



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
Acting General Manager’s Desk”
28 January 2021

FIRST COLUMN 2021

With the Western Herald having had a well-deserved summer break, this is my first column for 2021. I would like to wish all residents of Bourke Shire a safe and happy New Year.

Over the past year our nation has faced fire, flood, drought and the Coronavirus Pandemic. Monday, 25 January marked 12 months since the first identified case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Australia. Bourke Shire has been lucky to avoid the virus to date and it is important that we remain vigilant to keep everyone safe and to ensure that this insidious virus stays out of our community.

2021 promises to be another busy year for Council, activities include:-

- the Local Government Elections in September
- continuation of sealing the Wanaaring Road (MR 405)
- completion of the new Water Treatment Plant
- completion of the upgrade to the Bourke Olympic Pool
- Continuation of the upgrade to the Main Street Project this includes Bourke Wharf upgrade, Men’s Shed upgrade, Mitchell Street upgrade (from Sturt Street to Richard Street) and Cenotaph upgrade.

Council has been very fortunate to receive an unprecedented amount of grant funding from both the State and Commonwealth Governments since 2015 and this had allowed for the upgrade to a lot of Councils Infrastructure.

WATER FLOWING OVER THE WEIR

The flow in the Darling that originated from the local rainfall in December and early January, small flow from the Culgoa River and is now being supplemented by the flow from the Barwon which is a result of the rainfall in the upper catchment was very welcome. The Darling River progressive rise at Bourke saw the weir wall breached on 5 January 2021.

The flow in the Barwon Darling River was also supplemented by an Environmental release – The Northern Waterhole top-up has provided eight (8) additional gigalitres of Commonwealth and NSW water for the environment. The delivery of this water was first expected to reach Walgett. Thankfully, December storms wet the River channel which has meant the environmental flow has now reached Bourke.

There is no definitive period that the water is expected to flow over the Bourke Weir but it is anticipated that it should last at least until the end of summer if not longer.

There has been a restriction placed on the pumping of water from the Barwon –Darling River system with the hope that the flows currently within the system will continue and that it will reach Menindee Lakes. Let’s hope we have additional flows in the system in the coming weeks that will enable the irrigators to have access to water for their crops plus see water reach the Menindee Lakes.

WELCOME RAINS IN THE SHIRE

The recent rain has had a tremendous positive impact on the town with all the parks and gardens looking very fresh and green. The availability of water in the river should mean that the town is again well presented for visitors to the community and the Easter weekend.

The rainfall that also fell in parts of the LGA has Council employees very busy in and around Bourke mowing and tidying the parks, gardens and entrances. There are still areas of the Shire that have received very little rain. I hope the La Nina that has been predicted to bring much needed rain to those who have missed out will receive something in the coming weeks.

While Council staff will do their best to ensure the town is showcased to its best advantage it would be a great help if residents could mow their nature strips and ensure that their yards are neat and tidy.

TREE REPLACEMENT

Over the years it has been necessary for many of the trees in Bourke to be removed. Whilst some of the trees were large shade trees, when in their prime, they had died due to vandalism, drought or caused damage to property due to their size.

Council has been provided with grant funding of \$90,000 through the NSW Drought Communities Fund to undertake tree planting throughout the urban area of Bourke.

A tree replacement program comprising of five (5) stages has been developed and it is expected that the \$90,000 will go part way to completing stage one (1) of the plan. A copy of the planting program is available at the Council Office at 29 Mitchell Street Bourke

With the recent flow in the river, Kurrajong Bottle trees and Bottle Brush trees are now on order to commence this part of the project. The trees will be planted on the footpaths from Sturt Street then along Mitchell Street and all the way to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre. Residents living in these blocks may like to adopt a tree if it is planted outside your residence on the footpath by assisting with watering.

NEW ART GALLERY

The new Bourke Aboriginal Art Gallery, in Oxley Street opened to the public on Thursday, 24 December 2020. Since then it has been quite busy with sales to both local people and a number of tourist who are still circulating around or passing through the region.

Although there are still a number of displays to be set up the space has become an artist work space and sales point for Bourke Aboriginal art. We are very lucky to have a number of talented artist in our community, I would recommend a visit to the Gallery to see the works that are on display.

Plans are currently underway to organise an official opening with dates for the event being discusses with dignitaries.

AUSTRALIA DAY

This Australia Day we paused to reflect on the past year and recognise the resilience of our people and the courage and selflessness of those work worked on the frontlines fighting fires and floods and responding to a global pandemic, and also those who have suffered through the long drought.

Australia Day celebrations in Bourke were considered highly successful, despite the need for changing the venue of the main activities to the Wal Mitchell Wharf Precinct. Throughout the celebrations, Ambassador John Donovan was widely appreciated as he demonstrated a natural passion and enthusiasm as a worthy Ambassador for Australia Day

My personal congratulations are extended to all the recipients of special awards, they were all very worthy recipients.

I would like to thank the National Australia Day Council for supporting the Ambassador Programme and on a local level the Bourke Rotary Club and all other that assisted on the day.

As part of this year's Australia Day Ceremony a Citizenship Ceremony was held for 10 new Citizens Sangita Parjapati, Harmeet Singh, Harveen Kaur, Abdul Waheed, Rana Awais Ahmad, Mohammad Abram Rana Waheed, Kynat Waheed, Milika Waheed, Ejaz Ul Haq and Javairaiia Latif. I congratulate you all on what is a very significant occasion.

By becoming an Australian citizen, people join a unique national community. Our country has been built on the contributions of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and migrants from all over the world.

POOL UPGRADE

The pool upgrade is continuing and last week saw the lining near completion in the deep end of the pool. At this stage unfortunately the redevelopment is behind schedule and the re-opening of the facility is unlikely this season.

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.

The splash park is open from Tuesday to Sunday 2pm to 7pm. Bourke pool is following COVID regulations which means everyone coming to the splash park area is required to sign in. As the main pool area is still in the construction phase hours could be subject to change without notice.

COMMUNITY AND VILLAGE MEETING

Council will be conducting a tour of the village areas within the shire to give the residents of these areas the opportunity to meet Councillors and Senior Staff to discuss issues impacting on the residents of the villages and surrounding areas in February.

The timetable for the village tours will be released in the coming weeks, dates and times will be advertised in the Western Herald, on Facebook 2WEB and through each of the village committees.

WELCOME TO BOURKE

Bourke Shire Council along with the Rotary Club of Bourke will once again welcome new residents to town in the coming weeks. The welcome to Bourke evening will be held at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre on the evening of Wednesday, 24 February 2021.

This will give new residents a chance to meet with locals, gain valuable networks and ask questions that may assist in the move to Bourke. More information will be provided in the coming weeks about the

welcome to Bourke evening or please feel free to contact the Shire Office for further information or to register your family's acceptance to attend.

Local sporting, social and interest groups are also invited to send a representative so that newcomers to town can get firsthand information regarding the various groups.

The night has been going for a number of years now and is a great initiative.

BUDGET

Work has commenced on the preparation of the Councils Operational Plan (Budget) for 2021/2022 and it is proposed to have the budget completed in early April 2021 with the consideration by Council by the end of May 2021. IPART have release their determination of the allowable rate increase applicable for 2021/2022 and it has been set at 2% which applies to the general fund of all Council's with the exception of those who have applied for a special rate variation and had that application approved .

If anyone would like to see specific projects or works included in the budget they can forward details to the Council offices and they will be considered in the budget process along with all other identified works.

EASTER

The first meeting to kick off the organisation of the Easter Festival is set down for 9 February 2021 at the Council Chambers. The committee is preparing for the Back to Bourke celebrations to be held over the Easter long weekend. The preparation of some activities does take time to organise to ensure the weekend is a success.

An assessment will be undertaken leading up to the weekend as to COVID restriction and if there is any issues the committee will reassess the situation at that time.

One of the marquee events planned is the Bourke Race meeting which is the committee are busy pulling together. Easter is only nine (9) weeks away!

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The conduct of the Local Government Elections is now scheduled for Saturday, 4 September 2021. The Election was to be held in September 2020, but due to COVID-19 the Minister for Local Government postponed the Election until 2021.

Further information in regards to the Local Government Elections is available on the NSW Electoral Commission website. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a Councillor I would encourage you access the site and view the six (6) steps to becoming a candidate at the election. Depending on your circumstances you may not need to follow these steps in order or complete all steps. Please read the details under each step to see which steps apply to you and the relevant deadlines under each step.

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING

The next Ordinary Meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday, 22 February 2021. This will be the first meeting of Council 2021.

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 have meant that some staff are also unable to attend in person. By also utilising the Audio – Visual platform, however, such staff are both able to follow the meeting and comment on any reports they may have submitted, as required.

TOURISM BOOKING ONLINE OPPORTUNITY

In partnership with DNCO (Destination Country & Outback) and the Bourke hub consisting of Bogan, Cobar and Brewarrina Councils, have engaged the services of Rebecca George from Central NSW Business HQ to run a series of “Becoming Bookable Online” workshops for local tourism operators in the above shires.

Delivery of these workshops will occur over a six (6) step program and work one on one with local tourism operators. The objective of these workshops is to provide local businesses with the tools to find the booking system that is best for them, to become bookable and to give them the confidence to take the next step. Over the coming weeks we look forward to our tourism operators signing up for this great opportunity.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

“Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you’ll start having positive results”!

Willie Nelson