



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
11 March 2021”**

COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

Australia’s COVID-19 Vaccination Program rollout is now well underway.

Mayor Barry and I were fortunate last week to talk, via teleconference, with our Federal Member and Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton, MP, with one of the matters discussed being the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Bourke.

With the first doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine being rolled out to priority groups including aged care and disability care residents and workers, frontline healthcare workers, and quarantine and border workers, in metropolitan areas, Phase 1a of the rollout is expected to take six (6) weeks.

In talking with Mark, he urged people in Bourke to remain patient and that Bourke’s turn will come. The point that Mark was very keen for Bourke residents to hear was that they will not have to travel outside of Bourke to receive the vaccine as it will be administered in Bourke. This was most pleasing.

Residents can be ‘vaccination ready’ by linking their myGov and Medicare digital accounts with further information about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout being available at: www.health.gov.au

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING

Council’s March Meeting will be held on 22 March 2021 commencing at 9.15am. At this point, the temporary COVID changes that relate to the holding of Council Meetings expire on 25 March 2021. My understanding is that following this date public attendance will be permissible under social distancing conditions. This will enable Public Forums to recommence. I further understand that remote access during meetings for Councillors will no longer be permitted. Whilst the latter has not been an issue at Bourke with Councillors attending meetings in person, it will be pleasing to again see the public accessing meetings and arrangements for the April 2021 meeting will be advised accordingly.

ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I received a copy this week of the Newsletter as distributed by the Bourke Public School (BPS). The School provided some interesting information in the Newsletter regarding attendance at school by students, noting that the NSW Government is targeting improved school attendance from 2021. This target has now been included as a focus in the Bourke Public School Plan for 2021. The school will be judged on the number of students who attend school greater than 90% of the time. In the article, BPS advise that

there are a large number of children where attendance over recent years has been between 85-89%.

The information that I found most interesting was that even at 95% attendance rate throughout school, students are still missing the equivalent of two (2) weeks of learning each and every school year. This two (2) week gap in learning adds up to half a year of schooling by the time students finish year 10. Obviously the best schooling outcomes are achieved where attendance is as close to 100% as possible.

It's an interesting thought and I thank BPS Principal, Ben Smith and BPS AEO, Anne-Maree Riches for allowing me to reproduce this information.

NORTH BOURKE BRIDGE

Council this week will lodge a grant funding application, as part of the Commonwealth Governments Building Better Regions Fund (Round 3), for the restoration of the North Bourke Bridge. With an estimated restoration figure of \$4M, Councils application will be for \$3M with Council having accumulated \$1M to go towards this important project.

Opened in May 1883, the near 138 year old North Bourke Bridge is the oldest moveable span bridge in Australia and the only remaining example in NSW. The bridge was designed and constructed at the height of the River Trade Era when the principal mode of transport for Western NSW and the Riverina District was some 200 paddle steamer-barge combinations operating on the Murray-Darling River system.

The one-lane and speed-limited bridge was mothballed in 1997 when the new 'Gateway Bridge' was constructed, however unfortunately the wooden approaches to this significant, historical, technical, social and aesthetically pleasing bridge are suffering from decay such that the bridge has been barricaded from public access for some years. It is deserving of extensive refurbishment works to restore it to its former glory and become a jewel in the heritage, recreational and tourism inventory of Bourke Shire and Western NSW.

Council, on behalf of the Bourke Community, is the custodian of this significant historical structure. Its restoration has been identified as a priority in the Bourke Shire Community Strategic Plan. Previous applications have been submitted by Council for grant funding, however to date these have been unsuccessful. North Bourke Bridge stands as a monument to the history of Western NSW and in submitting its application for funding, Council looks to restore this monument to both its former splendour and make again safe and accessible to residents and visitors alike.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

I mentioned last week the upcoming 2021 Local Government Elections to be held on 4 September 2021. At a Forum of General Managers from the west and north-west of the State held in Nyngan last week, information was provided that Candidate Information Sessions will be delivered by both the NSW Electoral Commission and Local Government NSW. It is anticipated that such sessions will be delivered via webinars.

There are legislated responsibilities of candidates and councillors around the election itself, such as nominating and the rules around campaigning. These responsibilities require candidates to get a full understanding of the processes, their obligations in relation to nomination and other laws that apply to candidates. Candidates should

find the sessions both useful and informative and I will provide further advice as information comes to hand.

2021 ROTARY CLUB OF DUBBO SOUTH TOYOTA TOUR DE OROC – IT'S ON!

I received advice during last week that planning for Toyota Tour de OROC is about to start for the 2021 event which is proposed to run over 6 days from Monday 4 October through to Saturday 9 October 2021. The distance will again be over 1,000 kilometres with the new committee to decide on the exact route. The 2021 event will be the fifth edition of the biennial Tour de OROC.

With the Tour raising almost half a million dollars for the Macquarie Home Stay Regional Patient and Family Accommodation facility in Dubbo, event organiser Mathew Dickerson has put a 'shout out' for members of the public and any members of Rotary who want to be involved with any aspect of the event. Macquarie Homestay has been of great benefit to residents of Bourke. For young and old, involvement in organising the Tour is a great way to give back to Homestay. If you're interested, please send an Email with your details to info@tourdeoroc.bike or call Mathew Dickerson on 0418 628 439.

SUPER RUGBY AND NRL

This weekend is Round 4 of the ten (10) round 2021 Super Rugby AU Competition whilst tonight, the 2021 National Rugby League (NRL) Competition kicks off with last year's premiers, the Melbourne Storm, playing the South Sydney Rabbitohs.

As a long-term fan of both the Waratahs and the St George Dragons, I fear it's going to be a long season for both these teams, and us fans! For the Waratahs its nil from three in terms of wins, with much having been written by Sports Journalists as to the Waratahs performances to date. When they went down 61-10 to the Brumbies in Round 2, nine-tries-to-one, Sydney Morning Herald journalist Tom Decent described the performance as "shambolic". Ouch.

In a similar vein, the Dragons pre-season has been less than inspiring. In their major pre-season game, the Dragons were defeated 48-16 by the South Sydney Rabbitohs in their Annual Charity Shield match, this year held at Glen Willow Oval in Mudgee. The win by the Rabbitohs was their ninth straight Charity Shield. I had contemplated going to Mudgee to watch this game. I'm glad I didn't! I know Grand Finals aren't won in February or March but both sides need major improvement to be any show in 2021 and avoid that long season.

If you enjoy your rugby league, don't forget that the Rabbitohs are playing the Panthers at Apex Oval in Dubbo on Sunday, 23 May 2021. Might be worth a road trip!

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

Mark Riley
General Manager