



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 10 June 2021

General Managers Forum

I attended a Forum of Orana region Council General Managers in Gilgandra last Friday. We heard from the Department of Regional NSW in regard to the Government’s work in response to the high level of unmet housing demand across the regions. This high level of demand is not just limited to a lack of rental properties or greenfield sites to allow the construction of new houses, even if you can find a builder, in the larger regional localities such as Wagga, Dubbo or Tamworth. Rather, it is also an issue in Bourke with both new to town government and private sector employees finding it very difficult to secure accommodation.

We also heard from RDA Orana on the housing issue and from the Local Land Service (LLS) on the impact of the mice plague across regional NSW. Also presenting was Alister Lunn who is the Western Area Director for Transport NSW. Alister heads the Department that is responsible for the provision of safe, integrated and efficient transport systems for the people of Western NSW. His region comprises essentially 60% of NSW from basically Penrith at the base of the Blue Mountains and all points west to Broken Hill and north west to the Qld Border. I took the opportunity to talk with him, without notice, on a couple of road matters relating to Bourke. With Alister’s transport responsibilities exceeding an area in excess of 400,000 square kilometres, to his considerable credit, he was right across the matters raised.

The Hon Mark Coulton.

Mayor Barry Hollman and Councils Manager Corporate Services, Leonie Brown; Manager Environmental Services, Dwayne Willoughby and Manager Roads, Mark Gordon, met with the Federal Member for Parkes, the Hon Mark Coulton, MP, last Friday. Mark is also the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government so it was great for Councils representatives to be able to meet with him in Bourke and discuss matters relating to the Shire. The opportunity was also taken to show Mr Coulton some of the projects undertaken by Council as a result of the receipt of funding under the Federal Government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program. From all reports Mark was impressed with the vibrancy of Bourke and the positive impact of projects either completed or underway such as the main street project, the wharf project, the walkway to North Bourke and the new toilet facilities at Rotary Park, to name but a few.

Medical Students

Friday was a busy day for the Mayor and Leonie, because on Friday night they “backed up” and welcomed to Bourke 20 medical students from Sydney University who were undertaking a tour of western NSW to gain a better understanding of rural health and hopefully inspire them to consider a career in a regional/remote community. Each

of the students was provided with a small memento of their visit to Bourke whilst Barry spoke passionately to the group about Bourke and further, encouraged them to experience rural health.

Possum Swinton, Project Officer for the Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health, the University of Sydney and North West Academic Centre does a tremendous job in bringing student to the area. Possum didn't let this opportunity slip by and arranged a very informative evening for the students. The group were welcomed with a smoking ceremony performed by Jamie Moore and Jamie also provided an opportunity to visit the Aboriginal Art Gallery to the visitors.

On Saturday morning, all the students participated in the Bourke Racecourse Parkrun where Leonie had an opportunity to catch up again with the group. From all accounts, the students learnt a lot about the community in the short time they were here, and found out there are opportunities in the bush.

Council Elections

Don't forget the upcoming Council elections on 4 September 2021. Voting is compulsory for people over 18 years of age for these elections. If you wish to make sure that you are on the roll, go to <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/check-electoral-enrolment> At 6pm on Monday 26 July 2021, the roll will be closed off for the purposes of being a candidate, or a nominator. That same day, candidate nominations open.

As advised last week, the NSW Office of Local Government has released an information booklet titled "Stand for Your Community – All You Need to Know about Becoming a Councillor in NSW". If you are thinking of putting your hand up as a candidate for the first time, this booklet is a good place to start.

To access the information, go to <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/become-a-councillor/information-for-candidates/> Alternatively search, OLG Council elections.

Visitors to Bourke

I am not sure if it is the current COVID situation in Victoria or whether it's the standard transition of caravaners heading north, but whatever it is, there are certainly a lot of tourists passing through and staying at Bourke. The PV Jandra, which is now back in action after the high river, is experiencing very solid passenger numbers on its twice daily cruises. Likewise, the Back O' Bourke Visitor Information Centre is assisting significant numbers of visitors and I certainly thank the Council staff on the boat and at the Centre for their considerable efforts at this busy time. As a further example of the number of people in town, on the weekend Council opened the J B Renshaw Sporting Complex for caravaners due to the Caravan Parks being fully booked. It's a good problem!

Closed Roads

As I write this Column, there are still various dirt roads around the Shire that are closed to traffic. With more rain expected this week, I would remind people who are not familiar with our area that all unsealed roads are closed when wet.

Apart from the safety factor, unfortunately Council wastes valuable resources repairing damage done by vehicles using closed or wet roads. Often because of a lack of

finances to repair the damaged road, the road may have to stay like that for some time before Council is not able to fund the repairs. This means that those people who live along the respective road are disadvantaged because of someone else's actions.

Council has the right to prosecute offenders and they may be held responsible to pay for any damage caused. This can be substantial.

Tennis/Netball Courts

Now that former Bourke resident, Jeff Costello, has completed the installation of two (2) synthetic tennis courts at Louth, which look fantastic, he has turned his attention to the repair of the accidentally damaged tennis and netball courts located in Central Park, Bourke.

Site set up and the commencement of the removal of the damaged synthetic grass took place last week with the project now heading into the preparation of the subbase in readiness for the laying of the replacement synthetic grass. Thereafter, sanding of the playing surface will take place before a final inspection by Council staff and handover of the project. Assuming the project doesn't run into further inclement weather, the courts should be playable by Monday 5 July. The damage to the courts was unfortunate and Council thanks the Bourke Tennis and Netball Clubs for their patience and understanding as Council looked to undertake repairs over a period of time.

It's a Small World

I spoke in a previous Column about catching up with former Bourke schoolteacher, Ray Collins, when he was in Bourke a couple of weeks ago. At that time, I hadn't seen Ray for many a year. On Saturday in Dubbo, I attended a memorial game day to honour the passing of three (3) club stalwarts from the Dubbo Kangaroos Rugby Club.

Interestingly, the near first person I ran into upon arrival at the ground was Ray Collins! Ray was there with his brother Gerry, who once taught at Byrock and Dubbo before joining ABC radio. During his radio career, Gerry Collins broadcast 23 Australian Olympic Gold medal wins, rugby world cup wins and many other sporting moments. The men honoured were Charlie Holland, who once operated the Carriers Arms Hotel in Bourke back in the 60's and 70's before moving to Dubbo and running the Dubbo Hotel; Ollie Hall who, after growing up and playing rugby in Dubbo, ultimately played for the Wallabies before turning his hand to acting and Mick Frew who was a tenacious player for the Roo's during the 70's and who married my first cousin. I caught up with Mick's brother, Peter Frew, with Peter also having been a solid footballer in his day having been plucked out of school at Dubbo High back in 1974 to play in the Amco Cup winning Western Division Team. A good day with some connections to Bourke.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

*"But how the world turns. One day, cock of the walk. Next, a feather duster."
Tina Turner to Mel Gibson in the presence of Ollie Hall in Mad Max - Beyond Thunderdome*

Mark Riley
General Manager