



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
17 June 2021”**

COVID Alert

The news that two (2) errant Victorians, one who tested positive to the COVID virus had travelled along the Newell Highway, stopping at a variety of towns including Dubbo, certainly raised the alarm stakes when their travels were revealed in the media last week. They have essentially put inland NSW at risk. Not good.

Pictures of car after car lined up at the Dubbo Showground as people attended a COVID testing clinic clearly reflected the community’s concerns. Councils in general spend a significant amount of resources promoting their respective localities and whilst the old saying is “any publicity is good publicity” in this case, I can’t agree. With the matter hitting all avenues of mass media leading into a long weekend, I suspect that many in Dubbo, and for that matter most of regional NSW, had a significantly quieter long weekend in terms of trade than what they had anticipated as people stayed away from a potential problem.

But lost trade is only part of it. The potential for the loss of life is obviously the bigger issue. Remember to use the QR Readers and check in to venues that you visit, socially distance and maintain your hand hygiene.

Governor

Louth and Bourke were honoured this week to host The Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency, Margaret Beazley AC QC, and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson.

Her Excellency was sworn in as Governor of New South Wales in May 2019. Prior to her appointment, she enjoyed a long and distinguished career in law, spanning 43 years. Her Excellency was the first woman to sit exclusively as a judge in the Federal Court of Australia and then become the first woman appointed to the NSW Court of Appeal.

The visit to Louth saw Her Excellency visit the recently completed Royal Flying Doctor Service facility in the Village. After that it was back onto the road for the journey to Bourke where Mayor Barry hosted both her and Mr Wilson on a trip along the Darling River on the PV Jandra in the company of numerous visitors to Bourke at the time, who were also experiencing the delights of a relaxed river cruise.

It was then onto the Council Chambers in Mitchell Street, where the Governor met with Bourke Shire Councillors for a “roundtable” discussion and then later in the day the Governor wrapped up her visit with a Vice-Regal Reception. The Governor and Mr Wilson certainly maintained a cracking pace whilst in Bourke and the ability for Council

and the community to bring to her attention the history and current activities and issues in Bourke was very much appreciated.

Wanaaring

Back in February this year at Councils round of Community Village Meetings, residents of Wanaaring in attendance were in favour of the removal of the levee from Vicary Street, Wanaaring, sooner rather than later. They advised that the current route through the village was difficult for road train traffic, the existing route pushed heavy traffic past the school and further it meant that tourist traffic was not easily able to access the hotel, when and if it reopens. Following investigations, it was determined that the most efficient option, given the high costs associated with any installation of a flood barrier system, was to retain the earthen levee as constructed last year except for the removal of that section of the levee essentially, where it crosses Vicary Street, near Hebden Street and that in the event of future flooding concerns, Council subsequently reinstate the previously removed section of the levee. The removal of the section of the levee at Vicary Street near Hebden Street has now been completed and I look forward to the re-opening of the Wanaaring Hotel to service both the community and the increased levels of tourists currently being experienced in the Far West of NSW.

Digital Connectivity

Council in August 2020 gave consideration to advice from the Hon. Mark Coulton MP, Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government and Federal Member for Parkes that the Australian Government had committed up to \$53 million to a new Regional Connectivity Program to improve access to and participation in the digital economy in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The purpose of the Program is to provide targeted, place-based investment in telecommunications infrastructure projects which facilitate economic and social opportunities in communities that are not classified as in a Major Urban area and that are outside the existing NBN fixed-line footprint.

Discussions ensued with a firm by the name of Field Solutions Group (FSG) with a view to the submission of an application under the Program. FSG specialises in delivering connectivity solutions to rural, regional and remote Australia and over the past four years has developed and operates the largest national non-NBN fixed wireless network. Ultimately FSG lodged the application with Government with Council providing a letter of support committing in-kind support by providing facilities for the erection of required infrastructure atop one of its water reservoirs.

It was pleasing to receive advice from Mark Coulton last week that the application of FSG was successful such that Field Solutions Group are to receive near \$590,000 in funding to deploy a fixed wireless network in the Bourke shire. They will use this funding to extend high-speed broadband connectivity into areas in the Bourke region with limited existing coverage, enabling the uptake of new agricultural and business technologies. This is an exciting step forward for the Shire with the delivery of the project under the Program to begin shortly and expected to be completed by June 2022.

RANGELAND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

I received advice this week from Western Local Land Services that it is offering landholders, groups and organisations a funding opportunity to help to improve agricultural productivity and ecological sustainability.

The rangeland rehabilitation program has a priority area within the Western region which is the Coolibah-Black Box Woodlands (CBB Woodland) endangered ecological community. Successful applicants in this program will carry out soil erosion works that will improve the condition of vegetation in the CBB Woodland. A map of the Woodland (the priority area) is included in the guidelines on the Local Land Services website – www.ils.nsw.gov.au.

In respect of the other program, Ecosystem Management Understanding (EMU) participants will be shown how to understand landscape processes, conditions and trends with on-ground projects developed that address ecological sustainability and agricultural productivity. The EMU program does not have a priority area however all applicants must be based within the Western Local Land Services region (see website).

Applications for both programs are now open with the guidelines and application forms being found at www.ils.nsw.gov.au. Applications for both programs close Monday 12 July 2021.

Further information about the programs is available by contacting Rangeland Rehabilitation Officer, Paul Theakston on 0428 259 231 or paul.theakston@ils.nsw.gov.au.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

“All this grief caused by two selfish individuals.....I cannot believe what they have done”.

Moree Mayor, Katrina Humphries, talking on Sydney radio in response to the COVID infected travellers from Victoria.

Mark Riley
General Manager