



“From the GM’s Desk”

24th September 2020



MEETING AT LOUTH

Council’s Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown and Manager of Environmental Services, Dwayne Willoughby, travelled to Louth last Tuesday evening to meet with members of the Louth Community regarding a number of projects underway or being considered for the village including the changes to the Local Environmental Plan (LEP), relocation of the Bourke Shire Worker’s Camp, improvements to the tennis Court Complex and improvements to the Cricket Oval. In applying and allocating funding, Council has been very much aware of the need to improve the amenity of the Shire’s villages. In this regard, each village has been the recipient of considerable funding over the past few years.

One of the major items discussed was the need to investigate the construction of a new hall for the village. The existing hall is in need of a significant amount of repair work and it has been suggested that the hall may have come to the end of its useful life. Options in relation to possible sources of funding to replace this asset will be investigated.

As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, Council is extremely appreciative of the support and assistance provided by each of the village communities. Without this help it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Council to maintain the level of service which currently exists

SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on 28 September 2020 starting at 9. 15am. This will be my last Council meeting with Bourke Shire before I retire.

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

TENDERS FOR PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES FOR BOURKE AND BREWARRINA

As mentioned last week Healthcare NSW, on behalf of the Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD), has invited tenders for the provision of medical services at selected sites throughout the WNSWLHD.

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

As part of the tender, the documentation proposes new minimum requirements for Visiting Medical Officer coverage at the Bourke Service with the minimum face to face coverage being over five (5) days from 8.00am-6.00pm. Outside of these days and times, the documentation provides that proposals will be considered for virtual care service options.

Bourke Shire Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, has acknowledged that whilst the five (5) day/8.00am - 6.00pm requirements are a minimum, and that the final hours may vary, the tender documentation

requires respondents to identify how they will provide cover outside the minimum on-site requirements.

To suggest that residents and visitors to Bourke are to be subjected to a five (5) day a week “business hours” only face to face medical service and for the remaining hours of the week a virtual service, is abhorrent to Council. People in the far west of the State simply deserve better.

Council is of the very strong view that 24/7 access to on-site medical care at the Multipurpose Service is essential for the on-going health of the Bourke community and should be maintained.

LIBRARY NEWS

If you have five minutes to sit and relax, why not enjoy one of the libraries eMagazines through RB Digital. The library has expanded the range of titles and there is now an enormous variety available. Keep the kids occupied in the holidays with titles including Storytime, Krash, The Week Junior, National Geographic Kids, National Geographic Little Kids, Little Angel, Mania, and many more. You can find all the big titles, such as Australian Women’s Weekly, Better Homes & Gardens and Australian Geographic, not just from Australia but from England and all around the world. Every interest is covered, for men, woman and children. Make sure you check them out today!

Go to the library website, www.bourkelibrary.com.au or download the RB Digital app. If you’re not already a member, you can join through the website, or 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.

FUNDING FOR HUNGERFORD ROAD

I am pleased to advise the REPAIR allocation for 2020/21 has now been confirmed and Council has received \$400,000.00 to undertake work on the Hungerford Road (Darling Track). The work will be supplemented by a \$600,000.00 contribution from Council making the project \$1,000,000 in total.

RECONSTRUCTION OF DOG FENCE

Bourke Shire Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, and Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, recently travelled to Hungerford for the ceremony to mark the beginning of the reconstruction and expansion of the Wild Dog Fence which separates New South Wales and Queensland. The fence will also now be constructed along the border with South Australia.

The 742 km fence extension means the infrastructure will soon stretch from the Murray River in the south, north to Cameron’s corner and east to Mungindi, making it the longest dog fence in the world.

NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon. John Barilaro, MP and the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, the Hon. Adam Marshall, MP were in Hungerford for the occasion and Barry and Leonie had the opportunity to catch up with them on a few occasions during the course of the day and raised with them issues of relevance to Bourke Shire and the Far West of the State more generally

The funding for the construction of the Dog Fence was announced by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer Dominic Perrott, MP in Bourke last year and involves an expenditure at this stage of \$35.5 million.

Bourke Shire has taken a greater involvement in the Wild Dog issue over the past few years and has been successful as the lead Council for a consortium of Councils and has obtained well over a \$1m in

funding. This funding has been utilised to undertake a number of initiatives in conjunction with Western Local Land Services.

Council is well aware of the threats posed by the wild dog problem and the fact that it places the viability of a number of grazing enterprises at risk and in turn impacts on the economy of the region.

I understand that local firm, Bourke Steel and Hire, were successful in obtaining the contract to supply the equipment for the first stages of the fence which is a great achievement for them and the economy of Bourke more generally.

It would be a great boost for regional economies if more equipment for these regionally based projects could be sourced locally with the economic and social benefits for these rural communities far outweighing any minor cost savings that may be utilised to justify a centralisation of procurement that seems to currently be the case. Given the opportunity, local firms not only provide competitive pricing but also good service.

SHARING OF RESOURCES

Brewarrina Shire Council has experienced some mechanical problems with its Garbage Truck and has needed to borrow the Bourke Shire Waste Truck for the collection of their garbage bins over the past couple of weeks.

Both Councils work well together and often need to borrow equipment and parts from each other in times of emergency. I know Bourke Shire has had the need to borrow water fittings over the past few months when it experienced an unprecedented level of water main breaks within a short period.

Given the tyranny of distance it is good to be able to have access to additional resources and back-up in times of emergency.

WESTERN WEIRS PROGRAM

Council had a meeting on Tuesday with those charged with the development of the Western Weirs Program.

Bourke Shire has been a strong advocate for the development of additional storage along the Barwon Darling River System to enhance water security and has even offered to provide funding to assist the progression of the program.

The meeting provided Councillors the opportunity to receive an update on the Western Weirs Strategy and the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the strategy and in particular the consultation phase.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTS

Councils Annual Financial Reports are in the process of being audited and will be able to be lodged by the due date as determined by the Office of Local Government.

The way in which the audit was undertaken has been significantly different this year compared to previous years due to COVID-19 and the desire for everyone to both limit unnecessary travel and face to face interaction.

Additionally, there are requirements for Council to address the impact of COVID-19 on their operation as part of the audit process.

The way in which audits have been undertaken has changed since the NSW Audit Office assumed responsibility for the audits of all Local Government Bodies in New South Wales with Council audits more closely aligned to the guidelines applicable to state government agencies.

I am pleased to say that our finance staff have met the challenges presented by these changes and have worked cooperatively and effectively with our appointed audit team and the Audit Office to successfully meet all these new requirements.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BACK OF BOURKE EXHIBITION CENTRE

Last Tuesday the upgraded Visitor Centre and new Café at the Back O' Bourke Centre opened for business. The upgrade to the visitor centre looks fantastic and the new café is an exciting addition to the facility and one that has been requested by a large a number of visitors to the centre over the past few years.

The Café will be open from 9.00am to 2.00pm Monday to Friday. However, these times may be extended depending on the patronage.

The new displays to be erected at the centre are still a little way off, with a significant portion of the material coming out of Melbourne. With the spread of COVID-19 and the restrictions that have been in place in relation to interstate movement there has been a delay in the installation of these new displays.

It is important that displays are refreshed periodically and use made of changes in technology that can enhance the displays.

Word of mouth is one of our best forms of advertising so it would be advantageous if our local community could take the time to visit the revamped and improved facility and inspect for themselves the work that has been completed and perhaps try out the new café facilities.

The Back O' Bourke Centre is the cornerstone of much of our tourism product and in turn the tourism economy which plays an important part in the overall economic strength of the Shire.

Funding for the work was sourced from funding that was provided by the NSW State Government to the Far North West Joint Organisation (JO) on its formation. Funding was provided for tourism enhancement in recognition of the important role that tourism plays in this part of the state.

COVID-19

It is pleasing to see the reduction in the number of fatalities and infections as a result of the COVID virus in both NSW and Victoria. Hopefully we are not too far from our borders with Victoria and Queensland reopening.

As I have said on numerous occasions in this Column, it is essential that we all remain vigilant in relation to the risks of the virus.

Despite the reduction in case numbers, we should all continue to be aware of and continue to comply with the recommendations of Health Authorities and directions as contained within the Public Health Orders including:-

- Practicing social distancing and staying 1.5 metres away from other people at all times;
- Don't share eating utensils or drinks;
- Don't shake hands but utilise other methods of greeting;

- Practice good personal hygiene including washing your hands regularly, particularly when you get home;
- If you display any symptoms of the virus seek medical advice; and
- Don't go to work, or go out, if you are unwell.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 in parts of Victoria and Western Sydney that we previously witnessed clearly demonstrates that we cannot afford to be complacent. All members of the community have a role to play to do their best to minimise the spread of the virus.

POTENTIAL FUNDING FOR AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND FIELD DAYS

All registered agricultural shows and agricultural field days cancelled in 2020 because of COVID-19 will receive assistance from the Federal Government, with applications for the funding due to open later this month. The funding for event organizer will help reimburse 2020 fixed expenses.

The amount of funding will range from up \$10,000 to up to \$70,000 depending on the size of the show and attendance in 2019.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/infrastructure/supporting-ag-shows>

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."

– Nelson Mandela

Ross Earl
General Manager