



“From the GM’s Desk”

14th MAY 2020



TEMPORARY RELIEF FROM THE EMERGENCY SERVICE LEVY

To assist in maintaining delivery of community services, the NSW Government has announced that it will fund the \$32.76 million increase in the Emergency Services Levy (ESL) for all NSW Councils for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Councils will receive a grant to offset the amount that their contributions have increased by during the period between 2019-20 and 2020-21. Councils will be required to pay their ESL invoices to Revenue NSW and the Office of Local Government will directly reimburse Councils the 2020-21 increase in the contribution.

The increase in the amount invoiced to Bourke Shire Council in respect of its contribution for the ESL, which covers Councils contribution of the State operating the NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW State Emergency Services and Fire and Rescue NSW, was approximately \$63,000.00. An amount of \$58,605.00 of this increase is attributable to the increase in the contribution to the Rural Fire Service.

The contribution to the Rural Fire Service for the Barwon Darling Zone which includes Bourke and Brewarrina Shires was \$117,210.00 which is an increase of 42.75%, far greater than the allowable rate increase of 2.6% so the Government’s decision to pick up this increase for 2020-2021 was very welcome indeed.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING - 25th MAY 2020

The next Ordinary Meeting of Council is scheduled for 25th May 2020 commencing at 9.15 am. It is expected that this meeting will again be held remotely via Audio-Visual Link. Last month’s meeting held in this remote format went smoothly, with both Councillors and staff on a steep learning curve as part of the interim arrangements as Council practices social distancing.

Included on the agenda for the May meeting of Council is consideration of the draft 2020/2021 Operational Plan (Budget). Council is required to consider any submissions received in respect of the Operational Plan, following exhibition, prior to adopting the Plan.

SWIMMING POOL CONSTRUCTION

Work has commenced on the reconstruction of Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool Complex with these works comprising of the total refurbishment of the 50 metre pool and the associated filtration plant.

The pool redevelopment will see the installation of wet decks as opposed to the older style water drains located within a cavity in the wall of the pool and will also see the installation of an accessible ramp which will make access and entry to the pool easier for people with disabilities and elderly users of the pool.

There has been a lot of work done at the complex over the past few years with the Splash Park, new fencing and now the main pool upgrade.

Other works planned include the creation of a barbeque area, complete with shade and some minor improvements to the Swimming Club amenities.

The Swimming pool is an important asset to the community of Bourke during the long hot summers and the improvements will be welcomed by all members of the community and will dramatically improve accessibility for the pool.

BATTLE OF CORAL AND BALMORAL – VIETNAM WAR.

Wednesday, 13th May 2020 marked the 52nd anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral in the Vietnam War, a battle that lasted for 26 days and in which 26 Australians lost their lives with a further 100 injured.

The battle was acknowledged on the 50th Anniversary of the conflict with the Unit Citation for Gallantry being awarded to all members of the 1st Australian Task force.

Annette's older brother, Robbie, who now lives in Northern NSW, was an enlisted serviceman with the 1st Royal Australian Regiment and was among those involved in the battle. At the age of 22, he was in his second tour of Vietnam.

Annette wanted to commemorate the Day and took the opportunity to play at the cenotaph and lay some flowers to acknowledge those involved in the conflict, including her brother and remember those who died in the service of their country.

WESTERN WEIRS MEETING

Together with Councils Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, we recently took part in a Video Conference with representatives of WaterNSW regarding the Western Weirs Program, which was announced last year, at this stage the program is still very much in the consultation and planning stages.

WaterNSW is preparing a Strategic Business Case for the Western Weirs Program. The Program would allow WaterNSW to more effectively and dynamically manage flow along the whole Barwon Darling and Lower Darling River System to support water supplies to remote communities and provide related socio-economic, environmental and other benefits. WaterNSW is aiming to fast track the study and have identified a target completion date for the end of 2020.

Implementation of the Western Weirs Program may include the following:-

- Construction of a new integrated system of gated weirs to replace the current fixed crest weirs along the river;
- Provision of a fish passage (where required) on all new and existing fish barriers along the river;
- Removal of weirs and river structures, where recommended; that provide no benefits to the system;
- Implementation of new ownership, maintenance, operations and cost recovery arrangements for infrastructure and operations along the river;
- Amendments to the Water Resource Plan considering the new operational regime along the river.
- Weirs were initially identified and included within the study to comply with the over-arching project objectives and the following principles:-
- Weirs are located on the main stem river of the Barwon Darling or Lower Darling rivers in NSW between Mungindi and Wentworth; *and*
- Weirs on a tributary to the Barwon Darling Rivers, and its primary purpose is potable drinking water supply for local towns, and its proximity to Barwon Darling River, provides an opportunity to investigate improved system functionality and environmental flows.

The scope includes confirmation of weirs to be included within the area of the study, however approximately 29 known permanent weirs are considered to meet the over-arching project objectives, including:-

- 24 mainly weirs are located in the Barwon Darling River system, whereby;
 - 16 unregulated weirs are on the Barwon Darling River system,
 - Six (6) weirs are on adjoining unregulated tributaries,
 - Two (2) regulated weirs are in the Border Rivers

Bourke Shire Council is keen to see the further development of the Program and have offered to support Water NSW as best we can through the planning and consultative stages.

NEW RFDS BUILDING AT LOUTH

It is great to see the new RFDS clinic being opened in Louth. The new clinic building will play a vital role in providing medical and healthcare services to Louth and the surrounding districts. The clinical building was funded through a private donor to the RFDS. I am sure the Louth community will be grateful to have the new facility up and running.

NEW DISPOSAL AREA AT BOURKE WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY

A new drop off area for domestic waste is being constructed at the Bourke Waste facility. This new drop off area will allow for smaller household loads to be unloaded in the designated area negating the need for people with smaller loads to drive to the main cell area. The drop off is situated close to the main entrance making it easier for customer use at the Bourke Waste Facility.

SHIRE ROADS UPDATE

Maintenance work continues on flood damage sections of MR 404, being the Bourke to Hungerford Road.

The sealing of the first 3.8km of the reconstruction works on MR 404, south east of Fords Bridge was completed this week and it will make a big difference to this section of road which had been identified in need of improvement. The sealing project has been welcomed by regular road users.

A maintenance grade is in progress on the unsealed section of the Wanaaring Road and gradings have also been undertaken on Avondale and Amaroo Roads.

Resealing works were completed on the Mitchell Highway, adjacent to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre last week and this has seen a marked improvement in the road surface.

The good rain over the past few weeks has seen a growth of roadside vegetation and the slashing program along the State Highways commenced late last month and is progressing.

DESALINATION PLANT

Council's Desalination Plant was commissioned last week and operated from the 4th May to 8th May 2020.

A sample of the treated water from the plant was due to be sent away for chemical analysis by an Australian Accredited Water Laboratory, however, this was unable to be undertaken last week and a further test period will now be required and the dates of this test will be advised once it is confirmed.

In the interim the town own supply has reverted to River Water.

Once collected and sent away the sample results should be returned within a week.

Once the quality of the water is confirmed, the desalination plant will again be commissioned and commence 30 days of production for the towns potable water supply to ensure that teething issues are corrected and that the plant is operating according to the construction specifications, to the satisfaction of all parties.

Once the thirty-day period has expired the plant will be again “mothballed” from full production until such time as it may be required.

Council has been extremely appreciative of the support given by the State Government in securing the water supply for Bourke.

It was only a few months ago that Bourke was identified as the town in New South Wales likely to run out of water. However, the proactive action by Council and the funding and support provided by the NSW Government has meant that Bourke is able to be serviced by two sources of water and the community can take a great deal of comfort in the level of water security that is now available.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF RICHARD STREET

To allow for the safe installation of a new Pump Station at the corner of Richard and Darling Streets Bourke, **the Richard and Darling Streets intersection will be closed for the period 18th May to the 22nd May 2020**, weather conditions permitting.

The laneway will not be affected and will remain open and pedestrian access will still be available into Darling Street from Richard Street.

Access to Rotary Park and toilet facilities located within the park will be maintained.

Access to the southern end of Darling Street will need to be via Glen Street.

2019 WAS A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR BOURKE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

2019 saw a number of awards and achievements for individuals and organisations from within the Bourke Shire Area. These included:-

- Bourke Shire Council winning the Bluett Award for Rural Councils,
- The Louth Race Club being named the New South Wales Country Race Club of the Year,
- Peter Crothers being named the Australian Pharmacist of the Year,
- Sally Simmonds winning the Australian Junior Show Jumping Title,
- Clay Simmons winning the Australian FEL World Cup League Show Jumping Rookie Title, and,
- Both Clay and Sally representing Australia in their chosen sport of Show Jumping

For a remote rural shire with a population of some 2800 people contending with the tyranny of distance as well as other challenges including the extended period of drought, these achievements reflect most positively on Bourke.

PLAQUE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE STOLEN GENERATION

Transport for New South Wales have erected a plaque adjacent to Platform One (1) at Central Station in Sydney as part the recommendations coming out of the NSW Governments “Unfinished Business Report” in relation to the Stolen Generation.

It is proposed that another eight (8) plaques will be erected at eight (8) regional stations and Bourke is one of these Stations.

Transport for New South Wales is coordinating the erection of the plaques including consultation with stakeholders. Such consultation will involve, most importantly, those who were part of the stolen generation or their descendants, Councils and John Holland who is responsible for the maintenance of the rail infrastructure.

An indicative date for the unveiling of the Bourke Plaque has been announced for 12 noon on 9th September 2020 with the plaque proposed to be erected being similar to that erected at Central Station.

Further information in respect of this unveiling will be provided as it becomes available.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE STREET LIGHTING IN BOURKE SHIRE

Work has commenced on the installation of new streetlights across Bourke Shire area. The current lights in Bourke are a combination of high-pressure sodium lights and compact florescent lights. There are 560 streetlights in total and these will be replaced by Light Emitting Diode Technology or LED lighting, as it is called generally.

The cost to Council of installing this new technology will be in the order of \$365,000.00 with this investment having an investment payback period of around seven years.

New lighting has recently been installed near Jones Park and the improved lighting is obvious.

VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING WITH LGNSW

As part of assisting Councils through the COVID-19 Pandemic, LGNSW, the peak body for NSW Councils, currently hosts a weekly teleconference forum for Mayors and General Managers on the impacts of the virus on Local Government in NSW.

At last week's forum, Federal Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications, Local Government and Bourke Shires local Federal Member, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, spoke with the Forum on Federal Government initiatives in respect of the pandemic.

The Minister spoke and encouraged people to remain watchful to ensure that there isn't a major break out of the virus anywhere. He encouraged people to sign on for the COVID SafeApp.

During a question and answer session he also spoke of the need for continuing with social distancing. He said, and I liked this advice as a good ready reckoner, that we should assume we have/or the person we are near, has the virus. It is certainly a good way of thinking about the virus and social distancing.

Mark spoke of the work being undertaken by the Deputy Prime Minister's Department in considering potential Local Government "shovel ready" project funding. This work is in response to the Deputy Prime Minister previously seeking projects. No date for an announcement of outcomes was available.

The Chair of LGNSW, Cllr Linda Scott took the opportunity to raise with the Minister the need for increased:-

- Regional Roads Funding
- Black Spot Funding.
- Regional Airports Funding and
- Financial Assistance Grants.

Quote of the week!

"Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go. Just remember how far you have come, remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won and all the fears you have overcome".

Ross Earl
General Manager

