



“From the GM’s Desk”

25th June 2020



ROADS

Council’s road crews have been undertaking heavy patching works on the Kidman Way during the past two (2) weeks and will shortly move onto patching works on the Kamilaroi Highway to Brewarrina. This will see the completion of the heavy patching program within the next two (2) weeks.

Crews are also finalising work on Rural Local Road 4 (RLR4), Bundy Road, with work almost completed on the gravelling of the sand hill areas of this road which has restricted heavy vehicles being able to utilise this important transport link. This project is funded by the Roads to Recovery Program provided by the Federal Government.

Mitchell Highway 7, is currently undergoing extensive pavement crack sealing under the Roads Maintenance Council Contract with RMS. The patching team has completed the full 97km between Enngonia and Bourke and is now moving to work on the Mitchell Highway South between Bourke and Byrock.

REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGERS GROUP

Last Friday I joined my fellow General Managers from the Orana Region in a Video Meeting.

The General Managers have re-established a forum which had previously gone into recess with the establishment by the NSW Government of Joint Organisation of Councils. The re-establishment was led by Derek Francis, General Manager at Bogan Shire. The Group is a great way to share ideas and experiences on a regional basis plus share information and potential solution to issues as they arise. We are very fortunate that the group works well together and all members understand the benefits of working together where appropriate.

Speakers included Michael McMahon, the CEO of Dubbo Regional Council, who is part of a working party in respect of progressing a new Local Government Employment Award which will come into being on the 1st July and Peter Evans the Engagement Manager for the Office of Local Government for a large part of the State including the Orana Region, who updated the General Managers on a wide range of issues including the advice and support provided by the Office of Local Government in relation to COVID-19 and the role of Councils and the impact on the Local Government Sector. The Group also heard from David Swan from DPIE – Water who provided an update in relation to water initiatives across the State including future availability of funding from the State Governments Safe and Secure Water Funding programme.

WATER RESTRICTIONS

My prediction that we would be facing water restrictions last week maybe a little premature, however, with the river dropping steadily, the introduction of restrictions will become a reality unless we get some local falls that translate into a runoff into the river.

As of Sunday 21st June 2020 the Darling River at Bourke was still at 4.01 metres having held that level for a few days.

The cooler weather has reduced evaporation levels and the scattered falls have been able to assist in the maintaining of the river height.

BRIEFING ON THE PROPOSED RECLASSIFICATION OF ROADS

Bourke Shire Council will join with its fellow members of the Far North West Joint Organisation and Brewarrina Shire Council in attending a video based seminar of the "Proposed Reclassification of Roads".

The state Government announced last year that it would take back up to 15,000 kilometres of Council-owned rural and regional roads which are currently controlled by Local Government and funded in part by the State Government via the provision of Block Grants.

The transfer is proposed to take place over a period of up to ten (10) years.

Currently, Councils have responsibility for almost 90 percent of the State Roads which equates to around 164,000 kilometres and they rely heavily on the provision of funding from both the State and Federal Government to be able to undertake that task.

The proposed transfer of the roads will be overseen by an independent panel which released a policy paper and consultation strategy on Monday 22nd June 2020.

Road Maintenance is an important part of each Council's budget and the ability to undertake works on behalf of the State Government not only means the ability to be able to keep machinery both modern and fully utilised, but also puts vital dollars into the economies of rural communities.

The State Government apparently understands Councils' funding concerns and has specifically requested the Panel consider funding implications of any transfers, including working to ensure local road maintenance jobs are maintained. This position is supported by Local Government New South Wales who have for a long time been strong advocates for increased levels of road funding.

Bourke Shire Council has 516 kilometres of regional roads and will be looking with interest at the proposal to ensure that Council is in no way disadvantaged.

It is my understanding that the Minister for Roads, the Hon Paul Toole MP, is keen for Councils to still be able to undertake the work on regional roads if the transfer proceeds which will certainly assist in ensuring that they are able to maintain jobs locally.

The independent Panel is being chaired by Wendy Machin. Wendy Machin is a highly respected member of the roads industry and former Member of NSW Parliament. She brings a deep experience of road stakeholders as former President of the NRMA.

Wendy is joined on the panel by Peter Duncan AM who has extensive experience across State and Local Government with multiple senior executive positions in infrastructure, transport and administration, including as former CEO of Roads and Maritime Services upon its inception in 2011. Also on the Panel is Michael Kilgariff who is the head of Roads Australia, the peak body for roads and integrated transport systems, with Michael bringing industry to the table on the Road Classification Review.

The panel will be talking to as many stakeholders as possible.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING (LEMC)

The Bourke Shire LEMC met last Thursday to provide members with an update as to what is happening in relation to COVID-19 and to ensure that the Local Management Plans are updated as required.

There is an obvious concern for the potential outbreaks with the increased easing of restrictions and travel and the need to not become complacent was stressed and to encourage everyone in the community to be mindful of the dangers presented by the virus.

MOBILE COVID-19 TESTING FACILITY

A mobile testing facility will be in Bourke on 1st July 2020 to enable people to get tested for COVID-19. The facility is being provided by Western New South Wales Local Area Health Service in association with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and will be located adjacent to Darling Park opposite the Bourke Men's Shed.

The testing will be available from 10.00am to 2.00pm and will take the form of a drive through with the entrance and exits marked by "witches' hats" and flags intensifying the entrance and exit.

People will not be required to leave their vehicle and will be firstly directed to the registration desk and from there proceed to where the swab will be undertaken. If you are on foot you can simply call at the registration desk.

You don't need to be showing symptoms to be tested, but if you do have symptoms you may be asked to self-isolate whilst the tests results are returned.

Whilst this testing facility will be available on 1st July anyone with concerns in relation to the virus can contact their doctor or the Bourke Hospital and tests can be arranged with the results coming back relatively quickly.

REPLACEMENT OF TREES

Staff have started the task of replacing the large number of trees both within the town parks and along the footpaths which fell victim to the prolonged drought conditions. If you have a new tree on the footpath adjacent to your property and would like to assist by watering it, please feel free to do so.

PV JANDRA

Council has secured the services of a qualified Captain to take control of the Jandra when it is ready to recommence cruising next week.

The Jandra is an extremely important part of the Bourke tourism attractions and due to the drought followed by COVID-19 it has not been in operation for just under two (2) years.

A number of the businesses involved in the tourism industry have been very keen to see the Jandra operating recognising that the Jandra is a major drawcard for the tourism industry with many people happy to stay an extra day to take a cruise along the mighty Darling River.

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS WITHIN BOURKE

Bourke residents can be great ambassadors for the tourism function within town by encouraging visitors to visit the many attractions that the town has to offer. This is particularly the case when asked what is there to see and do in Bourke, which is a question often posed to locals. To assist people in their response I consider that the following list, whilst not exhaustive, provides a good start:-

- The Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre
- The Crossley Engine
- The Jandra
- The Darling River and its history
- Dunlop Station at Louth
- Byrock Rock Holes
- Mount Oxley
- The numerous old buildings in Bourke
- Back of Bourke Art Gallery at North Bourke
- A new Air Tour
- Mount Gundabooka National Park

- The Historic North Bourke Bridge
- Poet's Corner
- Ledknapper National Park
- The River Walks
- Great Parks
- Excellent food outlets catering for a number of cuisines
- Children's Playgrounds in all towns and villages
- The historic Cemeteries
- Tooralé National Park
- The village pubs

Whilst not all the attractions are for everyone, the aim is to cater and provide for a broad cross section of the travelling public and I think this is being achieved to a large extent.

The Bourke area has some great accommodation including motels, hotels, bed and breakfasts and caravan parks and for those who like more of the bush camping experience, Rose Isle and Trilby Station offer that alternative together with cottage accommodation.

Council's Tourist Officers at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre are all aware of the attractions and facilities on offer and are able to provide information on these attractions and basic information required by tourists such as availability of dump points for caravans and road conditions within the area.

There are a number of other attractions that we hope will recommence shortly including Poetry on a Plate and a New Outback Show.

Bourke Shire Council is keen to ensure that Bourke and the surrounding district enhances its reputation as a tourist destination.

BOURKE SIGNAGE PROJECT

One of the keys to developing a great tourism product is the development and implementation of a signage strategy and also to be able to provide information in relation to a number of the attractions. As we move into the digital age we need to embrace the opportunities that technology presents including things like QR codes.

Council is about to embark on a major project in relation to signage within the shire which is a strategy developed following community consultation across the shire aimed at provide consistent and attractive signage.

Walking tours using QR Codes are planned. Utilising the services of Andrew Hull and Paul Roe, work is continuing on developing information on the old cemetery which can be downloaded by visitors by using QR Codes.

The signage will be such that signs for historic sites will be colour coded in one colour and parks and recreations in another colour. This is all part of the branding and signage project staff are currently working on.

BOURKE TOWN WATER SECURITY

The funding provided by the State Government to drought proof Bourke has been very much appreciated by Council and we now have three (3) bores that can provide enough water to meet the needs of Bourke in times when water is not available from the river.

There has been a lot of work done in relation to the project over the past few years and it certainly has provided a much needed certainty of supply for Bourke residents.

Bourke Shire Council was identified last year as the town most at risk of running out of water but that has now changed thanks to the work that has been undertaken. In this regard I again thank the State Government for the provision of funding to undertake these most important works.

NO INCREASE IN FEES FOR COUNCILLORS

The Local Government Remuneration Tribunal have handed down their determination in respect of the 2020/2021 financial year and have determined that there will be no increase in Councillors Fees for 2020/2021.

ANNUAL PERMITS – COMPANION ANIMALS

From 1 July 2020, the NSW Government will introduce annual permits for owners of non-desexed cats, restricted dog breeds and dogs declared to be dangerous.

This means that owners of cats not desexed by four (4) months of age will be required to pay an \$80 annual permit in addition to their one-off lifetime pet registration fee.

Owners of dogs of a restricted breed, or declared to be dangerous, will be required to pay a \$195 annual permit in addition to their one-off lifetime pet registration fee. This applies to dogs that are already registered.

Pet owners will be able to pay for annual permits using the online NSW Pet Registry or through their local Council. Annual permits are NOT available from Service NSW.

Exemptions will be in place for cats that are registered by 1 July 2020, cats kept for breeding purposes by members of recognised breeding bodies and cats which cannot be desexed for medical reasons.

Quote of the week!

"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

Albert Schweitzer

Ross Earl
General Manager