



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 26 August 2021”

An Extraordinary Time

Someone once said, “We live in an extraordinary time”. I am not sure who coined the phrase and when they said it, but I suggest that at the time they had a crystal ball for August 2021 which showed the spread of the delta strain of Coronavirus in New South Wales. Since Bourke initially went onto “stay at home” orders on Wednesday 11 August 2021 and then along with all Regional NSW onto “stay at home” orders from Saturday 14 August 2021, to at this point 28 August 2021, it has been an absolute whirlwind.

With regular teleconferences each day, the emergency management machine is now up and running. In Bourke, as General Manager, I chair a daily meeting of the Local Emergency Management Committee with this meeting comprising representatives of numerous government and private organisations who provide services directly to Bourke. I also attend the Regional Emergency Management Committee, which is chaired by Assistant Police Commissioner Geoff McKechnie, based in Dubbo. Officer in Charge of Bourke Police, Detective Inspector, Jeff Little provides a daily update report on issues in Bourke and I provide input from Councils perspective, with matters pushed to a higher level, as required.

There is a phenomenal amount of work being undertaken by a myriad of organisations in Bourke at the moment as part of the response to the current public health order and positive COVID cases in Bourke. People are working extremely hard under difficult conditions to assist the community and keep them safe. Bourke is very lucky to have Acting Commander Brett Smith as the Regional Commander of the Central North Police District, based in Bourke, along with Detective Inspector Jeff Little as the Officer in Charge at Bourke Police Station. The experience, dedication and work ethic of these Gents is first class, and as a community facing a very difficult time, we should be most thankful for their leadership and the work of their officers. The Community Health Staff manning the COVID testing clinics, the vaccinators, the hospital staff, the ambulance, the organisations delivering food and so on and so on are all working so hard to assist people. I just don’t get those who don’t show all our fabulous workers the respect they deserve.

Vaccinations

It was good to see the National Rugby League (NRL) launch it’s “Lets Tackle This Together” promotional campaign encouraging people to get vaccinated. As the NRL says, “just like in footy, this needs to be a team effort”, in reference to encouraging vaccinations. In Bourke over the past fortnight there has been considerable opportunity for the community to get vaccinated. Ochre Health, the Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service, Outback Division of General Practice and then on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of this week, the Western NSW Local Health District held a “pop up” clinic at the Full Gospel Church in Tarcoon Street.

Across the State, the roll out of the vaccine is finally well and truly underway. Chemists have set up clinics in their shops and undertaking inoculations for their customers. The Royal Flying Doctor is moving around the countryside doing vaccinations in remote localities, including at Louth and Wanaaring. We see the massive pop-up clinics in Sydney. Last Saturday in Dubbo, the LHD undertook a vaccination clinic in West Dubbo. By 9.00am, some 600 people had already lined up and the LHD had to say “no more” for the day. Whilst a fantastic response, in Bourke we are fortunate that we don’t have to line up for very long, if at all, and I urge residents to take advantage of the convenience of the Bourke clinics.

Food Hampers

If you’re isolating because you and/or your family household are either:

- COVID positive;
- waiting on test results and must isolate at home; or
- a close/ casual contact and must isolate at home;

And

- can’t access the supermarket because there are no family/ friends permitted to source groceries safely and provide contactless delivery;
- don’t currently have the financial means; or
- don’t have the ability to order online;

you may be able to receive an emergency support package comprising masks, sanitiser, disinfectors, a personal care package and a food package. I must say that this isn’t a free lunch scenario, the capacity for that situation simply isn’t there, nor is it reasonable. As someone said to me, this program is about “need not greed”. If you can meet the above criteria and if you really need assistance, then help will be forthcoming. Maranguka is the hub for this service in Bourke and is being supported by a core local team including: Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Outback Division of General Practice, Bourke Health Service, Council and NSW Rural Fire Service and substantially supported by the NSW Government through Resilience NSW. Please ring Maranguka on 0428 892 210 to discuss your circumstances.

Increased COVID Compliance Measures

The NSW Government has announced increased fines for COVID-19 breaches across the State. These increased fines for Public Health Order breaches are effective from Monday 16 August and include:

- \$5,000 on the spot fine for breaching self-isolation rules
- \$5,000 on the spot fine for lying on a permit (already a criminal offence)
- \$5,000 on the spot fine for lying to a contact tracer (already a criminal offence)
- \$3,000 on the spot fine for breaching the two-person outdoor exercise/recreation rule, and
- \$3,000 on the spot fine for breaching rules around entry into regional NSW for authorised work, inspecting real estate and travelling to your second home.

The bottom line is that the Government is no longer messing around with those who don’t obey the Stay-at-Home requirements. We are all in a very big struggle. The Government has also introduced a permit system for people wanting to enter regional NSW from Greater Sydney with this new system having commenced on Saturday, 21 August 2021.

Wild Dog Controller Program

Landholders involved in the Professional Wild Dog Controller Program have recently achieved a major milestone with the 100th wild dog removed from the landscape.

The Program, which is coordinated by Western Local Land Services, has involved six Dog Controllers working with local landholders to control wild dogs, as well as increase landholder capacity with regards to identifying signs of wild dogs, understanding wild dog behaviours and management options.

To the end of July 2021, the Program, which was launched in February 2020, has seen 103 wild dogs controlled, as well as 48 feral pigs, eight feral cats and four foxes.

The Wild Dog Controller Program has been a great addition to the wild dog management tools available to landholders and to hear that the Program has been so well supported and successful is pleasing. Landholders from 37 properties have had a Controller on their property with further properties having registered to be involved in future. Western Local Land Services have advised that landholders who have yet to be involved in the Program, can take advantage of an initiative where they can have a Controller visit their property for a day for no charge.

Landholders wanting to be involved or find out more can contact the Program's dedicated administration officer on 0409 677 897 or PWDC@lls.nsw.gov.au, or their local biosecurity officer via 1300 795 299 or www.lls.nsw.gov.au.

Electoral Commission - Council Candidate Information

The NSW Electoral Commissioner has released comprehensive information to help candidates understand the numerous electoral requirements following the postponement of the local government elections.

The new information includes a bulletin regarding electoral funding, disclosures and compliance, and a calendar with key dates leading up to the 4 December elections.

The NSW Electoral Commission will continue to provide advice to candidates on their website at elections.nsw.gov.au

Council Meeting

Despite COVID and all that is currently going on in Bourke and elsewhere, the August meeting of Council proceeded, albeit via teleconference with Councillors being away from the Chamber. Council considered and determined tenders for six (6) items of Plant and appointed contractors to undertake the enhancement of exhibitions at the Back O' Bourke Centre.

Council also received a report, following advice from the Office of Local Government, that as a result of the postponement of Council Elections in NSW until 4 December 2021, Mayor Barry and Deputy Mayor, Lachlan Ford, retain their roles with Council until 4 December 2021 with no requirement for an election in respect of either position being required in September 2021.

Quote of the Week: “When enough of our population is vaccinated, the case numbers will be less relevant and what will be very, very relevant is how many people we’re keeping out of hospital and how many people we’re keeping out of intensive care and how many people we’re keeping alive.”
NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian on the need for wide spread community vaccinations.