



# “From the GM’s Desk”

## 27th August 2020



### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Council has received advice from the NSW Grants Commission providing details regarding the final quantum of its 2019-2020 Financial Assistance Grant and the estimated grant payments to be made in 2020/2021 which is as follows:-

| Year            | General Purpose | Local Roads | Total       | % Increase |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 2019-2020 Final | \$4,195,616     | \$1,955,543 | \$6,151,159 |            |
| 2020-2021 Est   | \$4,420,781     | \$1,976,217 | \$6,396,998 | 4.0%       |

Council is extremely appreciative of the funding that has been made through the Financial Assistance Grants which is allocated in New South Wales by the New South Wales Grants Commission.

In the adopted formula, there is a recognition of the challenges faced by Councils in rural and remote New South Wales both in terms of a limited revenue base couple with large sparsely populated areas with large road networks.

Bourke Shire Council has received an increase of 4% this year and those funds have been traditionally allocated to an infrastructure renewal reserve to be utilised to reduce the backlog of work in Council’s infrastructure renewal program. The funds also are also utilised to provide a co-contribution to funding applications should they be required.

Council has previously written to the Minister for Local Government in New South Wales Hon. Shelley Hancock MP expressing its appreciation of the level of funding that has been received over the past few years in particular when there was a freeze on the level of FAG’S Grants from the Commonwealth

### THE BLUES MAN

Buddy Knox, who is known as the Blues Man, is “Heading West” next month visiting Brewarrina, Bourke and Coonamble to deliver a series of FREE Workshops for Aboriginal Singers, Songwriters and Musicians of ALL Levels.

Details of the Workshops follow:-

BOURKE | Monday, 14th September 2020 – 10.00am to 4.00pm @ Diggers on the Darling.

BREWARRINA | Tuesday, 15th September 2020 – 10.00am to 11.00am @ Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum.

Registrations can be made at [www.2rivers.com.au](http://www.2rivers.com.au) or by contacting the 2 Rivers team on 0467668977.

Please note that COVID-19 restrictions apply.

This opportunity is made possible through the project partners Create NSW, Arts North West, Outback Arts, Dhiyaan Aboriginal Centre, Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum, Tamworth Local Aboriginal

Land Council, Aboriginal Regional Arts Alliance and Yawiriawiri Murri Ganuur Descendants Aboriginal Corporation.

It is good to see Outback Arts combining with the other agencies to help develop the arts in the West of the State.

### COUNCILS FINANCIAL AUDIT

The presence of COVID-19 has played havoc with the way in which our communities operate. The introduction of social distancing, the need for increased hand washing and hygiene practices and more generally, a reduction in the number of people able to assemble at our homes and at social events along with sporting codes playing in front of near empty stadiums and border closures being just some examples.

This year for the first time, the bulk of Councils Annual Financial Audit will be undertaken remotely with the auditors being based in Sydney. Whilst over the past few years there has been a lot of work done remotely with the transfer of files via computer and the use of emailed reports and documents, the Auditors have come onto site.

It will be a first for Bourke Shire Council and no doubt be a first for the many other Councils who will have their audits conducted in a similar fashion.

COVID-19 has resulted in significant changes to the way we all operate. Only time will tell just how many of the interim measures that have been implemented will become permanent

### FLOW IN THE RIVER

The height of the river last Saturday was 4.27 metres with a flow of 1276 megalitres per day.

There are still good levels of water to come which can only be good news for those downstream of Bourke who can look forward to an ongoing flow for the next few weeks.

### LIBRARY NEWS

While the Library is unable to hold story time and craft sessions at the moment, there are still a myriad of ways for library users to access children's services. Story Box Library is a fantastic online service which features a variety of well-known personalities reading children's books. Readers include Noni Hazlehurst, Missy Higgins, Andy Griffiths, Anne Edmonds, Nick Cave, Colin Lane and many more.

In addition, there are numerous videos with craft activities to go along with the books, as well as short films about the authors. You can access Story Box Library through the Library's website, [www.bourkelibrary.com.au](http://www.bourkelibrary.com.au) All you need is your library card number. If you don't have a library card, call in and sign up, or join online through the website.

You can also take the opportunity to carry the library with you in your pocket by downloading the Bourke Public Library app, available on the App Store and Google Play. If you would like any more information, please contact the library on 6872 2751 or [bpl@bourkelibrary.com.au](mailto:bpl@bourkelibrary.com.au) and one of the friendly staff will be happy to assist you.

### COVID-19

It has been pleasing to see that COVID-19 case numbers remained low in NSW this week. Notwithstanding the virus continues to circulate in the community, vigilance must be maintained. The work that is being undertaken by the Contact Tracers in investigating and tracking down the source of the cases to stop further spread of the virus is quite amazing and a credit to all involved. NSW Health

continues to urge anyone with even the mildest of symptoms – including runny nose, sore throat, cough, or loss of taste and smell – to come forward for testing. It is the best way to protect your family, friends and the wider community.

Vigilance against the virus will be needed by all of us, for undoubtedly quite some time yet.

### ROADS

Council again requests that residents and visitors alike take the time to check out the road closure situation following rain and NOT drive on roads that are closed. Roads are closed to ensure the safety of the travelling public in the first instance, but also importantly to protect the road surface.

Travelling on wet gravelled surfaced roads damages the road surface and makes it difficult to drive along when it dries out and also then necessitates costly repairs to be undertaken which in turn impacts Councils restricted roads maintenance budget.

Quite often, it only takes a short period for the road to dry out if the conditions are right.

Council's road condition report can be accessed on [www.bourke.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bourke.nsw.gov.au)

The report has been revamped and the roads are colour coded depending on their status and is generally much easier to follow.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEW SOUTH WALES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Another change as a result of COVID-19 is a number of functions to be held by Local Government New South Wales, including the Annual Conference, Water Management Conference and Environment Awards, are all moving online this year. The decision to "online" these events was taken so that members can continue to come together as a sector to vote, discuss priority issues, celebrate achievements and hear from key speakers whilst still maintaining a safety net in relation to the potential spread of COVID-19.

### SHOWGROUND STIMULUS FUNDING

Bourke was fortunate to receive funding for two (2) projects in the first tranche of the Showground Stimulus Funding, as provided by the NSW Government.

The projects that were funded were the construction of a new toilet block, which will be access compliant, and the installation of an automated water sprinkling system.

Work on the sprinkler system is well progressed and it is being undertaken by locally based Darling Irrigation. One (1) of the aims of the funding was an injection of funds into the local economy and the fact that the project involves a locally based company certainly achieves that objective.

Council has two (2) other projects pending in the second tranche of the funding and hopefully we will see further improvements to the Renshaw Oval Complex, which has been the recipient of various funding grants of late and is now a much-improved facility. The improved amenities should translate into an increased level of usage.

### INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS

Bourke Shire Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, has provided a submission to the above inquiry and in doing so has highlighted some of the great benefits that have been derived for regional communities as

a result of programs like the Stronger Country Communities Fund. An extract from the Mayor's submission follows:-

*"As you would be well aware the Bourke Shire has experienced the severe community and economic impact, which continues today despite recent rains, resulting from a once in a hundred-year drought. This drought resulted in agricultural activity in the region essentially coming to a standstill and employment opportunities evaporating. Population numbers in the town of Bourke fell significantly.*

*Despite this unfortunate set of circumstances, the Shire of Bourke has been able to improve the quality of life for its residents and visitors thanks to the significant grant funding opportunities presented by both the NSW and Federal Governments in recent years.*

*In respect of the NSW Government, the decision to remove, where possible, the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) requirements of past governments, was a godsend to communities such as Bourke. Whilst there were previously grant funding opportunities available, Bourke Council and like remote Councils, would often fall short in terms of being able to achieve the required BCR, given the limited population base.*

*Through the Stronger Country Communities Fund (SCCF), Council has successfully applied and then been able to undertake a project such as the redevelopment of its Olympic Pool. Pools have a limited life span and the Bourke Olympic Pool had essentially met its. The funding requirements for the redevelopment of the Pool were simply outside the resources of Council and without the funding through the SCCF, I would suggest that Bourke would ultimately be without a Pool. Such a thought is difficult to comprehend in the harsh environment of Bourke, let alone in terms of the potential dangers presented by people swimming in the river and resulting social issues"*

#### CODE OF MEETING PRACTICE

Since 14 December 2019, Councils have been required to webcast meetings of the Council and committees that comprise only of Councillors. The webcasting requirement may be met by posting an audio or video recording of the meeting on the Council's website.

The *Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW* required Councils to specify in their codes of meeting practice, the minimum time period that a webcast recording would be made publicly available on a Council's website, however the Code did not prescribe a minimum period.

There is now the requirement for Councils to retain recordings of meetings on their websites for at least 12 months, which is now prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

Accordingly, Council at its August meeting amended the Code of Meeting Practice to require recordings of meetings of the Council and committees that comprise only of Councillors to be retained on the Council's website for 12 months.

Councils are still required to livestream their meetings via an audio-visual link where members of the public are excluded from attending meetings due to COVID-19. Bourke Shire Council facilities do not allow sufficient space for members of the public to attend and as such whilst COVID-19 is still a threat to our community we will continue to live stream.

#### CODE OF CONDUCT

At the August Meeting, Council also adopted the revised Code of Conduct for Councils in New South Wales.

There are only relatively minor changes to both the Code of Conduct and Procedures but none the less there was as requirement for Council to adopt the amend Model Code.

### COUNCIL FACILITIES

The opportunity is taken to remind the community that when wanting to use Councils facilities, e.g. Ovals and Parks, for functions you should seek approval from the engineering section of Council who will not only let you know of your responsibilities but also arrange for the facility to be prepared for your event if that involves additional bins etc.

Importantly, with the restrictions being imposed as a result of COVID-19, groups utilising the facilities should be aware of these restrictions and how they relate to their particular sport.

A COVID-19 Plan is required to be prepared for such events and a copy of that plan lodged with the booking. It is only with an ongoing sense of awareness and cooperation that we can work together to ensure that the risk of COVID-19 within our community is minimised.

### SPONSORSHIP OF RADIO STATIONS

Bourke Shire Council resolved at the August Meeting to Support 2CUZFM for the ensuing twelve months and renewing its annual sponsorship to that organisation following a request from the Chair of 2CUZFM.

Council is also a sponsor of 2WEB and in sponsoring both stations recognises the value of locally based radio stations who can provide local information and news.

It is important that all our local media outlets are able to maintain a high degree of local content, as they are often the conduit to the community of many house bound people with Bourke indeed being fortunate to have two (2) radio stations.

Whilst on media, I should acknowledge the Western Herald who has ensured the continued publication of the paper each week despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the severe economic and social impact that COVID-19 has had on the community.

I understand that the difficulties posed by COVID-19 has resulted in the cessation of the publication of a number of rural papers, at least in the short term. The question will undoubtedly be asked if some of these papers will have the resources, both physical and financial, to be able to restart given the challenges they face from other forms of media and the pressure on advertising dollars available.

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

*The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.*

*Babe Ruth, baseball legend*

Ross Earl  
General Manager