



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
1 July 2021”**

Health Alert in Bourke

Last Thursday evening at approximately 9.20pm, Mayor Barry received a telephone call from the Chief Executive of the Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD), Scott McLachlan. Scott advised that as a result of NSW Health’s ongoing sewage surveillance program in Bourke, fragments of the virus that cause COVID-19 had been detected at the Bourke Sewage Treatment Plant.

Phone calls, texts, and emails all followed and resulted in the Western NSW Local Health District mobilising very quickly to establish a drive-through clinic at Davidson Oval, with testing commencing by 9.30am the next morning. The drive-through clinic operated for four (4) days and I extend Councils thanks to Chris Druce and her staff from the LHD who operated the clinic so efficiently for those days. Interestingly I saw a news segment on Sunday evening reporting that in Sydney, there was a one hour wait for testing !

I received my first phone call from the media at 5.23am on Friday morning. Meetings, media, questions, inspections.....it was a busy day and certainly not just for me, but for a variety of Council staff and the numerous other parties involved as a result of the announcement. Police, Regional NSW, NSW Fire and Rescue, Rural Fire Service, Community and Justice, and obviously NSW Health, to name but a few of the Agencies. Friday evening saw Mayor Barry appearing on a COVID segment on Nine News that was aired in Sydney after a hastily arranged interview for him earlier in the day in Bourke.

On Sunday, NSW Health advised that the “ongoing sewage surveillance program has found no fragments of the virus that causes COVID-19 at the Bourke sewage treatment plant in western NSW. After a positive sample from the Bourke sewage treatment plant was returned on 22 June, samples collected on two occasions on Friday detected no fragments of the virus.” Phew.

Despite the receipt of this most relieving news, what is very evident is that this pandemic is not going away very quickly. Since Friday, matters have moved such that the Greater Sydney area, including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Wollongong, is now in lockdown until Friday 9 July 2021. A two (2) week lockdown. There are also restrictions in place for the balance of NSW, including Bourke, which includes the wearing of masks at non-residential settings, including indoor workplaces and at organised outdoor events, at least for the next two weeks. The [nsw.gov.au](https://www.nsw.gov.au) website provides the various other requirements.

Good hand hygiene, physical distancing, use of QR codes to check-in and staying home and getting tested if you’re feeling sick, are practices that are undoubtedly now more important than ever.

Mark Coulton MP

I was disappointed to read last week that with the change of leadership at the Federal National Party, the Federal Member for Parkes and the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, was being touted as a “casualty” of an expected reshuffle of cabinet posts by the new Party Leader, Barnaby Joyce. The reshuffle became reality last Sunday afternoon. Politics is a tough game.

In sending Mark a quick message, I stated that the ability for the Council of Bourke to have had direct access to a Federal Minister had been fantastic. I have always appreciated Marks ability to simply get things done. He was always happy to be of assistance to me in my former role at Dubbo Council and nothing had changed when I requested assistance now that I am in Bourke. As an example, it was Marks office that was initially contacted by Council in respect of the view that a COVID Vaccination Clinic was considered necessary in Bourke. Mark worked with Scott McLachlan of the LHD and within a couple of weeks, the vaccination team arrives in Bourke. Good one. Mark was on the phone last week to advise that Councils application under Round 3 of the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program had been successful in the amount of \$974,000 to allow Council to undertake the ‘Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre - Updating our History’ project. Mark is still the Federal Member for Parkes representing Bourke; however, I extend a thank you to Mark Coulton for his significant efforts whilst he held his Ministerial posts.

Flag Raising Ceremony

In the company of Mayor Barry and Councils Manager Corporate Services, Leonie Brown, we attended a flag raising ceremony at the Bourke Police Station last Thursday to recognise the initial raising of the Aboriginal Flag at the Station. Phil Sullivan gave a great Welcome to Country whilst Deputy Commissioner Gary Worboys APM spoke passionately about the importance of the occasion. It was good to catch up with various Officers, including Assistant Commissioner Geoff McKechnie from Dubbo who is the Commander of the Western Region NSW Police Force. I also caught up with Natasha Everett who is now the Business Manager with Western Region. Natasha worked at Dubbo Council essentially during my term as General Manager and she worked and studied hard to better her career prospects and it was great to catch up with her and talk about her new role.

Online Planning Portal

From 1 July 2021, all Development Applications (DA’s), Complying Development Certificates, Construction, Occupation or Subdivision Certificates are required to be lodged via the NSW Planning Portal. Council will no longer be able to accept paper applications over the counter or electronically, via email with the Portal aiming to improve application determination times, increase the transparency of the planning system, and ensure greater accountability of all stakeholders.

The NSW Planning Portal is an online system that has been developed by the NSW Government’s Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE). The system will allow our customers to submit and track their planning applications 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Council would encourage residents who are looking to shortly lodge an application to either talk to their builder, designer or contact Council to find out more about the Portal.

The Portal also contains a comprehensive collection of resources that will assist applicants and developers with Quick Reference Guides, Fact Sheets, Useful Links and much more.

Further information regarding the NSW Planning Portal is available on Council' website at www.bourke.nsw.gov.au, by contacting Council on 6830 8000 or by visiting the NSW Planning Portal at <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/support-training/applicant-resources>

NSW State Budget.

The NSW State Budget was handed down last week and there was a fair bit in it for local government and the communities it represents. Some of the relevant features are:

The provision of a one-off payment to Councils to fully fund the increase in local government's 2021/22 Emergency Services Levy (ESL) contributions. This payment will ensure that Bourke Council pays the same amount in 2021/2022 as it did in the 2019/2020 financial year pre-COVID-19. \$240 million was provided for next year to improve road and connectivity conditions and help support jobs through the Fixing Local Roads and Bridges program. Bourke Council has received close to \$10m in the last 12 months via this program to undertake the sealing of various roads in the Shire including the Coronga Peak Road, with works on this road currently underway. Almost \$332 million has been provided in 2021/2022 for road safety investment such as audio tactile markings, wide centre lines and crash barriers for regional roads. \$250m has been provided to support upgrades to regional roads as part of the Regional Road Transfer and Road Classification Review. This review is about the NSW Government potentially taking back responsibility for some 15,000 km of roads throughout NSW. Council previously presented to the Review Panel based on ownership of the Bourke - Wanaaring Road being transferred to the NSW Government, as a minimum. Councils transfer offer is also on the basis of Council entering into a contract with Government which would see Council continuing to undertake both improvement works and the necessary program and emergency maintenance works on the roadway. This budget funding will enable the review to progress.

Importantly, the budget also includes \$64million over four (4) years for what the Government refers to as the "Future Ready Regions" strategy to progress drought resilience initiatives. I further note that \$27.9 million was committed over four (4) years to fund the expansion of the NSW Drug Court to Dubbo in an effort to tackle the ice epidemic that has particularly afflicted regional communities.

Quote of the week: "The difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician thinks about the next election while the statesman thinks about the next generation."

— James Freeman Clarke