



“From the GM’s Desk”

2nd JULY 2020



LIBRARY NEWS

The Bourke Public Library has a brand new app, RB Digital available now! It can be downloaded in the App Store and Google Play. Through the app, you can manage your account, renew your loans, reserve items, search our online databases and borrow eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines, and much more. We would love to hear your feedback on the app.

Effective 1 July 2020, the Library will be extending its opening hours from 11:00am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, to allow more people to access services. The time that customers will be able to stay in the library will also be extended.

The Library would like to thank all its customers for their patience and willingness to follow COVID-19 Guidelines. It has made the libraries transition back to physical services very smooth.

The Library has many new books available for loan. We also still have our online services available. Don't forget to check out our great range of eMagazines through RB Digital. Download the app and register with your library card number to access great titles for everyone, from Australian Women's Weekly to PC PowerPlay and everything in between.

STREET LIGHTING PROJECT

The project to change the street lights within the Shire to LED is progressing well, with all lights expected to be changed by the end of July.

The lights were installed by locally based Essential Energy Staff and have been installed in not only Bourke, but also in all villages across the shire.

Residents will have noticed an appreciable difference in the quality of street lighting and the increased level of visibility and security that has resulted.

NEXT MEETING OF THE FAR NORTH WEST JOINT ORGANISATION

The next meeting of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils (FNWJO) is scheduled to be held on 29th July in Bourke.

This meeting will be the first face-to-face meeting conducted by the FNWJO for some time. It is important that delegates have the opportunity to have that face-to-face interaction to assist in building upon the already strong relationships that exists amongst member Councils.

VISIT BY CLAYTON BARR MP

Council hosted Clayton Barr MP, Shadow Minister for Water, Shadow Minister for Innovation, Science and Tertiary Education, and Shadow Minister for the Hunter on Tuesday. Clayton was in the region undertaking a further familiarisation tour of our part of the state to ensure that he is aware of the various issues facing the region along with discussing possible solutions to such issues.

As with his previous visit, Clayton expressed a strong desire to be able to listen to all points of view and to then be able to formulate his own view.

MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT

Council has received numerous positive comments in relation to the redevelopment of Oxley Street, between Richard and Sturt Streets and Sturt Street between Oxley and Mitchell Streets with work continuing on the project.

The project was initially undertaken with funding from the Murray Darling Diversification Fund and the works that will now be undertaken in the wharf area and up to Central Park along Mitchell Street will be undertaken utilising funding which was announced by the Premier during the visit to Bourke by the NSW State Cabinet in November 2019.

The difference to the streetscape is quite remarkable and the polished rocks, garden beds and shade structures all combining to enhance the improved appearance.

Council has primarily utilised local labour to undertake the work including a team from REDI. The team has done a very good job and are looking forward to embarking on the next stage.

I would like to thank the shop owners adjacent to the worksite for their cooperation whilst these works have been carried out. I acknowledge the inconvenience that they experienced during the construction phase. I am sure that the finished product certainly outweighs any such inconvenience that may have been caused but none the less, the cooperation received was excellent and very much appreciated.

COUNCIL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES OPERATIONAL

The regular Bourke tourism season got off to a slow start primarily due to restrictions placed on travelling because of the emergence of COVID-19. Not only were there restrictions on travel but there were also restrictions on the number of people who could come together with the need to comply with social distancing requirements and the space ratio of one person per four (4) square metres.

At this point in time, the restrictions are such that all the attractions in the area are operational, albeit with some restrictions.

The long awaited return to the river of the PV Jandra became a reality on Monday with new Captain Alan Basrtsch at the wheel.

Work on a mechanical issue with the Crossley Engine has been completed with the Back O' Bourke Centre also open. Work on the upgrades at the Centre will continue and are expected to be completed towards the end of this month.

As I mentioned in last week's column, there are a huge range of attractions available within the district and I encourage those who have not taken the opportunity to do so, to check out what is available in their own back yard.

BOURKE ABORIGINAL ART GALLERY

Work is continuing of the refurbishment of the building that will house the Bourke Aboriginal Art Gallery and Artist space although having unfortunately slowed during the period of the COVID-19 restrictions, in relation to travel, were in place.

The project team which has representatives from Muda Corporation, Bourke Arts Community, Bourke Shire Council and the local artists, are hopeful that the building will be ready for use by the end of August but this will be dependent on the availability of tradespersons who have had to rearrange schedules and cannot leave work already started.

The project not only provides a Gallery for the display and sale of paintings but will also enable visitors to be able to watch the artists' work. One of the important parts of the project is to provide the ability for older artists to be able to mentor some of the younger artists who display both an interest and ability.

YOUTH OFF THE STREETS

After around six (6) years in Bourke, Youth Off The Streets (YOTS) have withdrawn and will no longer be providing services in Bourke.

Their departure will leave a considerable void in Bourke. The services and activities that YOTS provided included activities for youth in the evening and night periods and included a bus to pick kids up and take them home.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by YOTS whilst they provided services to Bourke.

Whilst the withdrawal of YOTS has left a void in some services in town, it is advised that Maranguka Community Hub are looking at ways of filling such void and have engaged some of the staff previously with YOTS.

One of the projects to be undertaken by the Community Hub is the conduct of a night patrol during the evenings, Monday to Friday, and if anyone is keen to assist on a voluntary basis in the provision of this service they can contact Maranguka on 58347900.

COUNCIL GRANTS WORKSHOP

Council has received almost \$1.2 million dollars from the Federal Government as part of their COVID-19 Stimulus Package.

It is intended to convene a workshop of Councillors and staff so that the priorities of Council can be determined for the allocation of this funding. The Workshop is planned for Monday, 6th July 2020.

Whilst the guidelines are yet to be released, it is understood that they will be reasonably flexible and as such, Council will review its list of strategic objectives as detailed in Community Strategic Plan and the Operational Plan and Delivery Program.

Council has achieved significant success in attracting grant funding lately and this has been in part to Council having identified shovel ready projects and projects that align with established priorities.

Each year Councillors and staff visit each of the communities within the Shire to ensure that the available funding also aligns with community wishes. To date the available funding has been able to be spread equitably across the Shire.

NORTH BOURKE BRIDGE

Arguably the most photographed feature in Bourke is the iconic North Bourke Bridge. Council has long held the view that this structure and approaches should be restored to its former glory recognising its importance to the development of this area and the fact that it is one of the few remaining examples of this type of structure remaining along the river.

Council has lodged numerous applications for funding and has also established a cash reserve that can be used as a co-contribution in relation to any application lodged. That reserve currently stands at \$700,000 which should be a clear demonstration of Council's commitment to the project

Preliminary costings on various options have been prepared and these vary depending on the works to be undertaken.

One of the options would be to restore the bridge and approaches so that it would be available as a single lane structure to link Bourke and North Bourke.

This would improve safety for both pedestrians and cyclists.

NEW AWARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEEES

A new award will come into force from the first pay period after the 1st July will all Council employee set to receive increases over the next three years (3). The increases will be 1.5% in 2020/2021 with 2% in each of the two following years.

COVID-19

The current situation in Victoria, which has seen a spike in coronavirus cases, highlights the needs for ongoing vigilance if we are to see the spread of the disease brought under control. I urge all residents to practice the recommended hygiene measures such as the regular washing of hands and to exercise appropriate social distancing.

Council will continue to put into place measures to try to eliminate the spread of the virus and as such, there may be minor inconvenience to persons using our facilities. All the control measures have been put in place for the benefit and protection of the wider community. It will take the cooperation and assistance of all the community if the spread of the virus is to be brought under control.

As the eastern states of Australia head into the July School Holiday season and coupled with higher tourism numbers, I again call on members of the community and business owners to remain vigilant against the virus and continue to practice and oversight social distancing and good hygiene techniques.

I was pleased to see that the Western NSW Local Health District offered residents of the Bourke district free "drive-through" testing for COVID-19 yesterday. The mobile service operated at Darling Park, on the corner of Mitchell and Sturt streets, on Wednesday for the benefit of residents in the region.

Whilst there are currently no known cases of COVID-19 in the Far West, including the Bourke district, it is important to keep testing people, even if they only have mild symptoms, to stay on top of COVID-19 as the general restrictions around movement start to be relaxed.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (LEMC)

The Committee continues to meet on a fortnightly basis to ensure that all agencies are aware of the current situation and any changes to the public Health Order in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee met on Tuesday, 30th June 2020 and the next meeting is scheduled for 10.00 am on Tuesday 14th July 2020.

The meetings have of late all been held via teleconference to negate the need for any increase in face-to-face meetings.

HEIGHT OF THE RIVER

The Darling River continues to flow over the weir at the moment and on Monday, 29 June was still at 3.99 metres. There seems to have been a slight increase in flow in some sections upstream and as such, it may result in the river flowing over the weir a little longer than initially anticipated.

VANDALISM

The town has experienced a small spike in vandalism over the past couple of weeks and I would ask people to report any such behaviour to the Police.

Council works hard to attract additional funding to be able to undertake work within our community and it is a pity that some people feel the need to destroy things and in doing so incurring additional costs and inconvenience to Council and the community.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Among the new staff joining the team at Bourke Shire Council are Col Kiley who has taken the role of Workshop Supervisor and Jack Mathews who will now be a permanent Plant Mechanic. Jack, along with Brodie Parry, recently finished his apprenticeship with Council.

Brodie has obtained employment in town, which is good for both him and the community, and Jack was successful in obtaining a full time role with Council.

Both men started as school based trainees and then finished their apprenticeships. It is now likely that Council will look to call applications for another apprentice later in the year to be able to assist in ensuring that the town has an ongoing supply of tradespersons.

DEPOT CLEAN UP

As with most large organisations over the years Council has had a build-up of material at the depot much of which is kept “just in case we need it or “we may need it for spares” which in many cases doesn’t occur. Some of the material, which has no value, will be disposed of but other material, which does have a value, will be put up for public auction in coming months to realise some return.

OUTCOME OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

Council still has a number of grant applications pending and is looking forward to positive outcomes when the result of these applications are known. The process of the lodgement of applications is a year round exercise with some of the grants being for significant amounts and others for smaller projects.

Included in the applications to be announced, include the second round of funding under the State Governments COVID-19 Stimulus Package in relation to Showground Improvements.

Quote of the week!

“Don’t dwell on what went wrong. Instead, focus on what to do next. Spend your energies on moving forward toward finding the answer”.

Denis Waitley

Ross Earl
General Manager