



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

Social Issues

It was a busy period in Bourke last week with much activity in the social issues space as numerous parties came together to look for solutions to address the recent unfortunate spate of anti-social behaviour in Bourke. Discussions were convened by the NSW Police Force Youth Command involving the Western Region Police Commander, Assistant Police Commissioner, Brett Greentree and his officers; NSW Youth Commander, Assistant Police Commissioner, Gavin Wood and his officers, representatives from the Bourke Tribal Council, Maranguka Community Hub, Government and Non-Government Agencies, the CEO of the NSW PCYC, Dominic Teakle and the Mayor, Leonie Brown and myself from Council, all met on Wednesday to discuss the current issues in Bourke and ways to improve service delivery to address these issues. Various actions are to be implemented but I consider that the big outcome from the day was that Police taking responsibility to ensure, that into the future, the Government Departments are held accountable for undertaking their respective roles. In any structure there has to be a boss, and like so many other situations, it is necessary for the Police to take that role. They do it well and whilst there is a body of work to be undertaken to re-engineer some of the processes as to how Agencies deal with certain issues in Bourke, I am confident that good steps have been taken.

Following Councils Ordinary Monthly Meeting last Friday, Councillors took the opportunity to meet with Acting Commander, Inspector Trent Swinton; Officer in Charge, Bourke Police, Inspector Peter Walton and Regional Director - Central West and Orana – Department of Regional NSW, Gerry Collins, to hear from all parties their positions in respect of the state of social issues in Bourke. Good discussions ensued and Councillors were most appreciative of the updates from the three (3) guests.

Electric Vehicle Charging Station

There have been many stories in the mainstream media in recent times regarding the emerging availability of electric vehicles (EV) in the marketplace. In 2015 during my term as General Manager at Dubbo Council, the Mayor at the time, Matthew Dickerson was to the forefront of the EV field when he took delivery of, on behalf of Council, the first all-electric Mayoral vehicle anywhere in Australia. At the time the standard joke from his fellow Councillors was, “Gee you’re going to need a long extension cord!” I am happy to also admit my scepticism as to the product. I subsequently drove a few of the electric Mayoral vehicles and then travelled in Matthews personal car, a Tesla, and on all occasions I was suitably impressed. The torque in the electric vehicles is quite amazing.

I am pleased to say that Bourke is also getting in on the EV evolution. For some time, the Riverside Motel has had a charging capability for Tesla Vehicles and since early 2020, Council has engaged with the NRMA to establish an Electric Vehicle (EV) fast charging station in Bourke. The good news is that the build of the Bourke NRMA EV fast charging station will commence in early March. The Station will be built in Mitchell Street outside of the Wal Mitchell Wharf Precinct and will comprise of two parking bays and electric fast chargers which will be accessible to the public 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The roll out of the charging stations is a partnership between the NRMA and the NSW government to deliver greener and cleaner travel and also allow EV drivers to confidently tour the entirety of NSW knowing they will have a charging station near them. This is an exciting opportunity for Bourke and owners of electric vehicles knowing that additional charging stations are being built in remote locations, as previously there was often an inability to conveniently charge vehicles in these locations. With the recent significant price increase of fuel, we may see a lot more electric vehicles on the road!

Far West Active Fest

From 4.00pm – 6.00pm on 22 March 2022, Davidson Oval in Bourke will be a hive of activity as the 2022 Far West Active Fest, a festival of “fun, fitness and laughter”, comes to Bourke. This free event seeks to deliver fun activities, sports gear and mental health programs through a whole of community wellbeing event. Professional athletes will be on site with all kids who attend the event receiving free training gear and also having the chance to win even more sporting apparel on the day. There is a colour run, footy clinics, league tag and other sports activities available. “Come on down”, as they say, and get involved. Mental health workshops will be conducted on the day for adults and children, through the Black Dog Institute. A free sausage sizzle BBQ is also available for all participants at the Active Fest.

This is the second year that the NSW Office of Sport has delivered this event in a number of rural and remote locations across the Far West of NSW, including Bourke. I thank the NSW Government through its Office of Sport for their initiative along with the other supporters on the day: Creative Community Concepts, Kit Bag for Kids and MALO Republic, Far West Academy of Sport, Mission Australia, National and NSW Rugby Leagues, BlackDog Institute and 1800Respect.

Small Business Month

March is Small Business Month and this year arrangements have been made for former Bourke local, Lionel O'Mally, Financial Planner from Purpose Planning and Wealth Advice, to empower our small business owners and operators. Two information sessions have been arranged at the Back o' Bourke Exhibition Conference Centre on Thursday, 17 March 2022. The afternoon starts at 4pm with a Wealth Information Session. This first session is not only for business operators but for residents who are interested in making better financial decisions for themselves and their family. Lionel will cover important topics including superannuation, basic investment, debt management, budgeting even retirement planning.

For the second session -Empowering Your Business - an invitation is extended to all business operators to provide information to help the Bourke business community make better financial decisions within their businesses. Lionel will be joined by Accountant, Vince Clemente from FMC Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors. They are both keen to bring a fresh approach to financial planning and running a successful business. A couple of young fellows who are happy to explain some of the tips and tricks for business. RSVP for catering for session 2 would be welcomed to Councils Economic Development Manager, Mel Milgate by phoning Council on 6830 8000 or by email: m.milgate@bourke.nsw.gov.au

COVID Vouchers

The NSW Government continues its efforts to stimulate the post-Covid economy with a range of measures, including a \$250 travel card for seniors living in remote, regional or rural areas. (www.service.nsw.gov.au/regionalseniorstravel). There are also more Discover NSW vouchers for families who did it tough during the lockdowns last year, having to home school children and having their outings limited. (www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-dine-discover-nsw-vouchers). The measures will go some small way toward pumping more dollars out to regional areas, with more tourist traffic giving a boost to the local businesses that also suffered during the pandemic. Also, with a new year of local sporting competition starting, parents are encouraged to make use of the Active Kids program, which provides two \$100 vouchers to put toward sports and recreation costs (www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/active-kids).

Road Works

In recent months the reconstruction and sealing of various roads in the Bourke Shire have been completed. Parkdale Road, Weir Road, Polygonum Swamp Road and River Road, which are all relatively close to town, have all been sealed. River Road has been damaged by the flood waters of recent times with a major wash away the result. The necessary approvals are currently being sought with repair works to be undertaken as part of the Bourke Shire having been declared a Natural Disaster area. The sealing of the Coronga Peak Rd, west of Byrock has also been completed. In addition to the sealing of these roads, the construction of concrete bridges on MR 68 South (Bourke-Louth) at Jandra Creek No2 and Compadore Creek have been completed. All of these projects have essentially been funded through grant funding through NSW State Government programs.

Council also works with Transport for NSW in maintaining the State Highways. This work is done under what is referred to as the Road Maintenance Council Contract (RMCC). Under this Contract, Council is currently undertaking shoulder widening works some 38 km south of Bourke on the Mitchell Highway. Council still awaits a decision on funding in respect of further works on the Bourke – Wanaaring Road.

Regular maintenance works are currently being undertaken on Lower Lila Road, Mooleyarrah Road, Bundy Road, Wilganea Road and Lakemere Road.

Quote: “The heaviest rainfall on Saturday morning (26 February 2022) was on Bribie Island and in the Moreton Bay region, but Mount Glorious, near Brisbane, recorded 618mm in 24 hours.” A Bureau of Meteorology spokesperson regarding the rain cell in south east Queensland last week. That’s some rainfall.