



## “From the General Manager’s Desk” 16 September 2021”

### **Economic Development Manager.**

I was happy to welcome Bourke local, Mel Milgate, on her first day of work with Bourke Shire Council last Monday when she commenced in the important role of Economic Development Manager with Council.

Councils Corporate Services Manager, Leonie Brown and I met with Mel at 8am on her first day, via teleconference, and from there it was straight into a COVID Food Distribution meeting for all of us at 8.30am. In all my time in local government I have never welcomed a new employee on day 1 via teleconference. Different times! I would also normally take a new Manager around to meet staff, however that wasn't obviously possible at this stage either.

Mel certainly projects as a proud Bourke girl. She has previously held a few roles within the Bourke community over the years including, Assistant Manager of Bourke Bowling Club, Café Owner, Health Promotions Officer, Communications Officer at the Outback Division of General Practice, and before leaving for Tamworth some five (5) years ago, she tells me that one her most fulfilling roles was producing and presenting 'Outback Mornings' on 2WEB.

Mel returns to Bourke from Tamworth after enjoying a role with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. Mel has had the opportunity to work with indigenous communities across the Northern part of the State and recently worked with North Coast Local Aboriginal Land Councils ensuring good governance practices and compliance.

Her passion for the Bourke community is one of the motivations that brought her back to town along with the opportunity to work alongside the businesses, agencies and NGO's within the Economic Development Managers role. Mel tells me that her Mum is very excited to have her home and Grace, her daughter, is looking forward to school holidays back in Bourke and training at the new Bourke Swimming Pool.

Given the current COVID situation in Bourke, Council is utilising Mel's communications background and skills to assist in messaging the community with all that is currently happening during these interesting times. As time progresses in coming weeks, she will be transitioning into her full Economic Development Managers role.

## **Diggers on the Darling site – the Clean-up.**

EnviroScience Solutions of Dubbo have been engaged as the Occupational Hygienists to oversee the clean-up of the Diggers on the Darling site following the fire at this important Bourke business on 1 September 2021. EnviroScience Solutions is a most experienced business in matters such as the clean-up of the Diggers site. I take this opportunity to thank the owner of the site, Phillip Parnaby and his insurers, for the expediency with which they have progressed this matter.

EnviroScience Solutions have been on site since Monday this week. By tomorrow, Friday, they are required to implement mitigations measures to ensure that airborne contaminants do not leave the premises.

In addition to this EnviroScience Solutions are classifying the waste at the site and are preparing a clean-up plan that outlines how the waste at the Premises will be lawfully removed, transported and disposed of. Such plan is to include mitigation measures to minimise air pollution. As per the Statutory Clean Up Notice, as negotiated between the parties, a copy of the waste classification and clean-up plan is to be provided to Council by tomorrow evening.

From there EnviroScience Solutions will be engaging a suitably qualified contractor to implement their mitigation measures with the waste from the Premises being required to be removed and lawfully transported and disposed of by no later than 5pm on 1 October 2021.

In regard to the Bourke Waste Depot where the waste will be transported to, following confirmation from the EPA, Council has engaged an earth moving contractor to undertake the construction of the necessary waste cell which will be utilised specifically for the Diggers waste. Work on the construction of this cell is now complete in readiness for the transportation to proceed as required.

It should be noted that the Bourke Waste Depot will be closed to the public during the period when the waste is being disposed of at the facility. Further advice will be provided following receipt of the clean-up plan.

## **NSW Wild Dog Fence Extension Project**

Back in 2018 a study that was commissioned by the Border Fence Maintenance Board and funded by Local Land Services, determined that there would be considerable benefits to be had by extending the existing wild dog fence along parts of the NSW/Queensland border and NSW/South Australian border by 420 km in the east adjacent to Mungindi and 322 km in the south to just short of the Murray River.

It is pleasing to read that much has been achieved with this \$37.5m project that is so important to the future of the Far West. Mapping of the proposed fence alignments, engagement with local landholders and stakeholders, assessments for biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage, the design of the fence and the construction of a 15-kilometre priority pilot site was constructed which involved replacing the existing wild dog fence near Hungerford, are all components of the project that have been completed.

While COVID-19 and other issues are impacting on the next phase of construction commencing, the project team is working through the approvals process and is looking forward to the main phases of construction commencing. When construction of the fence does ultimately commence it will be constructed from 15/150/15 exclusion wire and be 1800 mm high with 900 mm plastic coated chain wire buried to 300 mm deep and overlapping the 15/150/15 by 300 mm. Heavy duty steel posts will be

placed every five metres with a drill rod strainer post every 250 metres. Some sections of the fence will be custom designed to suit the terrain.

### **COVID-19 Economic Support Measures Extended.**

The NSW Government has announced an additional \$3.9 billion in funding, including \$1.5 billion from the Commonwealth, as part of its COVID-19 economic support package providing ongoing assistance to businesses and individuals affected by current lockdown restrictions across the State.

This additional funding will extend the successful JobSaver program and Micro-business Grant and continue rent relief incentives.

Additional relief for businesses will also be provided with further reductions in payroll tax as well as allowing eligible businesses to defer their payroll tax payments, due from July 2021 through to December 2021, until 14 January 2022 with 12-month interest-free repayment plans available. Information is available at [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au)

### **Self-Isolation Facility, Bourke**

There has been plenty of talk in Bourke during the past week surrounding the mobile campervans that are now onsite at the Mitchell Caravan Park on Becker Street, Bourke. These campervans are an initiative of the Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD) and known as a self-isolation facility (SIF).

The SIF will include up to 20 onsite mobile campervans with its own 24-hour security, with a site manager. The campervans are fully self-contained inclusive of air conditioning, shower, toilet, cooking and eating facilities, microwave, radio and TV. Each campervan has an awning and chairs. An area around each campervan will be identified for outdoor living and ensure separation from adjacent vans. Linen, waste management, and post occupancy cleaning will be managed and overseen by the health service. Residents of the SIF will have access to food and other supports similar to current arrangements in place for other community members that are isolating at home.

Access to the SIF is voluntary and is specifically for people who do not have a confirmed COVID condition. The facility is designed to provide short-term assistance to assist the safety and recovery of individuals, families and the wider community. The SIF will ensure primary and social care providers and services are able to assist transition back into community.

Access to the SIF is via a health provider referral. Referrals will be reviewed daily Monday to Friday by a group including Local Health District Accommodation Lead, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Public Health, other local partner agencies as appropriate.

At this stage the SIF is in place for 8 weeks at Bourke having commenced operations on Monday 13 September 2021. If there is a requirement, these dates may be extended. Campervans may be relocated to other small communities nearby if there is a demand and the capacity is not fully utilised in Bourke.

**Quote: “Particularly sadly, none of these people were vaccinated.”** The Hon Brad Hazzard, NSW Minister for Health reflecting last Saturday on the unfortunate passing of eight people from COVID-19 in the previous 24 hours.