



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
20 May 2021**

Visit to Darling Farms

Last Thursday along with Mayor Barry Hollman, Manager Corporate Services, Leonie Brown and Councillor Ian Cole we visited Darling Farms to see the magnificent cotton crop and have a hands on introduction to the picking process.

The crop this year due to the rain and flow in the river last year has allowed for the planting and harvesting of one of the best crops seen in Bourke for many a year. It is amazing the difference a change of season makes and when water is available. My understanding is that the recent flows in the river will ensure a further crop being harvested this time next year.

Tourism Update

As a result of the rapidly falling height of the Darling River at Bourke, the P.V Jandra recommenced operating last Friday. With tourist numbers on the increase, there will undoubtedly be many tourists who will be delighted to hear that the boat is again operating. Under the command of Captain Allan Bartsch, one (1) hour tours depart Kidman Camp, North Bourke at 9.00am and 2.30pm each day, Monday to Saturday inclusive, with a two (2) hour tour departing at 2.00pm on Sundays. The Jandra provides an excellent opportunity to re-live the history of the days of the mighty paddleboat era. Bookings are available at the Exhibition Centre or go to www.visitbourke.com.au

As part of the recent Federal Budget, the Treasurer announced that the Budget had been prepared on the basis of our borders not reopening to permit international travel until mid-2022. This time frame, whilst not necessarily perfect for our national economy, will undoubtedly result in continuing levels of high domestic tourism. This is good for Bourke and the wider western region of NSW.

During the period when the Jandra was not operating, Captain Allan was redeployed to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre where, in conjunction with Groundsman Adam, they have been able to significantly improve the state of the Centres landscaping such that its public presentation and aesthetic appeal have increased substantially. With the installation of an automated watering system at the Centre, the vision of a “green oasis” when water is available, is well and truly on track.

Since Easter the number of visitors has increased, I am sure we all notice the number of additional caravans and camping trailers whilst out and about. Just this week I am told the town had no accommodation during the week, this is a great thing not only for the accommodation providers, but also other businesses that will benefit from visitors making purchases.

Tour de OROC

Following a series of meetings, the route for this year's Tour de OROC has been determined and the group of cyclists will be in Bourke for an overnight stay on 6 October 2021.

There will be approximately 30 cyclists who will form the peloton and they will be accompanied by a support crew of up to six (6) people in cars, to transport food and equipment and also provide awareness to other road users.

The coordination of the event takes a considerable amount of effort and resources and all is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Riders and the support crew give a large commitment of time not only for the ride itself but also training and obtaining sponsorship.

All funds raised will go to support Macquarie Homestay which provides accommodation for those persons from the Orana Region and beyond who need to travel and stay in Dubbo for medical treatment. Many Bourke residents have already benefited from this great facility so I encourage the community to get behind this great event on 6 October 2021. Further information in regards to the activities Bourke will host will be provided at a later date.

Mosquito's

With water levels having dropped in the Darling River, favorable breeding conditions have resulted in the number of mosquito's increasing rapidly.

By using flyscreens on windows and doors, screening chimneys, vents and other entrances you can generally stop adult mosquitoes from entering the home. Ensure that any damaged screens are repaired.

Consider also using a surface insecticide spray in areas where mosquitoes like to rest. During the day, mosquitoes rest and hide in cool shady areas such as in and around the home before emerging at dusk to feed. Make sure you avoid aquaria and fish ponds as fish are acutely sensitive to these insecticides.

Mosquitoes need water to breed and some mosquitoes can breed in very small amounts of water, such as in the water that collects in a discarded soft-drink can.

Measures to reduce the risk of mosquitoes breeding in around the home include:

- Cleaning up your backyard and removing all water-holding rubbish, including tires and containers
- Keeping your lawns mowed
- Flushing and wiping out bird baths and water features once a week.
- Filling pot plant bases with sand to avoid standing water
- Storing anything that can hold water undercover or in a dry place, and keeping bins covered
- Flushing out the leaves of water-holding plants such as bromeliads once a week
- Keeping drains and roof guttering clear to avoid standing water
- Covering or securely screening the openings of septic tanks and rainwater tanks.

Properly cleaned and chlorinated swimming pools are rarely a source of mosquito breeding but neglected pools can be a haven for mosquitoes.

Mice Plague

I received an email last week from NSW Farmers advising that they had joined forces with the Country Women's Association in calling for the State Government to implement a mouse plague financial support package, providing up to \$25,000 per farm business to assist with baiting costs.

The two (2) organisations held a parliamentary briefing last Tuesday week to outline the significant financial and health impacts of the mouse plague that continues to spread across the state, particularly through the grains belt.

The loss of stored grain and fodder is having the greatest financial impact, with NSW Farmers advising that a third of respondents to a survey they initiated reporting estimated losses of between \$50,000 and \$150,000.

The survey results also showed that the costs of baiting so far for some exceeds \$150,000, with 30% of respondents to the survey having spent between \$20,000 and \$150,000 already.

The survey also revealed that the mouse plague is showing that people are having issues with sleeping, which can then flow onto mental and physical health issues with reports of people being bitten and mice also making their way into rain water tanks causing contamination of domestic water storages with different bacteria such as salmonella.

As we would all know the mice plague is not just effecting farm businesses. Regional hotels, retail and food businesses, bakeries, supermarkets, child care centres and aged care homes have also felt the impact of this plague. I heard of a motel well to the east of Bourke having to close because of the rampant numbers of mice and the number of customers being bitten. For some after drought, bushfires, floods and COVID, a mice plague was the last thing the regions needed.

On Thursday last week, I was pleased to hear that NSW Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Adam Marshall had announced a \$50m funding support package with the Minister aiming to "knock these things into oblivion."

Rates instalment and Water accounts due

A reminder that the payment of the final instalment to Council of the 2020/2021 rates and charges and the last water charges are due on 31 May 2021.

If anyone has any queries in respect of these matters, they should contact Councils Revenue Officer, during office hours Monday to Thursday, by phoning 68 308 000.

Next Meeting of Council

The next monthly meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday, 24 May 2021 commencing at 9.00am with a Public Forum session, if requested. The Council Meeting will otherwise commence at 9.15am with members of the public being able to attend the meeting in person, subject to social distancing requirements.

Should members of the public wish to speak at a Public Forum, they must first make an application to the Council which must be received by 4.00pm on Friday, 21 May 2021. Applicants must identify the item of business on the agenda of the Council meeting that the person wishes to speak on, and whether they wish to speak 'for' or 'against' the item. Please contact Councils Executive Assistant, Ms Kai Howard-Oakman on 6830 8000 if you wish to speak at the Forum.

Council will consider the adoption of Council's Draft Operational Plan (Budget) for 2021/2022 at this meeting.

This week in history

I was interested to see that Bourke was proclaimed a township on 17 May 1863. The North Bourke Bridge was officially opened on 4th May 1883, 5 years after the original plans were signed.

Quote of the Week!

"There are few sights more pleasant to the eye than a wide cotton field when it is in bloom. It presents an appearance of purity, like an immaculate expanse of light, new-fallen snow."

Solomon Northup

*Mark Riley
General Manager*