



“From the GM’s Desk”

11th June 2020



PV JANDRA SET TO OPERATE AT THE END OF JUNE

Council has received numerous enquiries as to when the PV Jandra will once again be operational. In this regard it is advised that plans are in place that should see this popular attraction cruising at the end of June 2020.

The PV Jandra is subject to strict regulatory requirements including the need to have the boat inspected on a regular basis to ensure that it is compliant with all statutory requirements given that it can carry up to 100 people.

The inspection process has been undertaken and PV Jandra remains compliant and able to operate. It has been almost two (2) years since the Jandra last travelled along the Darling River and this has significantly impacted on Bourke’s ability to encourage tourists to stay additional time in the Shire. It was sad to see the Jandra sitting on a sea of mud as the river dried up but fortunately, we now have a good flow in the river and the boat is able to operate.

As with all tourism facilities and similar attractions, the use of the boat can only be undertaken in accordance with the Public Health Orders in respect of COVID-19, including the ability to be able to provide for social distancing and the one person per four (4) square metre rule.

Council recognises the value of the Jandra to the tourism product of Bourke and have been working to ensure its operation as soon as practical.

REPAIR WORK ON CROSSLEY ENGINE

The Crossley Engine, located in the Wal Mitchell Wharf Precinct at the northern end of Sturt Street, Bourke, is a great attraction for many visitors to Bourke, particularly those with an interest in old machinery. Unfortunately, the engine is currently out of operation due to a failed piston. As with machinery of this vintage, the repairs are often both time consuming and expensive with parts difficult to procure or, in many cases, having to be machined.

Maintenance and repair work on the Crossley have for a number of years been undertaken by Don Burns of Narromine who has a good knowledge of the engine which has proved invaluable. It is hoped that the Crossley will be up and running within the next few weeks.

BACK O’ BOURKE EXHIBITION CENTRE (BOBEC) OPEN

The BOBEC has reopened to the public following the recent relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions. Notwithstanding, there are still a number of protocols that need to be followed by both visitors and Council staff. As part of the reopening, Council was required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan for the facility which sets out operating guidelines.

There were good numbers of visitors to Bourke over the long weekend with numerous caravans travelling to Bourke to enjoy the attractions that the town has to offer. It is expected that visitor numbers to Bourke will continue to increase with access to a number of states still closed and, based on media reports, are likely to stay closed for at least another two (2) or three (3) months.

With overseas travel unlikely to recommence in the short term, those people keen to travel are looking at travel into those parts of Australia that do not have restrictions in relation to access imposed at the current time.

Bourke's iconic status and with its name firmly entrenched in Australian folklore, seems to be on many people's "bucket list" and hopefully this translates to an ongoing increase in tourist activity. Such increased activity will be warmly welcomed by those in the hospitality and accommodation industry who have seen a dramatic disruption and downturn to their businesses over the last three (3) months.

COUNCIL OFFICES AND LIBRARY RE-OPENED

Both the Council's Offices, Service NSW and the Bourke Public Library are open with both having a number of procedures in place designed to provide an increased level of safety for both staff and residents.

We live in a changed world and it is important that everyone makes the required adjustments and comply with the conditions and procedures put in place in a bid to halt the spread of COVID-19.

RATES PAYMENTS ABLE TO BE DEFERRED (COVID-19 RATES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY)

As part of the COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives, Council is offering rate relief for community members and businesses suffering financial hardship. Council adopted its Rates and Financial Assistance Policy at its May 2020 Ordinary Meeting of Council.

The Policy allows eligible Ratepayers to defer the next three (3) quarterly rate instalments and request a payment plan. In addition, Council has suspended interest charges to eligible ratepayers for the period approved in the application to ease the burden on businesses and community members. Council is keen to ensure that residents are aware that Council is there to support them through these difficult circumstances. Application forms are available on the Council webpage: www.bourke.nsw.gov.au or contact the office on 02 68308000 and speak to Councils Revenue Officer.

COOPERATION OF ALL RESIDENTS SOUGHT IN COMPLYING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS

There is no coincidence in my opinion that the spread of COVID-19 within Australia has been less than initially anticipated due to the strict rules introduced in relation to movements and gatherings very early by the Commonwealth and State Governments. Equally as important is the overwhelming number of people who complied with the requirements.

Across the nation there have been many sacrifices made. The economic impact on our nation and the world more generally will undoubtedly be felt for some time to come. It is easy to become complacent as the restrictions are gradually lifted, however, we all must continue to be vigilant if we are to see the terrible virus brought under control and life as we know it return to what we had long regarded as normal.

There is a cautious optimism in relation to the re-opening of facilities and these re-openings are subject to controls and conditions and the development and implementation of safety plans.

BYROCK ROCK HOLES RESERVE LAND MANAGER

The Minister for Water, Property and Housing is seeking nominations for board appointments to the Byrock Rock Holes Reserve Land Manager. Appointments are for up to 5 years and are voluntary. It is expected that members of the board live within or in close proximity to the reserve.

A copy of the advertisement was placed in the Western Herald newspaper last week.

The closing date for applications is Friday 3rd July 2020 and can be lodged via the following link:

<https://portal.crownland.nsw.gov.au>

The Byrock Rock Holes are a very important piece of the history of Bourke Shire and a lot of work has been undertaken by National Parks and Wildlife in developing the site, including the erection of signage to explain the history of this very cultural significant area.

ROADS UPDATE

Hungerford Road (Main Road 404), also known as the Dowling Track, has been the subject of an injection of funds that has resulted in a sealing project between Bourke and Fords Bridge being recently completed. A total of 8.2km of road has been reconstructed and sealed with all the construction work being undertaken by Council staff and local contractors.

Repairs to the West Culgoa Road have recently been completed, with the repairs required as a result of damage caused by the rain events in March of this year. The works undertaken included the installation of several new culverts and the importation of new gravel for several areas severely damaged by the rain event. Whilst the rain was extremely welcome, Councils such as Bourke Shire that are responsible for extensive unsealed road networks are ultimately faced with significant repair bills following rain events.

Work has also been undertaken on improving access on the sandy section of Bundy Road which has caused a large degree of trouble for many travellers.

Preparations are currently underway in relation to works under the State Highway Heavy Patching Program with several areas on the Bourke to Brewarrina Road and the Bourke to Cobar Road having been identified for repair under the Program.

MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT

The work on the redevelopment of the main street and adjacent CBD continues. The addition of the polished rocks and flowers certainly gives the area a lift and is drawing a considerable amount of positive comment from locals and visitors alike.

The long running drought certainly slowed the ability to complete the finishing touches on the area and the addition of the trees and flowers brings the whole area to life which was the intention of the project.

There is still further work to complete with the works soon to extend into Mitchell Street and Central Park. It is anticipated that work will continue for up to another twelve months which not only provides for the beautification of our town but also creates employment opportunities.

SHOWGROUND GRANTS

Round two (2) of the Showground Grants developed by the State Government as part of the COVID-19 Stimulus Package close this week and Council intends to submit additional applications for projects that will potentially result in the further development of the Renshaw Oval Recreational Reserve. The Reserve plays a very important role in the social fabric of Bourke. Already home to the Annual Show, Back O' Bourke Picnic Races, Bourke Gun Club and Bourke Pony Club, improved facilities at Renshaw Oval would see a number of other activities being staged at the location that make use of both the built structures and also the wide expanse of space within the race track itself.

Functions such as Senior Citizens Week Activities have been held at the Oval, and with the improvements to the kitchen, roofing and with the planned upgrading of toilet facilities, the complex is much more user friendly. The facility has also benefitted from the acquisition of furniture previously utilised at the Back O' Bourke Convention Centre.

Modern sporting precincts are multi-purpose and Renshaw Oval is a good example of this and the establishment of a Renshaw Oval Users Groups Advisory Committee means that improvements made to the facility can be in accordance with the priorities set by that Committee.

TOUR de OROC

Chair of the Tour de OROC Committee, Mathew Dickerson, will present the proceeds of the fund-raising efforts resulting from the 2019 Tour de OROC to the Macquarie Homestay Committee at a function to be held at Dubbo Toyota on Monday 15th June 2020.

The 2019 event was the fourth time the Tour de OROC had been staged with some \$500,000.00 being raised in total during that period.

Locally, Bourke Rotary Club and Bourke Shire Council have assisted in the coordination of the event as it has passed through Bourke and each time have been able to contribute a substantial amount of money to assist in the fund-raising efforts.

I am aware of various people from Bourke having utilised Macquarie Homestay at various times and all have been glowing in their reports. I am in fact one of those who has utilised the facility and I can add my personal endorsement of the amenities and facilities provided.

The event has a regional focus which is fitting as those utilising the facility come from areas west of Dubbo and other towns for which Dubbo serves as their regional centre for specialist health services.

CANCELLATION OF DESALINATION PLANT TRIAL

The 30-day trial of the desalination plant has been suspended with Council reverting back to river water for its filtered water supply.

The emergency bore system is still able to be utilised should it be required, however, at this stage is not subject to the desalination process.

WATER RESTRICTIONS POTENTIALLY LOOMING

The current river level is 4.05 metres with water ceasing to flow over the weir at around 3.98 metres. Once the water stops flowing over the weir, Level One (1) Water Restriction will be introduced.

The river has dropped from 4.13 metres on Monday, 1st June 2020 which equates to a drop of around one (1) centimetre per day.

While there are a number of factors which can influence the river level it is anticipated that restrictions could be considered later this week.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

The next Council meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on 22nd June 2020 and is again likely to be held at the Back O' Bourke Convention Centre depending on what changes are made to the COVID-19 Public Health Orders over the next two (2) weeks.

The meeting will commence at 9.15am and will again be live streamed with the link for the livestream being advised on Councils Website at around 9.00am on the meeting day.

There is no public forum planned to be held at this stage, however, if any resident would like to raise any issue in relation to the items on the agenda they are invited to do so by forwarding the matter they wish

to raise to Council via email: bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au or via telephone 68308000 ensuring that these are done by 8.30am on meeting day.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Running away from a problem only increases the distance from the solution.” – Anonymous

Ross Earl
General Manager