



“From the GM’s Desk”

21st MAY 2020



NEXT COUNCIL MEETING 25th MAY 2020

The next Ordinary Meeting of Council is scheduled for the 25th May 2020 commencing at 9.15 am. Included on the agenda for the meeting is the consideration of the 2020/2021 Operational Plan (Budget).

Council is required to consider any submissions it has received in respect of the Operational Plan prior to adopting the plan.

The venue for the meeting will be the Back O’ Bourke Conference Centre.

A transcript of the meeting will be available on Council’s website shortly after the conclusion of the meeting.

SHIRE ROADS UPDATE

The unsealed section of the Wanaaring Road has had grading completed over the past few weeks which has provided a much better surface for the travelling public. The recent rain has made maintenance grading much more effective.

Storm damage repairs on MR 404, Bourke to Hungerford road, has been completed and the repair of the storm damage on the Dungarvon Road is currently progressing.

Repair work on the West Culgoa Road is also in progress with four (4) culverts having been replaced and storm damage repairs also in progress in this area, with gravel being carted and stockpiled.

A formation grade has been undertaken on the Avondale Road.

Work on MR 404 under the Regional Road Repair Program is progressing well and as noted in a previous column, 3.7 km of the new seal has been completed. The remaining 4.3 km of roadway is to be sealed in the next three (3) weeks.

With such a huge area to cover and a road network of around 2,300 kilometres, the task of ensuring that the road network is able to be maintained is not an easy one. It takes a lot of work to prepare work schedules to minimise travel between jobs to ensure that we are able to maximise the available funding.

TRAVEL ON UNSEALED ROADS

The ongoing cooperation of residents by not utilising Council’s unsealed road network when the roads are wet will assist in ensuring avoidable damage is not caused to the road surface. This damage is magnified when the roads are used by trucks when the roads are wet and the damage caused can run into thousands of dollars.

Whilst understanding the need to move stock or truck in feed, it should be equally understood that delaying these tasks will significantly reduce the potential for damage to the road surface.

Of course roads should not be used when they have been *CLOSED* by Council.

These closures are publicised on Council's website www.bourke.nsw.gov.au and on Council's Facebook page. Alternatively, phone Council's office on 02 68308000 or the after hours on-call number which is 0419 722 055.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF RICHARD STREET

A reminder that Richard Street, Bourke is currently closed at the intersection with Darling Street, to allow the installation of a new Stormwater pump station. At this stage it is anticipated that the intersection will be closed for approximately one (1) month with the street scheduled to re-open on the 22nd June 2020.

COVIDSafe Phone App

I would ask residents to please consider the option of downloading the Australian Government's COVIDSafe phone app. It is suggested that you research the issue and then make your own decision as to whether you download the App. Information on the App is available by visiting: www.health.gov.au.

NEW VOLUNTEERING PLATFORM LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT NEEDY

Volunteers are often the lifeblood of a community. Bourke is no different.

To this end, volunteers are being empowered to provide welfare checks, deliver supplies and offer essential transport to vulnerable people through a new online platform linking community members with charities and non-government organisations (NGOs) in need of support.

The NSW Government is encouraging volunteers and organisations to register on the new Emergency Support Volunteering website (<https://emergency.volunteer.org.au>) to help support people impacted by COVID-19.

The platform allows you to register your details online and an organisation in your local area will get in touch and offer volunteering opportunities when they arise. The safety and wellbeing of participants is a high priority.

The NSW Government has partnered with the Centre for Volunteering (<https://www.volunteering.com.au/#/>) to develop the platform which is also operating in Victoria and Western Australia.

WILD DOG CONTROL

Wild dogs continue to be an issue in the western region of the State. Landholders in the Western Division currently have the opportunity to engage professional wild dog controllers through the Professional Wild Dog Controller Program.

To assist in this matter, Western Local Land Services have developed an online update on the program at the following link: https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1218098/PWDC-May-2020-update.pdf

APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL WILD DOG FUNDING SUCCESSFUL

Bourke Shire Council is leading a project on behalf of Western NSW combined shires including Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Central Darling, to bolster their wild dog management efforts. The efforts are being coordinated by Local Land Services with Andrew Hull having overall carriage of the project.

Wild Dogs continue to be a major problem for graziers in the areas of all the participating Councils and has had a dramatic impact on the sustainability and viability of many farming enterprises.

On behalf of participating Councils, Bourke Shire lodged a funding application under Round 2 of the *Communities Combating Pest and Weed Impacts During Drought Program*.

The funding received in Round 2 was \$234,418.48 and follows the receipt of over \$926,000.00 under Round 1 of the same program.

Bourke Shire Council is pleased to be able to respond to the requests received from ratepayers for assistance in relation to the wild dog problem and equally pleased to lead the participating Councils for such an important project.

The project involves training, education and awareness, seasonal baiting programs, purchase of GPS tracking collars and the utilisation of professional wild dog controllers.

The initiative is a good example of Councils not letting boundaries be an impediment to the introduction of a strategy and a project that will provide widespread benefits across multiple Council areas.

DOG POUND FUNDING

Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock has announced a "Council Pound - Grant Program" (CPGP) which will assist in ensuring that Councils and their service providers continue to operate as they adjust to new procedures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her press release the Minister said that Councils are facing unprecedented pressure as a result of COVID-19 and the Pound Grant program will ensure they have additional funding to cover staff costs, as well as food for the animals they house.

Minister Hancock said that the funds can also be used to undertake capital works including minor site upgrades, maintenance works or the purchasing of new equipment to ensure that pounds remain viable and functional.

Funding will be available to all Council run pounds across the State, to ensure they run as close to normal as possible and the welfare of animals in their care is maintained.

A minimum of \$4,000 will be paid to Councils under the program, up to a maximum of \$28,000, depending on the number of Local Government areas the pound supports. It is anticipated that Bourke will receive the base amount of \$4,000.

PREPARATION FOR THE RE-OPENING OF COUNCILS OFFICES AND LIBRARY AND TOURIST FACILITIES

It is proposed to re-open Council's Office next week including the Service NSW Agency. Some modifications are being made to the office to assist in providing an increased degree of protection for both staff and customers.

Consideration will also be given to the opening of the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre once the number of persons allowed at a gathering is increased to allow for manageable numbers within the centre.

Also to be put in place will be improved hygiene facilities including the provision of hand sanitiser.

It is important that as a community and as a nation we adhere to all directions and suggestions as to how we can continue to work together to ensure we do our best to eliminate this insidious disease.

At this stage, the staged return program, as announced by the NSW Government, does not provide for the opening of libraries. However, once permissible, the Bourke Public Library will re-open with a number of protocols in place, as best we can, to ensure the safety of staff and library users.

GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Council staff, led by our consultant Belinda Colless, are continuing to identify grant opportunities, with Council focussing on projects that are contained within the adopted Delivery Program and the budgetary provisions of the Operational Plan and in line with Council's overarching Community Strategic Plan.

Council is awaiting the outcome of a number of applications and are currently finalising applications for a number of other projects.

The philosophy of Council has been to improve and/or upgrade existing infrastructure and this continues to be the case. This philosophy recognises that the ability to maintain additional new infrastructure potentially places ongoing pressure on the existing budget available. It is important that existing infrastructure is able to be maintained and if required, upgraded to meet current safety standards as well as compliance with any new regulations.

It has been mentioned that as Australia comes out of the other side of the economic turmoil caused by COVID-19, that stimulus funding may become available to assist both local Councils and businesses who have been impacted as a result of the pandemic.

Council would like to be able to be in a position to have shovel ready projects identified to ensure that, not only do we have the ability to access available funding, but importantly to provide businesses with the opportunity to supply goods.

Council would also potentially then provide the opportunity for those within the community who have lost their job as a result of the economic down turn to be able to return to the workforce as quickly as possible. If funding was to be available to expedite this, then Council will be looking to secure some of the available funding.

BOURKE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Work is continuing on the upgrade of the Bourke Community Centre. When completed, the building will provide the community with an excellent venue that community groups will be able to utilise for meetings and club activities.

The restrictions on gatherings that are currently in place, have provided an ideal opportunity to proceed with the improvements with no additional inconveniences to user groups.

GARDEN BEDS AT THE CORNER RICHARD AND MITCHELL STEETS

Bob Stutsel continues to cultivate an excellent array of flowers which provides a myriad of colours at this corner. The flowers provide a great display on what would otherwise be, a very stark intersection.

Glen Curtis, Ron Wood and Dave Neylon and continue with their efforts in watering the trees along Fred Hollows Way. Glen has also adopted one of the garden plots in the main street adjacent to the telephone exchange and again it looks good and adds a lot to the appearance of the streetscape.

We thank these gentlemen who volunteer their time and efforts to improve the beautification of the town. Well done!

CLEAN UP OF BACK LANES

The Town Services crew have been undertaking the clean-up of some of the laneways in Bourke and will systematically ensure that all laneways are cleaned and rubbish removed, and where necessary, weeds controlled.

Laneways are not dumping areas for garden waste and the cooperation of all residents is sought in keeping lanes free of rubbish

SHADE SAILS FOR JONES PARK AND CENTRAL PARK

Council has been successful in obtaining funding for shade structures to be erected both over the play equipment at Jones Park and the outdoor gym equipment which is located in Central Park. The funding was made available through the "Everyone Can Play" grant program, with Council matching the funding dollar for dollar.

The addition of shading to these facilities is seen as an essential requirement in providing community infrastructure that is compliant with regulations and meets Council's duty of care commitments for the outdoor environment. It is expected that by installing these structures over the equipment, usage of the facilities in the warmer months of Summer will increase.

MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT

The Main Street continues to take shape. With the planting of trees and the ability to be able to water, with the good flow in the river, a difference has been made to the streetscape, as it has right across the town.

Next week there will be a hive of activity in the area, weather permitting, with the boulder placement in garden beds, granite capping to blocks at the central crossing and planting of trees and additional colour plantings to complete the project.

WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM

If you ever wonder about the benefit of having a water filtration plant, one only needs to get a glass of water from the filtered water supply and stand that water beside a glass of the water straight from the river to see just what the filtration process achieves. Whilst I am told you can use settling agents to assist with the process, it is hard to imagine what the water would be like without the benefits of a filtration process and the impact this would have on both hot water systems and evaporative air conditioners.

FAR NORTH WEST JOINT ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

The Far North West Joint Organisations will meet on the 27th May 2020 utilising Audio Visual link.

The ability to use Audio Visual facilities to conduct meetings certainly makes the meeting much easier to both organise and coordinate and negates the need for participants to travel long distances.

The travel within the FNWJO can be quite significant with the distance between Lightning Ridge and Cobar being 480 kilometres or a round trip of nearly 1000 kilometres.

When there is requirement to meet in person, the meetings have been held in Bourke, being the most Central location of all members. The holding of meetings still means a round trip of over 600 kilometers for any Councillor based at Lightning Ridge which when you put the time taken to travel on top of the meeting time, makes for a fairly long day.

RESIDENTS URGED TO REMAIN WATER WISE

Whilst we have good flows in the river at the moment, I would remind residents that water is a finite resource that should be conserved where possible, and given this, not to over water areas or let water run back into gutters.

Whilst we have enjoyed good rainfall to go with the flow in the river, we should all still be mindful of the impacts of the drought conditions which we have recently experienced for an extended period and the loss of trees and other vegetation that resulted.

The transformation in the overall landscape with the availability of water has been quite amazing. I was speaking to a visitor last week who last visited Bourke at the height of the drought when the strong water restrictions were in place. They could not believe the overall difference that the rain had made to the district.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"As much as talent counts, effort counts twice."

Angela Duckworth

Ross Earl
General Manager