



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 19 August 2021”

Stay-at-Home

When it was announced on Wednesday that Stay-At-Home orders had been announced for Dubbo, it was felt that it wouldn't be long before Bourke was under the same regime. After all, with the number of Bourke people who transit between Bourke, Dubbo and back, the potential for the virus to be transported to Bourke was very high. Sure enough at 7.00pm the same day, Bourke also came under Stay-At-Home orders. By Saturday night, all NSW was under Stay-at-Home orders.

With the positive COVID fragments found in the Bourke sewage, the WNSWLHD extended the operation of its COVID testing clinic at the Bourke Multipurpose Service Carpark in Tarcoon St over the weekend and then on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Community Transport was organised for those in need who wished to access the testing.

Co-inciding with the Stay-At-Home Orders being announced was the culmination of a substantial amount of work by four (4) health providers in the Bourke community in respect of increasing the rates of vaccinations in Bourke. As at 8 August 2021, the Orana/Far West statistical area had the lowest percentage of people aged 15 and over who were fully vaccinated with a COVID Dose with a figure of 16.3%. The North Sydney/Hornsby Region had the highest percentage in the state with 32%. That means that twice as many people in the North Sydney/Hornsby Region are fully vaccinated compared to our region. Given the demographics of our region, such figures are not good.

The good news is that the local health providers have been most active and are to be congratulated on their considerable efforts in achieving vaccine doses.

Ochre Health have obtained 600 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and established a vaccination clinic in both the former dental surgery building and medical centre at 14 Darling St Bourke. Ochre advertised a clinic for last Saturday, from 8.30am -1.30pm with both first and second doses of the AstraZenaca and Pfizer vaccines available. Within a short period, the clinic was booked out. Further clinics have been organised with details available online at ochrehealth.com.au or by phoning 58332560.

The Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service also received supplies of the Pfizer vaccine. Aboriginal people 12 years and older have been invited to book an appointment to get the vaccine by phoning 6872 3088. Vaccine clinics were held on Monday - Thursday this week.

The Outback Division of General Practice has secured some 600 doses of Pfizer from the Federal Government which they will be rolling out in the community in coming weeks.

In addition to these clinics, Scott McLachlan, CEO of the Western NSW Local Health District HD advised that his organisation are finalising arrangements for vaccination clinics to be conducted across the western area in some two (2) weeks' time.

The delivery of the vaccines and the roll out of clinics is most pleasing and I wait with anticipation as to how our vaccination rates compare as we move forward.

The NSW Governor

The Mayor received a very nice letter of support this week from the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC following Bourke being placed under the Stay-At-Home Orders. Reflecting on her recent visit to Bourke, the Governor spoke of a great community and in sending her best wishes advised that her and her husband, Dennis, were thinking of Bourke residents at this difficult time. It was a much-appreciated email.

Darling River at Bourke

It's been good to watch increasing flows and river heights in the Darling River at Bourke over the past few weeks. A quick look at the Water NSW website late last week, which shows real time water flows in the various rivers of NSW, showed some 20,000 ML of water flowing past Bourke daily with the river still rising.

I went searching for some comparisons to put all that water in perspective and found information on the NSW Irrigators Council Website which advises that 1 Megalitre (ML) is one million litres of water. If an Olympic pool has dimensions of 50m long x 25m wide x 2m deep, then you have a capacity of 2500 cubic meters. One cubic meter is one thousand litres (one kilolitre). Therefore, it would take 2.5 Megalitres to fill an Olympic swimming pool. Alternatively, a ML is enough water to cover 1 hectare (100m x 100m) to a depth of 10cm.

So, with the weekend flows at Bourke there was enough water to fill 8,000 Olympic sized swimming pools flowing past Bourke and further, enough water to cover 20,000 hectares to a depth of 10cm. In summary, a lot of water!

A quick look around the State shows some really encouraging dam levels including Keepit Dam at Tamworth being at 94.8%, Burrendong Dam at Wellington at 86.1%, Whyangla Dam at Cowra at 93.6% and Lake Cargelligo is at 82.2% of capacity.

QR Check-In Cards

The NSW Government has undertaken work to improving the QR code check-in process by introducing a **new COVID-19 check-in card**. The check-in card aims to ease the burden of record-keeping for businesses and reduce customer queuing by enabling a quicker electronic check-in process for customers who don't have access to a smartphone.

The COVID-19 check-in card is a hard copy card with an encrypted, unique QR code that contains a person's registered contact details. Customers can present their card for scanning at participating businesses to electronically check in. The customer's check-in information is then directly available to NSW Health's contact tracing team in the event of a positive COVID-19 case. Quick access to the information protects the community by allowing timely contact tracing.

People can apply for their personal COVID-19 check-in card by calling Service NSW on 13 77 88 or by registering online at service.nsw.gov.au

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ACHAC).

I note that the NSW Government is currently advertising for Nominations for membership of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ACHAC) with four positions to be filled. The ACHAC advises the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Department on matters relating to the identification, assessment and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW. Nominees must be Nominees of Aboriginal elders' groups or Registered Native Title Claimants or Aboriginal owners listed on the register under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

Nominees must demonstrate their involvement in cultural heritage matters in their local community and an understanding of cultural heritage management issues. A Nomination Kit is available at heritage.nsw.gov.au with applications closing at 11:59pm on Wednesday 1 September 2021.

Barwon Darling Rugby League

After securing the minor premiership in the Bourke Darling Rugby League competition, the Bourke Warriors were no doubt working hard as they approached the Grand Final which was to be held last Saturday. Unfortunately, the Grand Final became another victim of COVID when the NSW Rugby League announce the postponement last Wednesday. This follows the NSWRL having taken the decision on Tuesday to abandon a number of major competitions for the 2021 season across the State in response to COVID.

There are unfortunately a wide array of events that are being cancelled due to the current pandemic. I see that the iconic City to Surf event in Sydney has been cancelled for a second year with the race reverting to a virtual event. I don't understand a virtual running race! Closer to home the Ronnie Gibbs Sevens have been cancelled, also for a second year. This was to be the 25th Anniversary of the event with a wide array of high-profile footballers, including current State of Origin coach, Brad Fittler, organised to attend. If we can increase our vaccination rates across the Nation, there is hope that Ronnie can celebrate those 25 years of competition in 2022.

COVID Arrangements

As I write this Column there are no confirmed cases of COVID in Bourke. Given the high level of COVID fragments found in the Bourke sewage, however, Bourke residents are strongly encouraged to adhere to the Stay at Home orders and get tested if they have any concerns, even if only for their own peace of mind. The prospect of a COVID case in Bourke has raised considerable concern in the community and with the priority being to protect our staff, the Bourke community and support the State Government in their bid to slow the spread of COVID-19, a review of Council staffing arrangements has been conducted.

Accordingly, due to the current risk factors, the decision has been taken to have very few staff in the Council office, various staff working from home, and numerous staff stood down. Notwithstanding residents can contact Council by phone (6830 8000) or by email (bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au).

Quote of the Week: "Those people that have been getting around the (Public Health) Orders, that is over." NSW Police Commissioner, Mick Fuller announcing increased fine for those that flaunt the NSW Stay-at-Home orders.