



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

**“From the  
General Manager’s Desk”  
1 April 2021”**

**Happy Easter**

On behalf of all at Council I take this opportunity to wish residents and visitors to Bourke a very Happy Easter. With the Bourke Easter Festival ready to commence tomorrow, Friday, a full calendar of events is planned. This week’s Western Herald contains a calendar style insert setting out the many activities to be held over the Easter Long Weekend.

A quick scan of the calendar shows that there are many fantastic events planned over the weekend, including the Colour Run, the Park Run, Street Parade, Markets, History Tours, Rides on the Jandra, Live Music, the Picnic Races, and so on.

The event I wish to highlight is the Giant Easter Egg Hunt to be held on Sunday Morning at the Back O’ Bourke Centre commencing at 8.00am. The event has attracted prizes of \$4000 in eggs and cash. It costs \$5 per child to enter with limited places available. Enter today by phoning 6872 1321 or visit the Back O’ Bourke Centre. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Good luck to all participants.

I would like to thank the many people who are involved in making sure that the Easter Festival weekend is a success.

**Travel Carefully**

For those who are travelling over the Easter weekend, take extra care on the roads and get to your destination successfully.

**Remember, double demerits are in place for five days over Easter, commencing from Thursday, 1 April 2021 to Monday, 5 April 2021, inclusive.**

Double demerit points apply for speeding, seat belt, motorcycle helmet and mobile phone offences. If you are detected using your phone by Police or by a Mobile Phone Detection Camera during this double demerit period, you will receive a \$349 fine (\$464 in a school zone) and 10 demerit points. Yes, 10 demerit points. That’s a big hit when you only get 13 points to start with if you have a Full Licence. It’s an even bigger hit if you’re a Red or Green P-Plater where you get 4 and 7 points respectively. That’s a “get the push bike out” situation if you lose 10 points.

The NSW Centre for Road Safety notes that Full Licence holders can only make or receive an audio phone call or use the music or audio functions on a mobile phone ONLY if the phone is either secured in a cradle fixed to the vehicle or can be operated without touching any part of the phone, (e.g. Bluetooth controls). Learners and P-

Platers are not permitted to make, receive or use the music or audio functions on a mobile phone whilst driving a vehicle.

### **COVID Restrictions Eased**

Last Monday, 29 March 2021, saw a number of COVID-19 restrictions eased across NSW. These included the following new arrangements:

- no caps on weddings and funerals
- no restrictions on singing including in places of worship
- no restriction on dancing including at weddings and in pubs and nightclubs
- no cap on visitors in the home (if there are more than 100 people there must be a COVID-19 Safety and electronic recording of visitor details)
- 200 people allowed for personal outdoor public gatherings
- all venues to move to the one (1) person per 2sqm (venues will be allowed at least 25 people before the 2sqm rule applies)
- 100% seated capacity at entertainment venues including stadiums and theatres
- Mask use including on public transport will move from 'mandatory' to 'strongly recommended'.

Businesses and other organisations must continue to ensure they keep accurate records of all attendances, including through QR Codes, to enable fast contact tracing in the event of any community transmission.

This is great news in time for Easter. In announcing the easing of restrictions, I noted that the NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, made comment that it was important that the community doesn't let its guard down, continues to check in at venues, socially distance and get tested should they have even the mildest of symptoms.

If we needed any reinforcement as to the need to keep our guard up, keep in mind the current lockdown in Brisbane as a result of a break out of locally acquired COVID cases.

### **2021/2022 Operational Plan**

Councils 2021/2022 Operational Plan (aka the budget) goes on exhibition today for a period of 28 days, as required by the NSW Local Government Act.

With submissions closing on Monday, 3 May 2021, any submissions received are required to be considered by Council before it ultimately adopts the Plan, which will be at its meeting to be held on Monday 24 May 2021.

As part of the Operational Plan, Council has included a filtered water price of \$2.26/KL for the 2021/2022 rating period while increasing water access charges by 2%. Sewerage Rates & Charges have also increased for the 2021/2022 rating period. There are proposed changes to various other fees and charges, and these are included in Councils Revenue Policy which forms part of the Operational Plan.

### **Far North West Joint Organisation**

Congratulations are in order for Bourke Mayor, Councillor Barry Hollman, who last week was elected as the Chair of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils (FNWJO). There are currently 13 Joint Organisations in NSW who represent some 87 Councils with the aim of the JO's being to strengthen collaboration and engagement between State

and local governments and improve infrastructure and service delivery to regional communities.

The FNWJO, which comprises the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett, has been successfully operating since July 2019 and unlike many other JO's, has been able to source significant funding to undertake projects and improve service delivery to its respective Council areas. Case in point is the funding for the provision of air services to the three (3) Joint Organisation localities.

This lack of funding, and undoubtedly other matters, has frustrated various JO's to the point that at a meeting of the neighbouring Orana Joint Organisation held in February 2021, the purpose and future of their Joint Organisation (JO) was discussed. The Orana JO resolved that each member Council present a report to their Council meeting to consider resigning from the Orana Joint Organisation and send a response back to the Executive Officer by the end of April.

The Orana JO comprises the Councils of Bogan (Nyngan), Gilgandra, Mid-Western Regional (Mudgee), Narromine, Warren and Warrumbungle Shire. Dubbo and Coonamble Councils never joined the Orana JO, for their own particular reasons, with the former Orana Regional Organisation of Councils footprint split up with the formation of the Far North West JO.

It was brought to my attention that in March, Gilgandra Council resolved to resign its membership of the Orana Joint Organisation. The Orana JO would appear not long for this world which, whilst understandable given its circumstances, is most unfortunate in terms of regional collaboration and strategic relationships. Perhaps some other form of strategic alliance will be forthcoming for Councils in the west of NSW.

### **Rainfall**

It was sad watching stories of human tragedy role out as the Nepean and Hawkesbury Rivers significantly impacted much of the north west of the Sydney Basin last week. In addition to the numerous other locations flooding up and down the NSW coastline, the biggest impact of the intense rainfall has been at Moree.

I haven't been in Bourke long enough to make a considered estimation of what this rain in the catchment will mean for the height of the Darling River at Bourke. Council has good staff who do that. However, a long term local recently told me that there will be a good flush of the river, full weir pools for a long time, full storages for local irrigators and a good river for graziers, downstream communities and the environment. His comments appear to tick all the boxes.

Rising rivers in Bourke are very different to my experiences in Dubbo. The Macquarie at Dubbo can come up very quickly, like in 2010 when it broke the banks basically overnight. They were interesting times!

### **Quote of the Week!**

"Easter egg hunts are proof that children can find things when they really want."

– Unknown.

*Mark Riley*  
*General Manager*