



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

“From the  
General Manager’s Desk”  
8 July 2021”

### **COVID Marches On**

Following on from the announcement that fragments of the COVID-19 virus had been found in a test of sewage from the Bourke treatment plant, it was very pleasing to hear, and a relief, that subsequent sewage samples from the plant came back negative. That’s not to say that we can relax in our approach to COVID.

Last week the NSW Government determined that the use of Service NSW QR codes will be mandatory at all workplaces and all retail businesses from Monday 12 July 2021. In expanding the mandate, the NSW Government is aiming to give NSW Health contact tracers real-time access to QR code data from a greater number of venues including supermarkets, retail stores, gyms and offices. The new requirements are spelt out on the NSW Government website, [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) and it is noted that businesses that fail to comply with the new QR code requirements may be subject to fines and in the case of flagrant breaches, temporary closure orders. Businesses who need to register for the NSW Government QR code can find the application form and more information at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/register-your-business-as-covid-safe> For visitors without a digital device, other check-in forms must be available.

I imagine that we are all now well aware of the fact that Face Masks must be worn in indoor areas excluding residential premises. Last week staff at the Back O’ Bourke were subjected to abuse by an individual who simply wouldn’t wear a mask upon entering the Centre, despite the fact that the requirement was well signposted, and the Centre was providing facemasks for free. Staff handled the situation perfectly; however, they really shouldn’t have to be subjected to such carry on. We would all prefer not to have to wear a mask at work, it’s far from perfect, but if that’s what it takes to keep me, my family, my work colleagues and the community safe, then so be it. The COVID situation is very fluid with advice changing frequently. Keep an eye on the [nsw.gov.au](http://nsw.gov.au) website for the latest updates.

### **Rural Financial Counselling Service.**

I had a long conversation this week with a disappointed Jeff Caldbeck, Chief Executive Officer of the Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW - Central Region (RFCSCR), based in Dubbo. For many years Jeff has overseen the operations of this most important service for rural communities including Bourke Shire. Following the decision by Government to award a tender that would merge the RFCS Central Region into the Southern Region such that the western rural sector will be serviced by an operation based in Wagga Wagga, Jeff and his team have been busy winding their operations up. I know Jeff from way back when he did a great job as the CEO of the Dubbo City Development Corporation. He is a community minded person who, in his “spare time”, is also the President of the Dubbo RSL Memorial

Club, a club which in 2020 achieved revenues of some \$22m. In talking with Jeff, it wasn't about his future, rather, it was about concern for "his counsellors" and their clients.

In Bourke, the changes have seen the local Rural Financial Counsellor, June, finish up and move to Tamworth to work as a Counsellor in that part of the state. June started in Bourke in December 2018 and has some 20 years' experience in similar counselling roles in Western Australia and South Australia before she headed east to Bourke. I take this opportunity to thank Jeff and June for their efforts in Bourke and wish them the best for the future. As for a replacement, I understand Southern are looking for a new counsellor. Clients and stakeholders will still be able to access services provided under the Rural Financial Counselling Program via the new agency. All the services that have traditionally been accessed via RFCSCR can be accessed via the Southern Region, 37 Morgan Street, Wagga Wagga, Phone: [1800 319 458](tel:1800319458) and at [www.rfcsnsw.com.au](http://www.rfcsnsw.com.au)

### **Heritage Items**

Back in September 2020, Council resolved to contact owners of potential heritage items identified in the Bourke Shire Community Based Heritage Study to advise them of the proposed listing of their item in the Bourke Local Environmental Plan 2012 and to afford each owner the opportunity to respond to the proposed listing as well as to meet with Council's Heritage Advisor to discuss the matter. Letters were sent out accordingly. Last week at its June 2021 Ordinary meeting, Council gave consideration to the responses received and resolved to make an amendment to the Bourke Local Environmental Plan 2012 to enable the heritage listing of various potential heritage items in the Bourke Shire. A copy of both the full determination of Council and the list of proposed heritage items is included in the Business Paper/Minutes section of Council's website, [www.bourke.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bourke.nsw.gov.au). In making its determination, Council also resolved that specific correspondence be provided to each individual property owner as part of the LEP amendment process to advise the proposed change to the heritage status of their property. Council is very keen for property owners to be aware of the potential listing of properties.

In other Heritage news, Council received advice this week that the NSW Heritage Minister had approved a grant of up to \$11,000 to Bourke Shire Council as part of the Small Heritage Grant program. This funding will be available to renovators keen to restore heritage items in the Bourke Shire area. The amount of funding is by no means substantial; however, every cent helps.

### **New Murray-Darling Basin Water Information Portal**

The Bureau of Meteorology launched the first version of its new Murray-Darling Basin Water Information Portal last week. The portal includes information on water availability, allocation, volumes, water take, trade and prices, environmental water, weather and climate for the Murray-Darling Basin. Whilst this information was available in the past, it was located in a range of different locations. The new portal aims to make it easier for communities, water users and other interested people to easily find all the information they need in one place.

The Bureau has worked with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and the Basin states including NSW to create the portal. It seeks to provide water information that users want; in the way they want it.

You can visit the new portal and provide information to develop future versions on the Bureau's website at [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) and then search Murray Darling Basin.

## Safer Quad Bikes

I see quite a few quad bikes on the back of tray back utes or on trailers as they roll through Bourke. I was interested to see an article from NSW Farmers advising that the NSW Government had provided an additional \$3.7 million in funding to extend the popular Quad Bike Safety Improvement Program to June 2023, as well as new guidelines that will make the program more accessible to farmers and rural businesses that service the farming community. Since its introduction in 2016, the rebate program has distributed more than \$5 million, promoting a total investment of around \$57 million in quad bike safety on farms. The article noted that there was no longer a limit on the number of applicants per ABN for the \$2,000 safety rebate, making the program more accessible to small farms and rural businesses.

The unfortunate thing about quad bikes is that, as per the NSW Farmers article, “over 280 people have been killed on quad bikes in Australia over the last 20 years with the average economic cost of each quad bike fatality estimated to be \$2.59 million.”

To their credit, NSW Farmers has advocated for a comprehensive approach to improving quad bike safety. The extended rebate program promotes the adoption of a range of safety solutions including helmets, operator protection devices, and side by side vehicles.

NSW Farmers administers the Quad Bike Safety Rebates Program on behalf of SafeWork NSW. If you're a farmer or a farm worker, and have one of these bikes, check out the eligibility requirements and how to apply at: [www.nswfarmers.org.au](http://www.nswfarmers.org.au)

**Quote of the week: “There is one way out of this sh\*\*fight. All of us who can need to get vaccinated as soon as possible. If we don't, lack of sport will be the least of our problems. Roll up your sleeves, and take one for the team.”** - Former Wallaby, author, journalist, radio and television presenter, Peter Fitzsimons writing in his “Fitz Files” Column in the Sydney Morning Herald.