



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 6 May 2021

Health Inquiry

Last Friday, Mayor Barry Hollman and Councils Manager of Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, travelled to Cobar and following the taking of an oath to tell the truth, they subsequently provided evidence to the inquiry being conducted by the NSW Legislative Council into “health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.”

This high-profile inquiry, which has been the subject of significant media interest in both rural and metropolitan areas, previously invited submissions on the matter. Interestingly a total of 705 submissions were received which, in any terms, is a very significant number and reflects the widespread concern across rural, regional and remote areas of NSW in respect of health issues.

In presenting to the Inquiry, Barry and Leonie focused on three (3) areas, being the need for a clinical review of the health system to support rural and remote areas; for the health system to support medical and hospital staff that are on the ground and; increase services that were once provided in our community.

Of the 705 submissions received, many included the issue of unmanageable workloads and staff “burn out” as a result of the long hours staff are expected to work to cover shifts. A number of presenters at the inquiry on Friday gave detailed accounts of patients not receiving quality care due to lack of staff in hospitals or multipurpose facilities around the area. Presentations were also made in regard to the lack of maternity services available in rural and remote areas, with the opportunity for mums to birth on Country being a key point raised along with the cost and family needs associated with travelling away while waiting for their baby to be born.

Other health issues raised included, the lack of Mental Health Professionals, Drug and Alcohol Councillors, Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists.

Whilst the Inquiry Panel will undoubtedly bring the many issues raised into a comprehensive report with a multitude of recommendations, the challenge ultimately rests with the Government of the day to actually address and do something about the current state of rural, regional and remote health and hospital services in NSW. After all, the statistics don’t lie. In its submission to the Inquiry, the NSW Rural Health Research Alliance notes that in 2017-18, “deaths due to diabetes, suicide, land transport accidents and liver disease were all more than 1.5 times greater in Remote and Very Remote areas compared to Major Cities. Linked to this poorer health and higher mortality are major differences in estimates of life expectancy, with people residing in regional and remote areas of Australia living shorter lives than metropolitan residents by up to 5 years.”

Water Treatment Plant

Work continues on the final stages of the construction of the new Bourke Water Treatment Plant. As part of these final stages, it will be necessary for the filtered water supply for Bourke to be shut off for four (4) hours from 12.01am and 4.00am on Friday morning of 7 May 2021. This will mean that filtered water will not be available for taps, showers, toilets, dishwashers, washing machines, and the like, for this four (4) hour period. In last week's paper, the incorrect day and date for this shut-off was advertised and I apologise for any confusion this may cause.

Bourke Show

From all reports, a very successful Bourke Show was held last week at the Renshaw Recreation Area. A big thank you goes out to all those volunteers who work so hard to make this event the success that it is. Without our volunteers, many community events, not just in Bourke but across the Nation, simply wouldn't happen.

Tooralé National Park

Council has received advice that the NSW Government has recently adopted a plan of management for Tooralé National Park and Tooralé State Conservation Area under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The plan of management enables improved visitor access and supports implementation of the Tooralé Water Infrastructure project.

Tooralé National Park and Tooralé State Conservation Area covers an area of 85,251 hectares located to the east of Bourke at the junction of the Darling and Warrego rivers. They are within the Country of the Kurnu-Baakandji People. Central to the ongoing management of Tooralé is recognition of its importance as part of Country for Aboriginal people.

Tooralé provides access to Country for the practice, renewal and creation of tradition, customs and cultural activities. This includes teaching children culture, holding culture camps and involving Aboriginal people in decision-making about how Country is managed. Tooralé is especially important due to its location at the junction of the Warrego and Darling Rivers that are both of spiritual and cultural significance.

Road Works

Council's roads maintenance and reconstruction works program continues in earnest with numerous projects currently underway.

On the State Highways that run through the Bourke Shire area, Council has recently completed 3 km of road widening on the Kamilaroi Highway, towards Brewarrina, with further widening of a 20km section of the Mitchell Highway south of Bourke, towards Byrock, currently in progress. In addition to these road widening works, Council staff have been busy with roadside slashing works between Bourke and Byrock on the state highway. With the distance between Bourke and Byrock being some 80 kilometres and the need for each side of the verge to be mown two (2) slasher widths wide, the task is the equivalent of slashing for 320 kilometres.

The sealing of a further section of Main Road 405, being the Bourke to Wanaaring Road, is in progress and when complete in coming weeks, all but 38 km of this important roadway remains to be sealed. Council takes whatever opportunity it can to seek funding for this remaining length of road. In addition to these sealing works, Council is also undertaking repair work to the previously damaged Cuttaburra Creek Bridge No 1.

In undertaking these repairs the bridge is closed and a side-track is in operation. The Repair Program in respect of Main Road 404, being the Dowling Track from Bourke to Hungerford, being 5 km of sealing work, is in progress. These resealing works are planned to be completed in May 2021. On the Bourke to Louth Main Road, a top grade has been completed.

With various rural roads effected as a result of the recent, and now falling flood waters, Council is in the process of undertaking a top grade on the West Culgoa Road, with a recent top grade also completed on the Burrawantie Road from Enngonia to Len Mallon Bridge.

Motorists are asked to reduce their speed in the vicinity of all road works for both their safety and the safety of Council staff and contractors.

Waste Bins

I take this opportunity to remind residents that when placing their waste bins out for collection, to please place them at least one (1) metre away from obstructions, such as power poles or trees located on the nature strip. Properties that are rated for more than one (1) bin to be collected are requested to place the bins one (1) metre apart to allow safe collection.

In addition to this, there have been some recent instances where bins have been overflowing. Council will only collect bins where the garbage is wholly contained within the bin surrounds with the lid closed. If additional bin collections are required, please contact Council on 6830 8000.

Staff Training Day

Councils Annual Staff Information Day will be held on Monday, 10 May 2021. With all staff involved so that all staff hear the same information, it will be necessary to close the Council Offices in Mitchell St, the Library, the Depot and Workshop and the Waste Depot for the day. Should residents need to make contact with Council on that day in respect of an emergency, please call Councils Duty Officer on 0419 722 055 who will take the required action.

Quote of the Week!

"Reaching your destination is more important than the direction and speed at which you travel". - R.J. Intindola

Mark Riley
General Manager