



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 7 October 2021”

Gladys Berejiklian’s Resignation

When word came through around noon last Friday that then Premier, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian, was to be the subject of a hearing by ICAC, and then shortly thereafter that she had called a media conference for 1.00pm that day, speculation was rife of her potential resignation. Surely not. Not this impressive leader who has seen NSW through flood, fire and particularly relevant for Bourke, through drought and of course COVID.

Following her ultimate announcement that she was resigning, Councils Roads Manager, Mark Gordon, shared a great photo of he and his wife, Sandra, with Gladys from November 2019 when she bought the NSW Cabinet to Bourke. What a great two (2) days for Bourke. That photo got me thinking of the interactions I had been fortunate enough to have had with the then Premier, particularly during 2019. Firstly, in June 2019, when as General Manager at Dubbo Council, along with local Member, Troy Grant, and Councils Administrator, Michael Kneippe, we met with Premier Berejiklian prior to her announcing funding for the construction of what will be Dubbo’s biggest ever infrastructure project, a third bridge over the Macquarie River.

Following this, and during my time as Interim General Manager at Glen Innes Council, in fact the date was 11 September 2019, I met with the Premier as part of her travels to Glen Innes to meet with Council, Rural Fire Services staff and volunteers during prolonged bush fire activity surrounding Glen Innes. I then met with her again as part of my role in organising Bourke Councils component of the NSW Cabinet visit to Bourke in November 2019. Ms Berejiklian said to me, and I will never forget, “Hello Mark, what are you doing here?” I thought that was very impressive.

Politics can be a fairly ordinary sport at times and from what I have seen, it’s not for the faint hearted. Amazingly, in resigning, Gladys Berejiklian did not miss a beat and showed no emotion. She is one tough lady, who in my opinion, has done a fantastic job for NSW overseeing not only the state’s largest ever infrastructure spend but also some of the state’s darkest days as it faced natural disaster after natural disaster. As a newspaper asked on the weekend, “Did we just throw out our best ever Premier?” Time will ultimately tell. Mayor Barry will be writing to the former Premier to thank her for her considerable assistance to Bourke during her term.

The COVID Roadmap

In one of her last COVID related announcements, the former NSW Premier, last week announced a path out of COVID lockdowns with a roadmap for easing restrictions at the 80 per cent double dose target revealing a brighter future for the community.

At some point in the future, on the Monday after NSW hits the 80 per cent (aged 16 and over) double dose vaccination target, eased restrictions will allow those who are fully vaccinated to have up to 10

people visit their home, participate in community sport, and access hospitality venues (where drinking while standing up will be allowed indoors). All premises will operate at 1 person per 4sqm indoors, and 1 person per 2sqm outdoors. The 80 per cent roadmap will also remove the limit of fully vaccinated guests for weddings and funerals and remove customer caps for personal services such as hairdressers. I so need a haircut!

Given updated health advice, adjustments have been made to the 70 per cent roadmap. Regional travel will now not be allowed until 80 per cent (fully vaccinated only), and a booking cap has been introduced for hospitality venues of 20 people per booking. The Government is also considering changes to incoming international arrival caps, so more people can return home for Christmas. The 70 per cent roadmap lifts fully vaccinated people out of lockdown, with restrictions to ease even further when double vaccination rates reach 80 per cent. The roadmap may be fine-tuned by NSW Health as the Government monitors the COVID-19 situation over the coming weeks.

From 1 December further changes will be introduced, including all venues moving to the 2sqm rule, masks will not be required indoors at offices, indoor pools and nightclubs can reopen, and unvaccinated people will have greater freedoms. More information is available by accessing www.nsw.gov.au/COVID-19

Western Cancer Centre

Construction of the \$35 million Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo is now complete, and services have begun moving into the state-of-the-art facility at Dubbo Hospital in stages. This is such an important project for people in regional and remote areas of Western NSW and particularly residents of Bourke Shire. Dubbo is the Service Centre for Bourke and the Western Area, not Sydney or Orange where western area folk have generally had to travel to attend advanced cancer treatment appointments.

I noted that the Federal Member for Parkes, Mark Coulton, had made comment that the completion of the Western Cancer Centre was one of his proudest days as the local member. He deserves to be proud. From my time at Dubbo Council, and beyond, I am aware that Mark has been entrenched in getting this important facility up and running for the region, and thanks are extended to him. Similarly, Member for Dubbo, Dugald Saunders and past member Troy Grant, have worked extremely hard to deliver the \$306.3 million Dubbo Health Service redevelopment which is a once-in-a-generation health infrastructure project for Western NSW.

The new Centre will provide the latest treatment and diagnostic services and new health services for the region. The clinic rooms and reception opened first and will be followed by new chemotherapy treatment spaces and wellness space this month. Radiation therapy and PET CT Scanner services will be available in the coming months. A PET CT Scanner will provide advanced diagnostic services and radiation therapy, which will significantly improve health outcomes in the region.

think safe. work safe. be safe.

I wrote in last week's GM's Column that, amongst other things, October is National Safe Work Month. It is a time to commit to a safe and healthy workplace. Bourke Shire Council supports Safe Work Australia's think safe. work safe. be safe. campaign.

As an organisation, Bourke Shire Council considers that our people are our most valued asset. Their health and safety is a top priority, and that has been evidenced given the lengths we have gone to in protecting our staff during the COVID outbreak.

National Safe Work Month is an important event each year for Council. It is a great mechanism for raising awareness about important work health and safety issues and helps us highlight, understand and investigate potential WHS issues in our own workplace.

During the last couple of years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces have been presented with complex and dynamic challenges and have had to change the way they conduct their business and, in turn, manage work health and safety.

This year's National Safe Work Month campaign highlights a range of work health and safety topics, including COVID-19, occupational lung disease, sexual harassment, mental health, and working in extreme weather. National Safe Work Month also serves as a reminder for workplaces to review their work health and safety policies and processes. The think safe. work safe. be safe. campaign is led by Safe Work Australia and is supported by Safe Work Australia Members and other stakeholders, including Council. For more information about National Safe Work Month, or to download resources, go to the campaign website: safeworkmonth.swa.gov.au.

NRL Grand Final

Who would have thought that the Panthers and the Rabbitohs would end up playing it out in the NRL Grand Final after the Panthers demolished the Rabbitohs back in May this year at Dubbo. I was hoping for a Panthers GF win, with Isaah Yeo from Dubbo being named the Clive Churchill medallist. I got one out of two after Nathan Cleary picked up the Churchill. What a gripping game that really could have gone either way. Isaah Yeo mentioned his large family in Dubbo in an interview literally straight after the game ended. The Yeo's and their cousins, the Wilson's, are prominent rugby league families in Dubbo. I hope that the close-knit family group that they are, get to celebrate with more than a picnic in the park, in the goodness of time.

That's it for Footy for 2021. For all but the Panthers supporters there's the old saying.....there's always next year!!

Quote: "The Ashes are going ahead" – Australian Cricket Captain, Tim Payne making it clear the Ashes Test Cricket Series is commencing on 8 December 2021.