



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 12 August 2021”

COVID Vaccination Clinic

It was heartening to hear Premier Gladys Berejiklian at her daily briefing session on Thursday last week advising that the Prime Minister had contacted her to advise that an additional 180,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine had been made available to NSW with these vaccines being delivered this week. These additional doses are to go to the regions, to replace the vaccines previously redirected to Western Sydney, with the balance of the doses going to those areas of need in Sydney. Given this announcement, Council has made representations to the LHD to reinvigorate the previously identified, and currently postponed, dates of 24 and 25 August 2021 for a clinic at Bourke and 26 August 2021 for a clinic at Enngonia. At this point, the LHD is working to determine exactly what the new vaccine supplies will mean for the LHD’s schedule of Mobile Vaccination Clinics and Council looks forward to the LHD being in touch as soon as they have further details in relation to Bourke and Enngonia.

Lockdown

First it was Greater Sydney and Wollongong, then South-East Queensland, Orange, Victoria, the Hunter Region and then on the weekend Armidale, all going into a COVID lockdown for various periods, because of COVID cases. The Premier says she is worried about the regions, and for good reason. Dubbo and Mudgee have now both returned back-to-back positive samples of COVID virus fragments were detected in samples taken from the sewerage treatment plants at these two (2) towns. Authorities are concerned that there is an undetected case in both towns who are potentially moving around the localities. The Executive Director of NSW Health Protection, Dr Jeremy McAnulty stated, “Take it very seriously-if there is a case (in Dubbo) we need to find them to make sure the community is safe.”

Census 2021

Census 2021 was on Tuesday this week, 10 August 2021. Unlike previous years, the 2021 census is largely an online process with a log-in number and password having been sent to households. You were able to complete your Census form as soon as you received your instructions from the ABS on the basis that you knew who would be in your home on Census night. My understanding is that residents have until today to complete their Census form and from thereafter households who have not responded will receive reminder letters and visits from Census staff. Given that so much funding that is distributed throughout the nation is linked to the data sourced from the Census, I would urge all households, for the benefit of Bourke, to finalise and submit their census forms today.

COVID Community Support

I received correspondence this week from the CEO of St Vincent de Paul, better known these days as Vinnies, advising that his organisation is available to support the community as the health and economic

impacts of COVID-19 are being felt across NSW. Vinnies is available to support the community by providing assistance paying bills, food parcels, material aid, housing and homelessness services, access to the No Interest Loans Scheme, advocacy and referral to relevant services. People can connect with the assistance provided by calling Vinnies Assist on 13 18 12.

In addition to this support, information came to Council that households who need help paying their energy bills will be able to access up to \$1,600 per year in financial support during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The Energy Accounts Payments Assistance (EAPA) assessment threshold has been temporarily increased from \$300 to \$400 per assessment, meaning the annual maximum limit of vouchers per household has increased from \$1,200 to \$1,600. The duration of the increased limits will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in light of COVID circumstances.

EAPA representatives can also help customers to contact their energy retailers to get customers onto hardship plans. Residential energy customers can apply for EAPA vouchers directly through Service NSW to schedule an assessment. The NSW Government also offers six other rebates to help with energy bills. People can visit the Energy Saver website for more information: www.energysaver.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-and-discounts/energy-rebates.

Dine & Discover Vouchers

The NSW Government launched its Dine & Discover NSW Vouchers to encourage the community to get out and about and support dining, arts and recreation businesses. NSW residents aged 18 and over were able to apply for 4 x \$25 vouchers, worth \$100 in total.

2 x \$25 Dine NSW Vouchers could be used for dining in at restaurants, cafés, bars, wineries, pubs and clubs or for takeaway meals with 2 x \$25 Discover NSW Vouchers to be used for entertainment and recreation, including cultural institutions, live music, and arts venues.

The vouchers can be used 7 days a week and are valid until 31 August 2021. Time is running out to apply and then use your vouchers. Use your Dine NSW Vouchers at the Bourke Bowling Club Chinese Restaurant, Diggers on the Darling, The Port of Bourke Hotel and at the Café at the Back o' Bourke Exhibition Centre. Use your Discover NSW Vouchers to explore the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre. Book a cruise for your family along the Darling River on the Jandra Paddleboat. Shout some friends entry to Mt Oxley and have a barbecue on top of the Mount **ain**. Just a few suggestions noting that we often forget what is in our own back yard, so take the opportunity to get a tourism refresher by using a Discover NSW voucher before the end of this month.

Olympics

I have to admit that I was rather sceptical about the Tokyo Olympics going ahead given the state of the COVID Pandemic. Pretty happy now though! To their substantial credit the Australian athletes have performed superbly and as a nation Australia has punched well "above its weight" in terms of medal success. As I understand it, the gold medal haul has been Australia's best ever. Our swimmers, rowers, canoeists, BMX cyclists, sailors, skateboarders and kayakers have won a total of 17 Gold Medals and all credit to them. Success though is an interesting term. Without diminishing in any way the success of our medal winners, the performance and the story of Australian runner, Peter Bol, who came 4th in the 800m final is also very much a success on various levels.

Peter Bol and his family fled South Sudan for Egypt when he was just four years old. After a four-year wait, they migrated to Perth on humanitarian visas. Bol's initial sporting interest was not running but rather basketball. He earned a basketball scholarship, but when Bol kept achieving in high school athletics

competitions – something he was required to participate in – one teacher eventually manage to persuade Bol to pursue running instead of basketball. He has been quoted, “That single decision to say yes has meant I’ve travelled the whole world.” Good one.

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. On Saturday, a quick look at the Water NSW website, which shows real time water flows in the various rivers of NSW, identified 17,675 ML/d of water flowing past Bourke with the river still rising.

To put all that water in perspective, I went searching for some comparisons 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, to put the weekend flows at Bourke into perspective, there was enough water to fill 7,070 Olympic sized swimming pools flowing past Bourke and further, enough water to cover 17,675 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 95.8%, Burrendong Dam at Wellington at 83.9%, Whyangla Dam at Cowra at 95.4% and Lake Cargelligo is at 79.9% of capacity.

Quote of the Week: “And I want to go to the [MCG], I want to have three meat pies and 45 schooners and watch the AFL grand final.....I want normal life.” Karl Stefanovic on the Today Show last week lamenting COVID.