

NEW BOURKE POLICE STATION:

The Mayor and I had the opportunity to meet last week with NSW Police Force Deputy Commissioner, Mal Lanyon APM; Commander of the Central North Police District, Superintendent Andrew Hurst and Officer in Charge of the Bourke Station, Inspector Jeff Little to discuss proposals for the construction of a new Bourke Police Station in 2021/2022.

With a new two (2) storey building planned to be constructed to the south of the existing Richard Street facility, it was pleasing to hear the Deputy Commissioner speak of the retention of the two (2) heritage buildings that exist at the site.

The Deputy Commissioner also took us for a tour of the existing station. Planning for the project is well underway. This is an exciting project for not only Bourke but certainly also for the hard working officers at the Station.

COVID-19:

After the success of the original JAWS movie, 1978 saw the release of JAWS 2 with the promotional slogan "Just When You thought it Was Safe to Go Back in the Water." I was thinking this week that this slogan would be an appropriate analogy as we navigate COVID-19. Just as plans are being made for the re-opening of borders, word comes through of a COVID outbreak in Adelaide. There was considerable debate and pressure on the NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, to close the States border with South Australia. Ultimately, the South Australian Government determined that the state would go into a six (6) day lockdown.

Until such point that we have a vaccine, the Coronavirus Pandemic will undoubtedly continue to impact society. Whilst Australia’s response has been “best practice”, I will say it again, the biggest threat to avoiding further lock downs is complacency. Remember to practice the 1.5m social distancing rule, practice good hygiene, stay at home if you have a fever, runny nose, cough or loss of smell and taste and get tested. Community vigilance is most important.

COVID & QR CODES:

The mandatory use of QR Codes for all NSW hospitality venues came into effect from 23 November 2020.

Customer contact details collected by pubs, restaurants, bars, and other businesses makes contact tracing more efficient and assists in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in communities.

QR codes are a contactless, hygienic and private method of collecting details. A free QR code check in option is available for businesses and organisations that register as COVID Safe. For more information, please visit <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/covid-safe/customer-record-keeping> which will be updated as further information is available.

To find out more about QR code options please go to <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/covid-safe/qr-codes>

CHANGED DRIVING LAWS

Two (2) announcements were made last week by the NSW Government as part of National Road Safety Week aimed at reducing road accidents, and ultimately fatalities, in the state.

Motorists in NSW will no longer be warned when they approach a mobile speed camera on the road. The change to the speed camera warning signs will be rolled out over the next 12 months meaning warnings signs usually seen 50m and 250m ahead of mobile speed cameras will no longer be provided. No warnings signs means drivers can be caught anywhere, anytime. Independent modelling by the Monash University Accident Research Centre has shown that the changes could save between 34 and 43 lives a year. If the change means one (1) live is saved, then in my view, the change is a success.

Interestingly, warning signs for fixed speed cameras will remain in place.

The Government also announced tougher penalties for those caught driving while under the influence of both alcohol and drugs. These new penalties will be in place from next year and includes a fine of up to \$11,000, prison time and a potential lifetime ban on driving.

Last week's Sunday Telegraph newspaper made comment that, apart from the terrible emotional cost, each fatality on NSW roads now costs more than \$2.5 million. The Sunday Telegraph revealed figures that show the cost of all fatalities and serious injuries on NSW roads last year was \$9 billion, of which \$1.7 billion was from speed-related crashes.

Coupled with advice from Transport Minister, Andrew Constance that 11,000 people in NSW spend at least one (1) night in hospital because of a car accident each year, ongoing action is obviously required.

DON'T POKE THE BEAR! :

I am happy to admit, I do not know a terrible lot about rugby league. What I do know however, is that you shouldn't "poke the bear" unless you are prepared for a dramatic response. When I heard, leading into Game 3 of this year's State of Origin Series being played at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane, that some past NSW Origin players and commentators were saying that the Queensland team was "the worst team ever", I quietly sensed that a dramatic response was imminent. Sure enough, quite a boil over last Wednesday, with Queensland winning 20 -12 and taking the Series 2 - 1.

Whilst I see that some commentators have said they got it wrong, others are sticking to their view. Given that sustained position, I am just not sure where that leaves the NSW Blues!!

ROADWORKS:

Sealing works in the Louth village, which includes Charles, Becker, Hughes and Peter Streets, was completed on Friday, 20 November 2020. Council has also completed the resealing of the bitumen sections of the Weelong Road also at Louth.

Council graders have undertaken a top grade on MR 68 South, between Louth and Tilpa.

Construction works on the MR 405 project, Romani - Wangamanna section, continues with an extra section of the roadway receiving bitumen seal on Tuesday, 24 November 2020.

Shoulder widening is set to commence on the Mitchell Highway between Bourke and Enngonia.

WILD DOG FENCE - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SESSIONS:

On Thursday, 10 December 2020, from 9.00am – 1.00pm at the Western Local Land Service (LLS) building, 21 Mitchell Street Bourke, a face-to-face community drop-in session will be held to gather feedback, ideas, concerns and suggestions about the NSW Wild Dog Fence Extension Project to inform the development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

LLS have advised that their project team is keen to get a broad range of input on the project and everyone with an interest in the project are encouraged to have their say.

In addition to the face-to-face session, a number of online sessions will also be held as follows:

Day	Date	Time
Tuesday	1 December	1.00-2.00pm
Thursday	3 December	6.00-7.00pm
Tuesday	15 December	1.00-2.00pm

Registration for an online session is available by emailing: wilddogfence@scs.nsw.gov.au.

To find out more visit www.lls.nsw.gov.au or contact the project team on (02) 5852 1215 (during business hours) or email wilddogfence@scs.nsw.gov.au.

DISASTER RECOVERY:

Australia as a nation has had its fair share of natural disasters in recent times with the ongoing drought and then the bushfires earlier this year. In mid-November 2020, the Federal Government delivered its response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Legislation will be introduced to Parliament to give the Australian Government the power to declare a national emergency to help mobilise Commonwealth resources and help tackle the challenges states and local communities may face.

In addition, the National Cabinet has also agreed to establish a National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting which will be initially responsible for driving and coordinating implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations – in consultation with the range of responsible Ministers - and ultimately ensure that Australia is preparing for future disasters at the highest levels.

Importantly, the Government will strengthen the national coordination arrangements within Emergency Management Australia (EMA) to streamline requests for Australian Government assets to assist states and territories in their preparation and response to disasters.

The Royal Commission also identified the need for a new, dedicated National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency and the Federal Government has now commenced the necessary work to establish this agency.

The new agency will initially incorporate the functions of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, which was established in response to the Black Summer bushfires. It will also integrate the functions of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency, and the disaster recovery and risk reduction functions within the Department of Home Affairs.

I think it's fair to say that we have all witnessed a level of conjecture, albeit at a distance, as to if and when the Federal Government becomes involved in natural disasters. The identified reforms are extensive, and I look forward to their implementation.

WATER RESTRICTIONS:

As residents are aware, Level 1 Water Restrictions in Bourke and North Bourke became applicable on Monday, 9 November 2020. At the moment, the weir pool is dropping by some 20mm a day and unless we see further inflows into the weir pool in the not too distant future, we are looking at Level 2 restrictions in mid December 2020.

I again urge residents to be “water wise” in their water usage patterns and also respect the restriction requirements.

AUSTRALIA DAY NOMINATIONS:

The closure of nominations for the 2021 Bourke Australia Day Awards on Monday, 7 December 2020 is rapidly approaching.

Details on how to nominate are available on Councils website or by calling into the Council Office at 29 Mitchell Street, Bourke.

There are a lot of worthy potential recipients in the Bourke Shire for the various categories in these awards. We all need to ensure that unsung heroes within our community are recognised.

ALGAL BLOOMS:

In the event of river flows continuing to reduce, parts of the Barwon Darling system will see conditions favourable to algae growth. The warming weather is also favourable for algae growth. These two (2) factors indicate that the Barwon-Darling is entering a state that is likely to produce algae blooms. Water users should therefore prepare and be on the lookout for excessive algae growth. If then required, take the necessary actions to mitigate against the algae bloom conditions.

The Blue-green Algae Report dated 18 November 2020 as released by the Far West - Algal Coordinating Committee has identified that there were, at that date, No Alerts for the Darling River at the Bourke Boat Ramp or at the Bourke Weir.

A DATE FOR THE DIARY:

Council in conjunction with the Maranguka Community Hub will hold “Christmas in the Park” from 6.00pm till 9.00pm on Friday, 4 December 2020 in Central Park. Santa and his Elves will be in attendance with entertainment and food and drink stalls available. Please note COVID restrictions will apply. For enquiries contact Maranguka at their office in Mitchell Street, Bourke (Phone 0448 498 597) or contact the Back O’ Bourke Information and Exhibition Centre by phoning 6872 1321.

CHRISTMAS CLOSEDOWN:

Christmas is now but four (4) weeks away. This year, Council’s Shire Office, Service NSW Agency and Library will close at 4.30pm on Wednesday, 23 December 2020 and re-open for business on Monday, 4 January 2021.

If residents encounter a problem such as no filtered water supply, a water main break or a sewer choke, or for that matter any urgent issue over the Christmas/New Year period, please contact Council’s Duty Officer on 0419 722 055.

Quote of the Week!

“I’m glad it’s finally hot enough to complain about how hot it is.”

Anonymous

Leonie Brown
Acting General Manager