



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 15 April 2021”

Percy Hobson Mural

Former Bourke resident, Mr Percy Hobson was the first Indigenous athlete to ever win a Commonwealth Games Gold Medal. At only 20 years old, Mr Hobson broke a high jump record when he bounded over a 6'11" (210.82 cm) high bar at the 1962 games held in Perth.

If you have driven past Percy Hobson Park on the way out of Bourke towards Nyngan, you would have seen a significant change to the former green painted water tower with works having commenced on converting the tower into a mural honouring the athletic achievements of Percy Hobson. The mural will depict Percy's leap over the cross bar to win his Gold Medal at the British Empire Commonwealth games.

Acclaimed artist John Murray is leading the works of painting the mural. John is accompanied by other artists including local, Brian Smith, who will create an indigenous story to accompany the mural on the tower.

As part of the project, community members will be able to leave their own personal mark on the mural with plans underway for a day where the community can leave their handprints on the tower. Further details will be provided in due course.

Along with Councils Manager Environmental Services, Dwayne Willoughby, we spent time last week meeting with John and his colleagues to learn more about how he will bring this exciting mural to fruition. I am flat out drawing a tree, yet John is going to draw a picture on the side of a water tank over a three (3) week period.

There are some great articles on the NITV website in respect of Mr Hobson. Go to www.sbs.com.au/nitv and search Percy Hobson to learn more of his achievements and challenges.

River Flows

Conjecture abounds in and out of Bourke as to what height the Darling River will reach as it flows through the district in coming weeks. 10, 11 or 12 meters or even higher? It's too early to tell with the Bureau of Meteorology yet to issue a specific flood bulletin for Bourke. Notwithstanding, the various agencies know there is a good flow coming and the State Emergency Service, NSW Police and Council, along with various other agencies, are in dialogue in preparation for the flood event.

The Wally Mitchell Wharf

The Wally Mitchell Wharf at the northern end of Sturt St is the location of a piece of Australian history, being the wharf where paddle boats once loaded and unloaded

their goods before embarking on their travels up and down the Murray Darling river system.

In recent weeks with a rising river, some locals have taken to jumping and diving into the river, many meters below. With many tree branches and logs flowing down the river, some being very large, what starts as a fun jump into the water could ultimately result in a devastating injury including paraplegia or death. You simply have no idea what is under the brown milky water you are jumping into.

Mums, Dads and Carers, please talk to your young ones and tell them of the dangers and ask them not to jump from the wharf. A tragedy would be exactly that, but it gets worse for the family and friends. With the flow in the river, and I am being very frank, body retrieval would be very difficult and could take many days to affect. Council has ordered additional "No Swimming/No Diving" signage to be erected and local Police are attending the site regularly. Notwithstanding, Council and the Police can't be on site all day and can only do so much. At the end of the day, people have to take responsibility for their own actions.

PV Jandra

The higher-than-normal river height and flows has resulted in the decision to suspend the operation of the PV Jandra on the Darling River until further notice. With the gangway entrance to the boat being under water, it became unsafe for staff and visitors to access the boat. In addition, the strength of the river flow was of concern should there be an engine problem.

This decision, whilst necessary, is unfortunate, coming at the start of what is expected to be a very busy tourist season. As an example, there were 86 people on the PV Jandra last Wednesday afternoon alone. Staff at the Exhibition Centre are endeavouring to promote the other attractions in Bourke to encourage visitors to come to Bourke and stay a few days.

Prince Phillip and Tommy

Two (2) high profile people, who led very different lives with very different occupations, passed away last week.

Firstly, last Wednesday, rugby league international player, coach, commentator and most colourful of characters, Tommy Raudonikis passed away. Whilst it was a very different era of rugby league back in the 1970's and 1980's, the vision and stories of Tommy tell the tale of a very tough and unrelenting player. Replays shown this week of some of his antics against Great Britain during Test Matches and him and his Western Suburbs Teammates going "hammer and tong" against the Manly Sea Eagles "Silvertails" show a very different game as compared to now.

Stories abound of Tommy having his say and motivating his teammates. One that I liked was at a State of Origin camp when he, as the incumbent NSW halfback, was paired to share a hotel room with the up and coming half back, Steve Mortimer.

It is reported that when Messrs Raudonikas and Mortimer got to the room, Steve Mortimer threw his kit on the double bed, as if he was going to sleep there. That would leave Tommy with the single bed. Tommy, in his own way, told Mortimer that he wasn't state halfback yet and that Tommy would be taking the double bed.

Just to make sure that Raudonikis's point was clear, he proceeded to pick up Mortimer's bag, opened the window, and threw it outside to the street six floors below. Raudonikis got the bed and retained the half back spot for another three (3) years, by which time Tommy was ready to leave.

I was then out for dinner last Friday night when my phone pinged. I discreetly turned it over and saw a notification announcing the passing of Prince Phillip at age 99 years. Married to the Queen for 73 years, he has been her "rock" once saying, "He is someone who doesn't take easily to compliments, but he has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years, and I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know." Strong praise indeed.

Prince Phillip travelled to Australia 21 times and it was on 22 March 2000 when Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Phillip travelled to Bourke for a visit. Whilst I wasn't in Bourke, I have previously talked about the visit to Bourke with former Bourke Public School Principal, Paul Loxley. The excitement emanating from the visit was still very evident as he told me about the day, many years later. It was certainly a great day for Bourke and hanging proudly in the Council Chamber is a lovely picture of Her Majesty from the day.

From all reports Prince Phillip had an interesting sense of humour. I have read that this sense of humour was on display during his visit to Bourke in 2000, when, as part of the visit the Royals attended a local cotton farm. Apparently at the farm he renamed the piezometer, a well-known device used to measure water depth in soil, calling it a pissometer! Good on him.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"It was relief. Didn't sink in straight away, you know... I was just emotional. I didn't cry or anything, I just felt really good."

1962 Commonwealth Gold Medallist, Mr Percy Hobson reflecting on his success, 36 years on.

Mark Riley
General Manager