



“From the GM’s Desk”

4th June 2020



BOURKE TO DUBBO AIR LINKS

Air Link Airlines have continued to operate their scheduled flights from Dubbo to Bourke and return throughout the COVID-19 pandemic on schedule and without cancellations or delays. Operating from Dubbo to Bourke and return three (3) days per week, the NSW Government subsidised air service is a service that is the envy of many localities in regional NSW. Full details of the service are available from their website at www.airlinkairlines.com.au. If you are a Government employee based in Bourke, please bring the service to the attention of your supervisor with a view to you utilising the service, or for that matter, your supervisor flying to Bourke. It is a very efficient use of time.

CCTV NETWORK

Council is continuing to extend the CCTV security network in Bourke and this week contractors installed two (2) new cameras, one at the western end of Mitchell Street and the other on the Mitchell Highway as you come into town from North Bourke.

These two additional cameras were included in an application for funding from the State Government to enhance the coverage of the network.

The cameras are utilised by Bourke Police on a daily basis and the footage has proven to be very useful. A visible security camera can serve as a deterrent that assists in preventing crime. Council will continue to expand the network in consultation with the Police as funding becomes available.

COUNCIL ADOPTS OPERATING PLAN

Council met at the Back O’ Bourke Centre for its May 2020 Ordinary Meeting on 25 May 2020, with the layout of the meeting room taking into account social distancing requirements. A good amount of business was transacted at the meeting, with one of the more important decisions taken by Council being the adoption of Councils 2020/2021 Operational Plan, which includes Councils budget for the upcoming year. I congratulate Council staff on their work in respect of preparing the budget for Councils consideration and in doing so, exceeding the legislative timeframes for such document.

PLANT HIRE TENDERS

Council is currently inviting tenders from plant hire suppliers who wish to undertake work for Council during 2020/2021. Councils uses numerous contractors throughout any year and to provide all contractors the opportunity to be considered to undertake work as required, Council annually invites tenders.

Council has been fortunate to have secured some significant grant funding for road works over the past year led by the reconstruction work on the Bourke to Wanaaring Road.

SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS

Bourke Shire Council was advised last week that it was successful in obtaining funding in Round 1 of the NSW Governments COVID-19 Stimulus Package available to showgrounds throughout the state for safety and maintenance upgrades.

Council received \$270,078.00 for the construction of a new toilet block and the installation of an automatic watering system at the Renshaw Oval Complex. Not only will the funding provide a boost for the showground in terms of strengthening showground infrastructure, it will also assist the community by supporting trade work and suppliers.

\$25million dollars has been allocated by the State Government over two (2) years to assist in rebuilding 171 regional showgrounds across our State and it was pleasing to be successful in the first round.

There is a further round of funding available with applications closing on the 12th June 2020. Council acknowledges the NSW Government for this allocation of funding and further acknowledges NSW Crown Lands as the owner of this important facility.

COUNCIL CONGRATULATES THE OFFICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

At the May Ordinary Meeting Council resolved to express its appreciation to the staff at the Office of Local Government for their assistance in providing up to date and concise information during the COVID-19 outbreak, which continues to date.

The pandemic has been a stressful time for all in public office with information changing on a daily basis, which has in itself been a challenge to keep on abreast of, in what has been a rapidly changing environment.

The task has, however, been much easier by the information provided to councils by the Office of Local Government.

The Office of Local Government have been able to provide up to date information relevant to the operation of most Councils and it has been appreciated.

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY

Each year councils across New South Wales contribute to the cost of running the NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW Emergency Service and Fire and Rescue NSW through the Emergency Services Levy (ESL).

The amount invoiced to Bourke Shire Council in respect of its contribution for the ESL for 2020-2021 was an approximate increase of close to \$63,000.00 over the 2019-2020 contribution. \$58,605.00 of this increase is attributable to the increase in the contribution to the Rural Fire Service.

Whilst Council anticipated an increase in the contribution, the level of increase is far in excess of the anticipated increase.

The bulk of the increase is to fund assistance to those emergency services workers who contract cancer which is primarily attributed to their employment or service with the relevant emergency service.

The contribution to the Rural Fire Service for the Barwon Darling Zone which includes Bourke increased by 42.75%, which is far greater than the allowable rate increase of 2.6% identified by Government for 2020-2021.

When the 2.6% rate increase is applied to Councils General Rate, it means that for 2020-2021, total general income amounts to \$58,282, resulting in the total increase having to be directed to funding the increase in contribution to the Rural Fire Service,

Council supports the advocacy being undertaken by Local Government New South Wales in trying to have the State Government pick any shortfall in provision of benefits to those firefighters who have suffered from illness directly related to their service in the emergency services.

The NSW Government has previously picked up the increase in 2018-2019 and have again agreed to meet the increase in 2020-2021 which is very much appreciated. However, both LGNSW and Council would like to see this commitment continued into the future.

WAIVER OF FOOD PREMISES INSPECTION FEE

At its ordinary meeting of 25 May 2020, Bourke Shire Council resolved to waive the food premises inspection fee for Food Shops within Bourke Shire for the current financial year.

The decision of Council was in response to a report provided to the meeting by Councils Manager of Environmental Services, Mr Dwayne Willoughby, which recognised the impact of COVID-19, and the resultant restrictions, on those businesses operating as restaurants, coffee shops and similar establishments.

The report noted that as per the COVID-19 Public Health Order, such establishments were unable to serve dine in meals and relied on their takeaway trade.

Notwithstanding the Public Health Orders of the time, Council is still required to conduct inspections of retail food businesses to ensure compliance with the Food Act 2003 and Food Safety Standards.

Given these requirements, Council considered it was important that these businesses were supported through what has been a particularly tough time, and in this regard Council resolved to waive the food premises inspection fee for Food Shops within Bourke Shire for the current financial year.

Recent changes to the Local Government Act gave the authority to Council to waive the fees without undertaking public notice requirements where the proposed changes were in response to COVID-19.

NEW CEO FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEW SOUTH WALES (LGNSW)

LGNSW President Linda Scott has announced that Mr Scott Phillips will take up the full-time role of Chief Executive of Local Government NSW from 6 July 2020. Scott previously served as Chief Executive of Sutherland Shire Council from 2015-18, heading up 1800 employees and managing an annual operating budget of some \$250 million. Prior to his time at Sutherland Shire, Scott served as Chief Executive at Hornsby Shire Council, where he was appointed Chief Executive in 2011 after three years as Director of Planning.

As the peak Body for all NSW Councils, Scott's experience as a General Manager will prove beneficial to both the Organisation and members.

REVIEW OF NSW ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

The 93 electoral districts in New South Wales are being reviewed, and the boundaries redrawn if necessary, to ensure an equal numbers of voters in each district.

This process is called electoral redistribution and is required by legislation to take place after every second New South Wales State general election. The last New South Wales redistribution was finalised in 2013, with the resulting boundaries in place for the 2015 and 2019 State elections.

An electoral redistribution is a collaborative process involving input from the public, community groups, political participants and other stakeholders.

The Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel invites written suggestions and comments on suggestions relating to the distribution of New South Wales into electoral districts.

Key Dates are as follows:-

- Monday, 1 June 2020 – Suggestion period opens;
- Wednesday, 1 July 2020 – Suggestion period closes;
- Thursday, 2 July 2020 – Comments period opens;
- Wednesday, 15 July 2020 – Comments period closes.

Whilst understanding the need for the principal of one vote for one person to be maintained, I often feel for those elected members whose electorates take in the sparsely populated areas of Australia. These elected members, both at Federal and State Government level, have enormous areas to cover and perhaps consideration could be given to the geographic situation of each electorate.

Full details are available at: www.elections.nsw.gov.au/redistribution

COVID-19 UPDATE

Monday, 1 June 2020 saw the easing of certain restrictions previously imposed in respect of COVID-19.

These restrictions relate to such matters as:-

- Travel within NSW

There are now no limitations to travelling within NSW for the purposes of work, school, exercise or visiting family and friends. You may travel to regional NSW for a holiday with up to ten people being able to stay in a holiday home. More than ten people can stay in a holiday home if they are all members of the same household.

- Pubs and Clubs

Pubs, clubs and small bars may open with restrictions. Capacity must not exceed 50 customers or one customer per 4 square metres (excluding staff) per existing separate seated food or drink area, whichever is the lesser. Venues, such as clubs and licensed hotels, may have multiple existing seated areas. Bowlers on a green are not to be counted in the total number of persons on the premises. There can be no more than 10 Bowlers on a green at any one time.

- Cafes and Restaurants

Cafes and restaurants may open with restrictions. Capacity must not exceed 50 customers or one customer per 4 square metres in an existing seated dining area, whichever is the lesser. Bookings can only be to a maximum of 10 people. Anyone entering the premises must provide their name and contact details, including a telephone or email address. Operators must have a COVID-19 Safety Plan and keep a record of all people entering the premises.

- Worship

A maximum of 50 people (adults and children) can attend a religious gathering or attend a place of worship for private worship. The maximum applies to the whole of the venue, even where men and women worship in separate areas. Services can be streamed or recorded to enable people to engage in worship. People attending a place of public worship will be required to provide their name and contact details when they enter so that they can be used for contact tracing.

- Funerals

Up to 50 people may attend a funeral or memorial service. The limit to the number of people who may attend includes adults and children and excludes the people necessary to conduct the service such as the funeral director and their staff. People attending the service will be required to supply their name and contact details so that they can be used for contact tracing.

- Weddings

In addition to the couple, the people conducting or assisting in the conduct of the wedding, a photographer, videographer, and up to 20 guests (including adults and children) may attend a wedding. People attending will be required to provide their name and contact details so that they can be used for contact tracing.

Full details of all the current restrictions are available at www.nsw.gov.au/covid with residents urged to remain vigilant against the virus and continue to practice social distancing and good personal hygiene techniques.

Remember, in practicing social distancing, assume that you have the virus, or the person you are near has the virus.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

“Time is an equal opportunity employer. Each human being has exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Rich people can't buy more hours. Scientists can't invent new minutes. And you can't save time to spend it on another day. Even so, time is amazingly fair and forgiving. No matter how much time you've wasted in the past, you still have an entire tomorrow.”

Denis Waitley

Ross Earl
General Manager