



“From the GM’s Desk”

17th September 2020



COVID-19 SEWAGE TESTING PROGRAM:

Bourke Shire Council have accepted an invitation from the NSW Public Health Unit to participate in a sewage testing program aimed at identifying the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Coronavirus is impacting people all around the world and NSW Health is working to find innovative strategies to manage COVID-19. This project is testing sewage for fragments of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19).

The virus can enter the sewer when someone who has COVID-19 (or recently had it) uses the toilet or washes their hands and face in sinks and showers.

Early research in Australia and overseas indicates that fragments of COVID-19 may be found in the sewage from people *before* they have symptoms, *while* they have symptoms, and also from people *who do not show any* symptoms. This means that the virus fragments could be found in the sewage even before anyone in the community tests positive.

A number of Councils are joining this sewage surveillance research project to provide NSW Health with early warning of potential cases, and time to respond.

HERITAGE MATTERS:

Council’s Heritage Advisor visited Bourke last week and whilst in town she, along with Council staff, visited a number of sites. Visits included the Tooralé Homestead and Shearing Shed to review the extent of its heritage listing and Dunlop Station to view a potential repair project as part of Council’s Local Heritage Assistance Funding.

Whilst in the area there were also visits to several locations in the village of Louth that have been previously identified as potential heritage items as part of a heritage study completed for Council in 2002.

With the Heritage Officer in town, the opportunity was also taken to convene a meeting of the Heritage Advisory Committee. If anyone has an interest in the heritage of our town and district and would like to join the Heritage Advisory Committee, please contact Council’s Environmental Services Department for further information. The Committee meet some four (4) times per year and provide guidance in relation to the opportunity to preserve areas of heritage significance in the area.

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP DAY:

Thursday 17 September 2020 is the annual Australian Citizenship Day.

17 September was chosen as the annual date as it is the anniversary of the renaming in 1973, of the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 to the Australian Citizenship Act 1948.

Citizenship Day was introduced in 2001. It is an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate and value Australian citizenship, and the peaceful, prosperous and inclusive society we share and further to reflect on the role we all play in building our nation and shaping our country's future as proud Australian citizens.

2021/2022 RATE INCREASE:

Councils will be able to increase the revenue they can collect from rates in 2021/2022 by a maximum of 2% under the rate peg recently announced by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

IPART's rate peg is based on the annual change in the Local Government Cost Index (LGCI), which measures the average costs faced by NSW Councils. The rate peg reflects moderate price inflation over the previous year for most cost categories.

The rate peg for 2021/2022 is lower than recent years, which is a positive outcome for NSW ratepayers. The rate peg applies to each Council's general income in total, not to individual ratepayers' rates.

Councils may increase categories of rates by more than, or less than the rate peg, as long as the total increase in general income remains within the rate peg. Individual ratepayers' rates are also impacted by land values set by the Valuer General NSW.

Bourke Shire Council only derives a relatively small portion of its total income from rates but has been conscious of the need to take up the maximum allowable increase to ensure that its income increases in accordance with the relative costs of providing the service.

The rate increase of 2% only applies to General Rates with water, sewage and garbage charges being left to individual Councils to decide taking into account the cost of providing the service as they look at a cost recovery basis when deciding any increase.

The fact that the IPART has released its rate increase so early allows Councils the opportunity to plan for their budgets and in some cases review the need for a Special Rate Variation if they have a project or programme for which they will need additional funding to be able to undertake.

SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING:

The next meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on 28 September 2020 starting at 9.15am.

Unless there is a significant change to the guidelines for Council meetings the meeting will again be closed to the public with public participation being available via the webcasting of the meeting.

Details of the link to the webcast will be posted on Councils website before 9.00am on the day of the meeting. The website is www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

POOL UPGRADE:

The pool upgrade is continuing and last week saw the final wall area of the pool poured along with the accessible ramp and the shallow end stairs. The centre chase has been completed with the new pipework work inserted for the filtration into the pool floor. The concourse area is currently being formed and taking shape, along with the in-ground retention tanks which are currently being excavated and prepared for concrete. These form an integral part of the new filtration system in the upgrade of the pool.

At this stage the redevelopment is slightly behind schedule and the re-opening of the facility is now likely not to be until December. However, the contractors are conscious of the need to have the pool operational as soon as possible and are working towards an as early as possible re-opening timeframe.

The plans for the pool include an access ramp which will be of great benefit to all those who have previously had difficulty in entering and exiting the pool.

SHOWGROUND UPGRADE:

Works are well underway for the upgrading of the showground. Irrigation system trenching has been completed with the necessary pipes laid. Council has also undertaken trenching works to renew the power and the upgrading of cables associated with a new speaker system planned for the complex.

The new toilets are starting to take shape with new sewer and water pipes laid and the slab poured. The erection of the toilet building was scheduled to be undertaken late last week and early this week. The other part of the project sees the showers housed in the current amenity buildings undergoing a much-needed facelift. These works have seen the complete strip out of the showers with new plumbing, flooring and partitions being part of the complex.

The Renshaw Oval Complex has seen significant improvement take place over the past few years through a combination of the work undertaken by Council and the various user groups. It is a credit to the community groups and the level of cooperation and support shown.

TENDERS FOR PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES FOR BOURKE AND BREWARRINA:

HealthShare NSW, on behalf of the Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD), is inviting tenders for the provision of medical services at selected sites throughout WNSWLHD.

There are three (3) sites which are identified in this area; being Bourke and Brewarrina, one being Walgett Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri and Coonamble is the other.

The current provider in Bourke is the Rural and Remote Medical Services (RaRMS) with the contract holder prior to RaRMS being Ochre Health.

Council is interested in the issue from a community point of view as the provision of adequate health facilities a very important matter to all rural communities.

Tenders for the contract close on the 6 October 2020 with the contract to commence on the 1 March 2021.

LIBRARY NEWS:

There are some great new resources available in the library. These include new fiction titles from Jeffrey Deaver, Raymond E. Feist, Stephen Leather, Peter James, Jonathan & Jesse Kellerman, Tom Keneally and Stephen King. The library also has new DVDs available for adults and kids. These include Riverdale - Series 1 & 2, Reverie Series 1, Downton Abbey the Movie, WWII in HD, Barbie and the Magic of Pegasus, Toy Story 4 and many more titles. There's something for everyone at the library.

Make sure you also download the Bourke Public Library app, available on the App Store and Google Play, and carry the library with you in your pocket. 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.

TWO (2) HOUR PARKING IN THE CBD:

The issue of the possible introduction of time limited parking in the CBD has again been raised and will be the subject of a report at the next meeting of Council. A suggestion has been made that the time be limited to a maximum of two (2) hours.

The matter has previously been to Council when the proposal to have two (2)-hour parking was rejected.

A number of people tend to park in the CBD for extended periods effectively preventing others the opportunity to park close to shops and be able to readily transfer goods and in the case of the elderly, easily gain access to the shops.

The issue of restricted parking is always an emotive one and one that will see divided opinions.

Council encourages those persons who work in the CBD to park in the side streets to allow the available parking to be utilised by the elderly and customers of the CBD businesses.

ROADS INFORMATION:

Maintenance graders are currently west of Enngonia on RLR 27, Burrawantie Road.

RLR 38, Turra Road, will shortly be graded whilst they are in the area with the graders then continuing across to Yantabulla and then onto the Hungerford Road working towards the border and then back to Bourke.

Councils road construction teams continue to work on the Wanaaring Road with 9.1 kilometres of bitumen seal completed last week and a further (3) kilometres to be completed during the week commencing 28 September 2020.

This will see the completion of the Goonery to Barakee section of the project. Work will then commence on the Romani to Wangamana section which is 27.37 kilometres in length.

The dream is gradually becoming a reality.

COVID-19:

Service NSW has developed an app for NSW businesses which now features a COVID Safe Check-in tool to allow customers a safe and contactless way to check in at venues across NSW.

Registered COVID Safe businesses can now be issued a unique QR code which customers can scan using their Service NSW app.

It offers customers to your business a contactless, hygienic method of checking in to businesses so they can be contacted in the event of an outbreak.

Checking-in through the updated Service NSW app automatically captures the date, time and location of the check-in, and securely stores the data for 28 days for the sole purpose of COVID tracing.

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the check-in process can be found at the following link:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/covid-safe-check-customers-faqs>

A COVID Safe Check-in information pack for stakeholders can be found at the Service NSW Website.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget".

G. Randolph

Ross Earl
General Manager