



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

COVID CONFUSION

On Thursday last week, just as details of the Bourke Community COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic were being released in Bourke, the Federal Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt, was announcing that the Australian Government had made the decision that only people over 60 should now take the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine due to 12 new cases of a rare, but sometimes serious, blood condition.

Being under 60 years of age and having had my first dose of the Astra vaccine a few weeks ago now, I along with some 815,000 other Australians over the age of 50 who had received their first dose, were caught up in the confusion of the announcement. The Nations Chief Medical Officer subsequently urged the over 50’s first dose Astra cohort, to proceed with the second dose despite the changed advice. Whilst people’s hesitancy given the changing advice is understood, from my perspective it is imperative to get that second dose.

As I write this column, I have yet to hear the outcome of the Community Vaccination Clinic held in Bourke on Tuesday and Wednesday this week. It is my hope that the community did take advantage of this great opportunity as provided by the Western NSW Local Health District. As a result of the Federal Health Ministers advice last week, the LHD revised their criteria in terms of the vaccines available in Bourke. In this regard the Pfizer Vaccine was available to All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between the ages of 16 and 59 years old and anyone aged between 40 to 59 years old. The AstraZeneca vaccine was available to all people over the age of 60.

ANDREW AND BELINDA HURST

As previously reported in the Western Herald, Commander of the Central North Police District, Superintendent Andrew Hurst and family will be leaving Bourke shortly with Andrew taking up a leadership role at the new Crime Prevention Command at Police Headquarters in Parramatta. Andrew’s wife Belinda, also in the Police Force, has secured a position at a South West Sydney Station. One of Andrews final Official tasks before he leaves Bourke is to meet with Councillors following next Mondays Council Meeting, as he has done most months during his time as Commander. These briefing sessions are a valuable interface between Council and the Police and allow discussions on relevant matters relating to the community.

Andrews new position relates to studies he completed last year at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom and the Churchill Fellowship he was awarded to identify behavioural change programs for domestic violence (DV) offenders. Andrews passion in seeking to see reductions in DV incidents will see him well placed to pursue such an outcome.

Without wanting to gazump Monday's discussions, I am certain that the Mayor and Councillors will be quick to congratulate him on his new role and wish Andrew, Belinda and family all the very best for their move to Sydney and also thank him for his contribution in improving the quality of life of residents in not just Bourke, but the wider Central North Police District.

OPEN DAY AT TOORALE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

Preparations are well underway for an Open Day at Toorale this Saturday 26 June 2021. Park neighbours, downstream landowners, research organisations, government agencies and those interested in Toorale and environmental water will see Boera and Homestead Dam sites first-hand before construction begins next month.

The Open Day will provide an opportunity to learn more about the aims, benefits and challenges of the dam project, and the social, cultural and environmental values that have been considered. During the day, input from stakeholders will be recorded to help inform a process to keep everyone involved throughout the project until completion.

Whilst the Open Day is contingent on suitable weather, on-site conditions and COVID restrictions, numbers are limited for safety reasons and COVID health protocols. If you have any inquiries, please email Toorale.project@environment.nsw.gov.au.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

As previously advised elections for Councillors on the Bourke Shire Council will be held on Saturday 4 September 2021. I received advice this week that the Indigenous business, Politics in Colour, will be holding a workshop at Dubbo Regional Council from 10.00am to 4.00pm on Saturday 3 July 2021 aimed at encouraging more aboriginal people to become involved in their local Council elections. The free workshop includes seven interactive sessions over one day, covering topics like the Local Government political system, candidate eligibility, governance and risk management, building community support, running for Local office and much, much more.

If you're interested you can register at: <https://events.humanitix.com/dubbo-council-political-candidate-training>

NEXT MEETING OF COUNCIL

The next monthly meeting of Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday, 28 June 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, as per Councils adopted Code of Meeting Practice, they must first make an application to the Council which must be received by 4.00pm on Friday, 25 June 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 Council on 6830 8000 if you wish to speak at the Forum.

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL NSW

In between last week's visit to Bourke by the Governor and a host of other activities, Mayor Barry, Councils Manager Corporate Services, Leonie Brown and I were afforded the opportunity to meet with the Secretary of the NSW Department of Regional NSW, Gary Barnes and his Executive Leadership Team. This was a fantastic opportunity which allowed us to talk about numerous matters relating to Bourke. Gary and his team were in Bourke to participate in the Maranguka Cultural Competency Training Program held over two (2) days at the Back O' Bourke Function Centre. These Programs are being well received by Government and it is pleasing to see Departmental Secretaries and other high ranking government officials in Bourke to attend this training.

BIRRANG DRIVER TRAINING

Over recent months as I have moved to and from the Council Offices in Mitchell St, I have noticed a woman regularly in attendance at the building in a Birrang Uniform. Her regular attendance ultimately got the better of me and I sourced out who she was and why she was regularly there. I was advised that Zerelda O'Toole is part of the Birrang Learner Driver Program which is about eliminating kids not holding or being eligible to gain a driver's licence, which if not addressed, is a significant barrier to employment.

Once the learner has achieved a consistent pass rate, in respect of the NSW Driver Knowledge Test, Zerelda guides the student through the process of booking their learner driver test at the Service NSW Kiosk at Bourke Council. Once the learners permit has been achieved, Zerelda then assists the client to accrue the hours of driving required to gain their provisional licence.

Birrang Enterprise has purchased dual control cars which they use to assist the learners in general operations of the vehicle and to accrue their hours. I am told that for the majority of the students who start the driver training, without the avenue to accrue the required hours a Provisional licence would not be able to be achieved.

The gaining of their licence removes a major vocational barrier. As Birrang advises, obtaining a licence also has a positive ripple effect on many non-vocational barriers e.g improved levels of confidence and motivation and an elevated level of independence. A good outcome for both the individual and the community. Good job Birrang and Zerelda.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK! "Once I got my drivers licence, everyone treated me like an adult." – Candice Cameron.

Mark Riley
General Manager