



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 14 October 2021”

What a Long Weekend

I trust readers had an enjoyable long weekend. After the shock resignation of former Premier, Gladys Berejiklian on Friday, 1 October 2021, the weekend papers were full of stories regarding the resignation. The political and sporting headlines kept coming during a very busy weekend. On the Saturday, the Wallabies clocked up four (4) wins in a row when they had a win against Argentina. This was the first time in many years that the Wallabies had achieved such a winning streak. Sunday morning, after remembering to put the clocks forward for daylight savings, it was former NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance announcing that he was quitting NSW state politics for tilt at a federal seat. As I wrote last week, the Panthers did it Sunday night but come the public holiday Monday, former Deputy Premier and Nationals leader John Barilaro revealed he too was resigning. It was all happening!

Former Bathurst Mayor, Paul Toole was elected the new Deputy Premier. Like in the case of the newly elected Premier, Mayor Barry has written to Deputy Premier Toole to congratulate him on his new role. Minister Toole well understands the importance of regional transport links and he has been most supportive in respect of the sealing of the Bourke – Wanaaring Road in recent years, for which Council and the community are most appreciative.

The rather frenetic pace of change then continued through the week with changes to the COVID roadmap being made by the Premier, changes to his staff and so on.

Stay-at-Home Orders Expire

As readers are aware, stay-at-home rules expired for the Bourke Local Government Area on Monday this week. This expiration coincided with the reopening of the remainder of NSW and accompanying eased restrictions. Whilst Bourke was at a stay-at-home level for 60 days, spare a thought for the people of Greater Sydney who clocked up 107 days of the staying at home provisions.

With the easing of restrictions, the opportunity is now there for local business to also reopen, subject to various requirements. The Bourke Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) requested Council’s Economic Development Manager, Mel Millgate, Mr. Stuart Gordon from the Outback Division of General Practice (ODGP) along with Mr. Jeff Standen, and Mr Jason Hardwood from NSW Public Health to provide information and work with Bourke business venues in readiness for this 70% vaccination rate reopening.

On Wednesday last week, two (2) online information sessions were held. 18 local business operators attended the morning session with a further 15 businesses taking the opportunity to attend the evening session. Information was presented and questions taken to assist. Mel, Stuart, Jeff and Jason all bring considerable experience to their roles and Bourke is most fortunate to have these committed and knowledgeable people assisting business during these difficult times.

Whilst much has been written about the reopening, and the associated “excitement”, it is considered important that as a community we clearly recognise that COVID has not suddenly left Bourke, just because stay-at-home provisions have been relaxed. There are still cases in the community and unfortunately there will be further cases in Bourke.

In this regard, both vaccinated and non-vaccinated community members are urged to get tested if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 and immediately self-isolate until a negative result is received. Regardless of the reopening of NSW, if you test positive for COVID-19 you must still self-isolate for 14 days.

The Western NSW Local Health District is increasing its capacity in respect of undertaking contact tracing for close contacts in the Bourke community. This is most welcome. Close contacts will include household members of positive cases and close social contacts of positive cases, such as partners and friends, even if fully vaccinated. Anyone may also be assessed as being a close contact following a risk assessment, including at workplaces, high-risk settings, such as healthcare and aged care, and other specific settings such as schools and child care centres, or where an outbreak has been identified. In the event that you are a close contact of a positive case and vaccinated, you must get tested and self-isolate for seven days. On day six after exposure, you must get tested again. If a negative result is received and you are well, you can end isolation after day seven. For the following seven days you must work from home where practicable, not attend hospitality settings, and not attend a high-risk setting even if it is your place of work.

If you are a close contact of a positive case and not vaccinated you must get tested and immediately self-isolate for 14 days. On day 12, you should get tested again. If a negative result is received, you can end isolation after day 14.

The Service NSW QR code check-in system will remain in place in the general community. This system will be used to notify people who were in the same venue as a positive case. People will be asked to monitor for symptoms and get tested if they become unwell. Other settings, including schools, workplaces and high-risk settings, such as healthcare and aged care, will have specific risk assessment approaches.

There are a significant number of requirements associated with the reopening and hence the support to Business. Detailed information is available from <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/rules>

Grabbing an Opportunity

Whilst not mentioning any particular business names, it is great to see community business members seeing an opportunity and grabbing it. It's easy to sit back and lament the tough times with the COVID restrictions but it is certainly pleasing to witness when business takes that commercial decision and expands its provision of services to the community. It is even better when the decision and the commercial risk is a success and pays off.

XPT and Trainlink Coach Services.

NSW TrainLink recommenced a full timetable service including regional train and coach services and those to and from Dubbo and beyond from 11 Oct 2021. Capacity on these services will remain restricted in the NSWTL booking system in accord with the TfNSW COVID plan will see capacity at close to 50% on regional trains and coaches. There may be some minor, local changes to the timetable in the

first day or so as NSWTL may need to move some trains around empty to recommence smoothly, but the principle is a normal service offering from 11 Oct. All NSW TrainLink contracted services and operational plans and CovidSafe plans comply with applicable Health orders.

Free classroom excursions with Ag Packs

I read that school students will soon be able to get a hands-on farm experience in the classrooms with NSW Farmers set to launch Ag Packs as part of the popular Kids to Farms Program. Sounds interesting. The program, which is funded by the Australian Government, aims to give every child in NSW two educational interactions with the agricultural sector before they are 12.

NSW Farmers has partnered with producers across the state to provide a diverse range of farm experiences for primary-school aged students, and now the paddock is coming into the classroom. Data suggests that nearly 60 per cent of students learn what they know about food and fibre production from their primary school teachers, who are so important in the formative years of children.

The Ag Packs are available for free to all NSW Primary schools and contain everything needed to run several experiments or activities, including pots, seeds, and soil samples. All ages are catered for with different levels of difficulty. Each pack is curriculum-linked and comes with student workbooks and a teacher guide. All that is needed is curiosity and children back in the classroom! The Kids to Farms initiative provides a critical awareness raising opportunity and adds to the broader industry engagement opportunities, such as with Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia, in expanding access to and interest in further study in high schools. Whilst agriculture is such an important component of the Bourke community it's important that students get a hands-on look at how farmers feed and clothe the nation. The Ag Packs can be ordered now by visiting kidstofarms.com.au/ag-packs

Quote: "You don't get into politics to stay still, you get into politics to reform," Dominic Perrottet in 2017.