



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 3 February 2022”

Happy New Year

Even though we are now into February and given that this is my first Column for 2022, I take this opportunity to put in print, my best wishes to all residents and readers for the New Year. It was a rather subdued and quiet Christmas and New Year period with limited celebrations by most people across the region due to the Omicron phase of the COVID Pandemic. COVID just “keeps on keeping on” and I certainly hold in the highest regard all those people on the COVID front line for all their fantastic work.

The Summer break has been relatively mild, weather wise, in Bourke with plenty of rain and storm activity. The river reached a high of 12.29m and I found it amazing to see where water flowed to. The sport has been great with Australia quickly wrapping up the Ashes against England and uncovering quite a bowler in Scott Boland. The Novak Djokovic non vaccination issue was soon forgotten once the games in the Australian Open were actually underway. Ash Barty appears to be an absolute champion player and an even better person. I really enjoy her humility when she is interviewed. Then there was Dylan Allcott, named as Australian of the Year. His reflections on his life as a disabled person were very powerful and worth viewing, if readers get the chance. There was the earthquake in Tonga, most sad, and more recently the allegations of violence against a woman by former television games host, Andrew O’Keefe. Men don’t hit women. Simple.

Australia Day

Last Wednesday we came together at the Bourke War Memorial Olympic Pool Complex to reflect, respect and celebrate Australia Day. People in Bourke took the time to celebrate everything that is good about our country, particularly our people and our resilience. It was also an opportunity to reflect on Australia’s rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture and celebrate the contribution that every Australian makes to our great nation. Bourke was fortunate to have as its Australia Day Ambassador, Mr James Pittar. James is blind and has achieved much as a marathon swimmer. On the day he reflected on his 30-hour swim of the English Channel. Who does that?

Congratulations to our three (3) Bourke Residents who were naturalised by Mayor Barry and become Australian Citizens. It’s a big step and well done to them for doing so. Congratulations also to Bourke’s Citizen of the Year, Kelly Lienesch; Young Citizen of the Year, Trae Wilson; Sportsperson of the Year, Laura Gordon; Young Sportsperson of the Year, Archie Nott and Volunteers of the Year, the Bourke Rural Fire Service Brigade. These winners were also announced at the Australia Day event as was the announcement that Mrs Pam Simpson had been awarded an Order of the Medal of Australia (OAM) for services to the Bourke community.

It was particularly pleasing to see that the volunteers from the Bourke Rural Fire Service Brigade were awarded the Volunteers Award. As part of the Communities response to COVID in August to October last year, I was proud to be part of the Maranguka Food Distribution Group which distributed food packages to COVID positive families and individuals during that phase of the pandemic. With the Group

comprising hard working representatives from NSW Aboriginal Affairs, Council, Health Service, Bourke Police, Maranguka, Outback Division of General Practice and the Rural Fire Service (RFS), COVID positives were able to contact Maranguka for a food package delivery. From there it was the Bourke RFS volunteers who were out there, day in day out, delivering the packages. I thank all associated with the Food Group for their considerable efforts but particularly congratulate the RFS Volunteers for their fantastic work and assistance to the community.

Vaccination Clinics in Bourke

As a community, Bourke has generally done very well in terms of the take up of the COVID vaccine. The process for the vaccine as this point is two (2) initial shots and then a booster. From Friday, 21 January 2022, booster vaccinations can be given 3 or more months after your first 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

To progress first, second, booster or kids doses, the Western NSW Local Health District will be delivering a pop-up COVID vaccination clinic at the Full Gospel Fellowship Church, 25 Short Street, Bourke on Tuesday 8th, Wednesday 9th & Thursday 10th February 2022. To attend the clinic in Bourke, it is necessary that you book an appointment. There are plenty of flyers around Bourke promoting the Clinic with these flyers showing a QR code which will link you to the booking form. Alternatively, phone 1800 684 423 to make a booking.

As of Saturday, 29 January 2022, there had been 133 positive COVID cases recorded in Bourke since Christmas 2021, when the first omicron case was recorded in the community. With these numbers comes a higher probability of exposure. In addition to the numbers in Bourke, on the same day, tragically 49 people died in NSW from COVID related matters. Of the 28 women and 21 men who passed away, 11 were recorded as receiving three (3) COVID doses, 24 had received two (2) doses, two (2) people had received a single dose and 12 were unvaccinated. Whilst a booster won't stop you from getting the virus, the medical advice is it will help to strengthen your immune system and improve your long-term protection against serious illness from the COVID-19 virus.

Wanaaring Rd Funding

One of the many projects that Council has undertaken over the past few years is the reconstruction and sealing of a large part of the Bourke to Wanaaring Road. At this point, there remains but 36.33km of road left to be sealed at an approximate cost of \$13.6m. What was once a bone jarring road full of bulldust and corrugations in the dry and a road impassable to non-4WD vehicles following periods of minor rainfall events (<10mm) is now, for all but this 36.33km, a sealed all-weather surface. The difference that this road has made to the quality of life of residents both along the road and in the village of Wanaaring cannot be underestimated in terms of its positive and productive impact. Funding for the sealing of the final 36.33km's of this roadway will complete both Councils and Governments vision to improve vehicular access west of Bourke, allow increased and more reliable freight movements from Western NSW to major stock selling centres in central NSW, reduce road closures during wet weather and reduce ever increasing road maintenance costs.

The completion of the reconstruction and sealing of this road is a high priority strategic project that Council raises the need for final funding with Government at every opportunity. To their considerable credit, Councils road construction crews have become very efficient and effective in undertaking long lengths of road works given the considerable experience gained undertaken the numerous stages of work previously undertaken on this road. This is evidenced by the fact that in respect of the last stage of the project, being the Romani to Wangamana section of the road, Council has underspent the funding by \$2.6m due to the efficiencies of the workforce. Good problem, I say!

It is not, however, a case of simply pushing on with further works on the road using these surplus funds as any such works would be outside the scope of the project funding. Accordingly, representations have been made to Government officers to extend the scope of the project and undertake further works on the Wanaaring Road utilising the remaining funds. It is important that Council “plays by the rules” and I look forward to positive advice from the authorities.

National Corrections Day

Friday 21 January marked the fifth National Corrections Day. The day recognised the 10,000 corrections staff in NSW who work year-round with offenders to keep our community safe.

This year the theme was, Giving Back, with this theme highlighting the ways Corrective Services NSW staff go beyond the call of duty to protect the community, fundraise for important charities, volunteer and contribute to vital community projects and partnerships.

Staff from Corrective Services NSW work in our community and I take this opportunity to acknowledge their dedication and contribution.

Quote

“I think standing ovations are one of the most ironic things in the world, by the way. But I’ll take them, without a doubt.....” Wheelchair athlete, Dylan Allcott on receiving his Australian of the Year Award.