



“From the GM’s Desk”

13th August 2020



WELCOME TO BOURKE SWAGMAN SIGN

I have received some enquiries as to what has happened to the John Murray painted “Swagman Mural” that was located in Anson Street next to the Water Tower and Percy Hobson Park.

The mural has been removed in preparation for the painting of the “Percy Hobson Mural” on the water tower. In addition to funding secured from individual donors, Council has also secured grant funding, which when combined, will enable the Percy Hobson Mural project to proceed.

Percy Hobson was a Bourke resident who, at the age of 20 years, won a Gold Medal at the 1962 Commonwealth Games in Perth in the athletics event of high jump. In doing so, Mr Hobson became the first indigenous Australian to win a gold medal and in jumping 6 feet 11 inches (2.11 metres), he also set a new Commonwealth record.

The new mural will be a fitting tribute to Percy Hobson who these days lives in Melbourne but still has sisters and other family in Bourke.

Council is considering options for potential alternative locations of the Swagman Mural but as yet has not made any final determination. Council would be happy to receive suggestions as to possible locations bearing in mind that the erection of such structures are subject to a stringent approval process when located on or adjacent to state highways.

It is likely that the mural will, as a minimum, need a “touch up” having been in situ at the Anson Street location for well over a decade and being subjected to the harsh elements during that time.

MEETING WITH NSW GOVERNOR

Bourke Shire Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Lachlan Ford and myself met with Her Excellency, Margaret Beasley, Governor of New South Wales via a Microsoft Teams teleconference platform last Friday.

The Governor also met with other members of the community earlier in the day including students of Bourke High School via the video conferencing platform. This platform is an alternate means of engaging with the community given the difficulties in coordinating face to face meetings associated with travel and other restrictions which have been introduced to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The Governor had planned to be in Bourke in person, however, the social distancing protocols that are currently part of our everyday life necessitated that the trip be postponed and substituted with the virtual meeting.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and myself all enjoyed the opportunity to speak with the Governor. Her Excellency was genuinely interested to hear how Bourke had been impacted by the natural disasters that had been experienced across the state over the past twelve months and how the community was dealing with the effects of COVID-19.

The Governor has a strong interest in education and social issues and was also keen to learn about the initiatives which are in place in Bourke to improve outcomes in this regard.

An invitation was extended to the Governor to visit Bourke when the opportunity next arises and she seem very receptive to undertaking a visit to our iconic town.

BOURKE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PROSPERITY STRATEGY (BEAPS)

Council has been hosting the BEAPS program for the past two (2) years and currently has funding to take the program through to the end of 2020. BEAPS is an initiative of Maranguka and Bourke Shire. The BEAPS program has achieved a number of its targeted objectives. However the overarching economic climate that resulted from the drought, and then quickly followed by COVID-19, has made the principal objective of creating employment difficult to achieve.

The temporary closure of the abattoir also means that a number of employment opportunities have been lost in the short term.

The Senior Project Officer with BEAPS, Mick McDowell, has made substantial progress in the role and developed good working relationships with employers, schools, training organisations and job seekers which is a vital part of the role. Unfortunately, much of the good work has been in a holding pattern pending the uncertainty, as created by COVID-19, is resolved. Council is working to secure additional funding for the project. Council strongly believes that once the setbacks are behind the community, opportunities to grow employment will be considerably enhanced.

DESTINATION COUNTRY AND OUTBACK NEW SOUTH WALES

The General Manager of Destination Country and Outback New South Wales, Lucy White, and Business Development Manager, Fleur Pors, were in Bourke last week to undertake Cultural Competency Training.

Lucy and Fleur took the opportunity to meet with Council's Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, Manager of Tourism and Events, Fran Carter and Tourism Team Leader, Ben Nott, to discuss tourism in Bourke and what Council has planned for the future. Both were given a tour of the town's attractions and an overview of the Bourke tourism product more generally.

COVID-19 has presented significant challenges for all those within the tourism industry with state Borders being closed and overseas holiday destinations not available and overseas visitation to Australia grinding to an abrupt halt.

Once the impact of COVID-19 abates and travel within Australia becomes much easier there is the potential for the number of visitors to rural and remote areas to increase as people wishing to travel elect to see what is on offer on their own back door and not travel overseas. It will be important that Bourke's tourist attractions and product are ready to meet this potential spike in domestic visitation.

REMINDERS TO PET OWNERS

It is timely to remind pet owners about their responsibilities under the Companion Animals Act and Regulations. If you intend to own a dog, cat or any other type of animal that is designated as a companion animal by Council, you must ensure the animal is identified and registered. Please be aware that all dogs are treated as companion animals, including working dogs on rural properties.

MICROCHIPPING

In NSW, all cats and dogs, other than exempt cats and dogs, must be microchipped by 12 weeks of age or before being sold or given away, whichever happens first.

REGISTRATION

All cats and dogs, other than exempt cats and dogs, must be registered by six (6) months of age. The registration fee is a once-only payment, which covers the cat or dog for its lifetime in NSW, regardless of any changes in ownership.

Residents are encouraged to have their cat or dog desexed before registering it. By having your cat or dog desexed prior to registration, it helps to reduce straying, fighting and aggression and antisocial behaviour, such as spraying to mark territory. It also helps to reduce the number of unwanted pets born each year.

Discounted registration fees apply to desexed dogs.

Annual permits are now required for owners of non-desexed cats, restricted dog breeds, and dogs declared to be dangerous.

Registration fees are used by Councils for providing animal management related services to the community. These may include ranger services, pound facilities, educational and other companion animal-related activities.

If you require any further information on your requirements under this legislation, please contact Council on 68308000.

FLOW IN THE RIVER

The river continues to have a good flow which has seen the height maintained at around 4.10 metres at Bourke Weir and water reaching a flow of over 400 megalitres per day.

The flow in the river reached Louth in the middle of last week and had also gone past Tilpa on its way south to Wilcannia.

The flow at Louth went from 3 megalitres per day on the 4th August 2020 to almost 400 megalitres a day on the 8th August 2020.

There is still a good flow coming down the river which is excellent given the fact we are only a few months away from the summer heat.

In terms of river flow and water availability, 2020 is proving to be a much better year than 2019. As at this time last year, the weir level was at 3.00 metres and it had been 355 days since the Darling River had flowed over the weir.

LIBRARY NEWS

The library is currently gathering information on Bourke servicemen and women who served in the Second World War.

Saturday, 15 August 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific and the end of the Second World War.

To commemorate this historic occasion, the library is putting together a slideshow which features those local men and women who fought for our country, both overseas and on the home front. If anyone has any photos they would be willing to share, it is requested that they please contact the library.

Residents are reminded to check out the fantastic online resources available on the libraries website www.bourkelibrary.com.au, including Ancestry, Britannica Library and World Book Online. All you need is a library card. You can also download the Bourke Public Library app, available on the App Store and Google Play. If you would like any more information contact the library on 0268722751 or bpl@bourkelibrary.com.au, and one of the friendly staff will be happy to help you.

ROADS UPDATE

Council graders are working on the Bourke to Louth Road having started from the Louth end of the road last week. The major grading of the Louth Road has traditionally taken place at this time of the year to coincide with the Annual Louth Races. Unfortunately this years races which had been planned for last weekend, were cancelled due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

Grading from Enngonia to the Brewarrina Shire boundary was finalised last week with work now commencing from this point towards Lednapper.

Work on the Wanaaring Road upgrade continues. It certainly has to be a welcome sight for those in the west of the Shire who have seen dramatic improvements in the road condition resulting in significantly less travel time and a smoother ride generally. In addition, the road improvement should result in an increased level of tourist traffic plus much better access for stock transport and other transport involved in the agricultural sector.

COUNCIL STAFF FUND RAISING

Council staff are generally very generous with fund raising when it comes to supporting local charities and other causes. To maximise the fund raising capacity you generally need someone who is keen to champion a cause and promote the fund raiser. A good example lately was Team Leader of Council's Administration Staff, Kellie Honeyman. Kellie took control of the sale of cupcakes within the office and managed at one stage to sell one dozen cupcakes to some willing buyers for \$70.00 which certainly helps build the amount raised.

In all almost \$250.00 in total was raised from the sales.

The overall generosity of Bourke people for fundraising events, particularly if they relate to local people, is nothing short of exceptional and typifies the strong level of community spirit that exists within the Shire.

NEXT MEETING OF COUNCIL

The next monthly meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday 24th August 2020 and any matters that need to be lodged with Council for consideration at that meeting should be received no later than 14th August 2020.

At this stage the meeting will again be conducted on a face to face basis with the public only being able to participate by following the meeting via a webcast. Councillors have the option not to attend in person but to participate remotely via an Audio-Visual link.

The restrictions on space and the need for social distancing has meant that some staff are also unable to attend in person however, by also utilising the Audio – Visual platform, such staff are both able to follow the meeting and comment on any reports they may have submitted, as required.

In a General Manager's on- line forum conducted last week, it was evident that very few Councils, if any, are able to have the same number of members of the public present in their Council Chamber that they did pre COVID-19 due to space limitations. Councils have made various arrangements to cater for the inability to attend meetings with the webcast of meetings being by far the most popular method.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The LEMC met last week and as usual the meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Local Rescue Committee which comprises the Police, State Emergency Services, Rural Fire Service, New South Wales Fire and Rescue and Ambulance. All agencies are normally represented with the gathering restrictions in place as a result of the COVID - 19 Pandemic only marginally impacting attendances at the meetings. These meetings are important and ensure that all agencies are prepared and equipped to handle emergency situations, when, and if, they arise.

Membership of the LEMC comprises those involved in the Local Rescue Committee but also includes a number of other agencies including Bourke Shire Council, Local Land Services, National Parks and Wildlife, Department of Communities and Justice and Essential Energy.

As I have said a number of times previously, the various emergency service organisations in Bourke work collaboratively and the community can be assured of a high level of preparedness.

The meeting marked my last as Chair of the regular meetings of the LEMC, although I will still continue to be involved in the fortnightly meetings to deal with matters impacting on our community as a result of COVID-19 up until my last day with Council.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW BRANDING AND SIGNAGE PROJECT FOR BOURKE

If you have the opportunity to go past the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre, you will notice new signage incorporating the letter "B" which is part of the new branding and signage for Bourke. This branding is also featured on a series of promotional flags along the front of the Centre.

These signs and flags are the commencement of an extensive transformation of the signage and branding of our town and its tourism product. The project will take a few months to implement but when completed will make the identification of various facilities and landmarks within Bourke Shire much clearer.

The designs of the signs are the result of a hard working group of Council staff who have worked closely with local graphic designer Laura Gillard.

Installation of the new signage will not just be focussed on the Bourke township but will also be installed across the Shire and will, I am sure, be well received. The branding was the subject of presentations during the annual round of village and town community consultation meetings where it met with a positive response.

ONGOING RISKS OF COVID-19

I saw an interesting quote regarding the COVID-19 virus during the week which caught my eye:-

“The virus doesn’t move, people move it. We stop moving, the virus stops moving, the virus dies. It’s that simple.”

With this phrase in mind, I would suggest that if we are to defeat this virus, it is necessary that all citizens do the right thing in terms of gathering restrictions, all the time.

If we don’t, we will slide into the same shaky ground that the nations second most populous state now finds itself. This includes, tragically, deaths exceeding ten people a day, new cases ranging from 300-700 per day, Stage 3 and 4 lockdowns and the resulting closure of businesses and concerning levels of unemployment. The NSW Premier said this week that “the next few weeks were critical for NSW.”

As a community, we all need to be vigilant and not complacent. Without putting too fine a point on it, complacency could be the difference between life and death. One person can jeopardise each and everyone of us.

I again urge residents to maintain the four-square metre and 1.5 metre social distancing rules and hand hygiene techniques when in a group. The NSW Governments website has a significant amount of information available should you need information on specific gathering requirements.

GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

The State Government has strengthened the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW as part of its commitment to improving the integrity, transparency and accountability of the Local Government sector.

The changes include strengthening investigation processes and penalties for Councillor misconduct to target the small minority who engage in bad behaviour and jeopardise the good reputation of the majority of Councillors in NSW.

The Government introduced strict new standards for local Councils in the new Model Code of Conduct in December 2018 to help ensure the ethical, accountable and transparent operation of Local Government across the State.

The code, which applies to 48,000 staff and 1,300 Councillors at 128 Councils, 10 County Councils and 13 Joint Organisations across NSW, is again being strengthened to further enforce high standards of conduct in our local Councils

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

“Optimism is a happiness magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people will be drawn to you.”

Mary Lou Retton

Ross Earl
General Manager