilst being commissioned in Bourke will be available to be transported to any place of need if it is not required in Bourke.

Once again Council is extremely grateful to the State Government for providing the funding of the plant.

Water Treatment Plant

Work has commenced on the construction of the water treatment plant for Bourke which is valued at over 10 million dollars.

The new plant is to be based on the same site as the existing plant and is expected to be completed late in 2021.

CASA Inspection

As the Bourke Airport is used by a Regular Passenger Terminal (RPT) it is subject to regular inspections by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and they will be in Bourke this week to undertake the inspection.

The inspection is a rigorous process and aims to ensure that the facility meets all the appropriate standards.

Despite not having an RPT service for over 10 years Council has maintained the airport to the appropriate standard in anticipation of an RPT service recommencing and this has finally happened.

New Bore

Council Contractors are currently on site to commence the new bore at Belvedere which is the last of the bores to be drilled in the current round of emergency water supply funding.

It is hoped to have the bore operational by the end of the month and consideration will then be given to doing an additional bore at the old Tolls Bore Site. While we are well placed for water at the moment the plan is to ensure the town is drought proofed for the future and the construction of an additional bore at the Tolls location will serve to further spread the area from which the extraction of the ground water occurs

Charity Shield Rugby League Football Match in Mudgee

Annette and I attended the Charity Shield Match in Mudgee between St George and South Sydney. We met up our two (2) sons Cameron and Brenton together with his partner Stephanie and our eldest daughter Jaimie and her partner Luke, all of whom travelled up to Mudgee for the weekend and enjoyed the match despite the fact that the mighty Dragons came second for the eighth or ninth time in a row.

There were a few Bourke residents who made the trip down and I bumped into Sam Rice, Kyle Gale, Bernard Davis and ex resident Phil Wilson who also enjoyed the game. Bernard was keen to get a photo of me in my St George Polo Shirt after his team had won.

The Glen Willow Oval Complex where the match was played was presented like a picture with the facilities first class and a credit to Mid-West Regional Council and certainly a far cry from when my boys played junior sport there many years back.

Mayor in Sydney for JO Chairs Meeting

The Mayor as Acting Chair of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils will be attending a meeting of the Chairs of all JOs across the State at Parliament House on Thursday, 5th March 2020. The Meeting will also be attended by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Handcock, MP.

Flow in the River

The flow in the river continues to create a great deal of optimism within the community, despite the inability of local irrigators to extract water.

There are significant flows in a number of the smaller rivers in the north of the state and good flows in the rivers in southern Queensland some of which will make their way into the Barwon Darling System.

The flows in both the Culgoa and Warrego Rivers should provide very welcome supplementary flows into the Darling and hence downstream.

The Culgoa joins with the Barwon at Warraweena just above Bourke to form the Darling whilst the Warrego joins the Darling between Louth and Bourke and will provide additional water downstream with little extraction taking place from that point.

Cleaning of Sewer Pump Stations and Gross Pollutant Traps

Contractors are in town this week undertaking the clean out of our sewer pump stations and Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs)

The GPTs provide a mechanism to save rubbish from being washed down the gutters and into the river and being 'trapped' before this happens, they need to be cleaned out periodically.

It is amazing what articles find their way into both the sewer pump wells and the GPTs.

Former Local Temporarily in Charge of Paroo Shire

Former Bourke resident and former Bourke Shire Council Director of Engineering Services, Sean Rice is currently the Acting Chief Executive Officer at Paroo Shire based in Cunnamulla.

Sean has been liaising with Bourke Shire Council regarding the closure of the Mitchell highway within the Paroo Shire due to the flooding in the Warrego River.

Tourism Promotions

Bourke attended the 2020 Victorian Caravan, Camping and Touring Super Show for two (2) days under the banner of the Kidman Way Committee between the 20th to the 25th February, following on from Newcastle earlier on in the month. The success of these trade shows are imperative to continue to raise the profile of not only Outback NSW but the link between the south and north of the state touring route.

Preparations are continuing for our stand at the upcoming 2020 Sydney Royal Easter Show. This Joint Organisation initiative will see the shires of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett come together over the 12 days to raise our profile to some 900,000 attendees. The show is a true celebration of Australian culture and provides the perfect platform for us to capture leads to new customers, provide sampling opportunities, build brand awareness within new markets, build a database of prospective customers, educate consumers about our product and gain additional exposure to the largest audience in the country.

Quote of the week

"A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you just the way you are".

Unknown

Ross Earl
General Manager

