



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 10 March 2022”

North Bourke Bridge

Council at its February meeting allocated \$200,000 to undertake a structural assessment, develop a preferred restoration option, prepare a cost estimate and prepare a restoration specification with a view to achieving grant funding to restore the historic, and magnificent, North Bourke Bridge. A high strategic priority of the Bourke Community Strategic Plan, the restoration of the Bridge has been the subject of discussions with various politicians and the submission of funding applications, to no avail. The expenditure of these funds will provide Council, and ultimately the community, with a level of certainty in pursuing both the funding and the completion of the project. It would be great to think that in years to come, visitors to Bourke, including myself, will travel to North Bourke to witness a fully restored bridge, including an operable centre section.

Minister for Western NSW

Minister for Western NSW, the Hon Dugald Saunders, flew into Bourke last Thursday morning, on the regular Dubbo to Bourke air service, to attend the Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee Meeting, meet with staff at the Bourke Multi-Purpose Service, meet with Bourke Police and finished up with a meeting with Mayor Barry, Leonie Brown, Melanie Milgate and myself, at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre. All this before getting back on the regular Thursday flight to Dubbo departing, at 3.10pm.

It was good to be able to talk with the Minister regarding the social and health issues which are currently impacting Bourke in a variety of ways. The Minister had heard of and was well across the break and enters in town and various other juvenile crime matters and the numerous actions being taken to hopefully address such issues. In addition, he was aware of an incident a couple of weeks ago, which saw the vehicle of a resident of Bourke being side swiped by a vehicle travelling in the opposite direction on the Mitchell Highway near Byrock. The vehicle that was in the wrong failed to stop. Luckily the occupants of the vehicle that was hit, which included a baby, were uninjured. What the Minister wasn't aware of was an incident last week which saw a young fellow leaving his car overnight at the front of licensed premises in town only to come back to the car the next morning to find various windows smashed. Residents have heard these stories before and potentially move on with their day-to-day activities. The unfortunate issue though is that these issues affect every resident in town because the victim of these crimes were medical people, who understandably, shaken by the events, have decided to leave Bourke. Every resident in the Shire is now a victim of someone's poor decisions in perpetrating these crimes, as the departure of these people makes the delivery of services to the community an even more difficult proposition. Whilst the Minister was confident replacement medical staff would be sourced, one really has to wonder where it all ends.

Stay NSW Program

The NSW Government has announced the roll-out of a \$50 accommodation voucher available to residents as part of its \$250m Stay NSW Program, (<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/stay-nsw>), effective

from last week. The purpose of the vouchers is to encourage NSW residents to get out and about NSW and stay at accommodation as they travel. The vouchers can be used at a participating country hotel, a family-run caravan park or a hotel in the Sydney CBD. People can pool their \$50 Stay NSW Vouchers with relatives or friends, with no redemption limit being applicable. There are more than 1,200 Stay NSW businesses already registered across the State with the vouchers being valid for use until 9 October 2022. Participating businesses will be able to redeem vouchers seven days a week, including public holidays. Customers will be able to search for places to stay on the easy-to-use business finder.

Cricket Sadness

Last Saturday was an almost surreal day having woken up to the news that Shane Warne had passed away at the relatively young age of 52. The “Wisden Cricketers Almanack” which dates back to 1884, and also known as the Cricketers Bible, conducted a poll back in 2000 to determine the five cricketers of the century. Shane Warne was ultimately one of the five with the stage having been set when he bowled “the ball of the century” at Old Trafford in England, back in 1993, to dismiss Mike Gatting. We’ve all seen that ball replayed in recent days, but I will quote Wisden’s description of the delivery. “It began its flight innocently so as to lull Mike Gatting, drifted to leg, pitched in the batsman’s blind spot, then rounded on him fiercely and bent back off stump.” Nice! Then there was Shane Warne’s hat trick, with the third wicket falling after an absolute pearly of a catch in close by David Boon, and his 700th wicket when he ran and ran in delight. Ultimately he captured 708 test wickets at an average of 25.41 runs when he called it quits at the end of the 2006/2007 Ashes Series. He made some interesting points in commentary but never backed away regardless. Death is inevitable for all of us, but 52 is too soon. I certainly feel for his children, family and his close friends.

Western Cancer Centre Dubbo

The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Barnaby Joyce, in the company of Member for Parkes, The Hon Mark Coulton and Member for Dubbo and Minister for Western NSW, the Hon Dugald Saunders, officially opened the much-anticipated Western Cancer Centre at Dubbo last weekend. Mark Coulton, Dugald Saunders and his predecessor Troy Grant, medical people, including Dr Joe Canalese, and a raft of other people, have worked long and hard to achieve this facility and they should be very proud to have achieved their combined vision. Constructed by NSW Health Infrastructure, the new centre located on the Dubbo Hospital campus will deliver life-saving cancer treatment and diagnostic services to residents of Dubbo and the regional and remote areas of western NSW, including Bourke. The new cancer centre will significantly expand chemotherapy services and provide access to radiation therapy and PET CT services in Dubbo for the first time. \$35 million has been invested by the NSW and Australian governments to develop the Centre. In delivering the purpose built two-storey cancer centre alongside the new main hospital building at Dubbo, the project includes the provision of 16 chemotherapy spaces/a bunker for radiation treatment/ a PET CT scanner for cancer diagnostics/ a wellness space to provide support and well-being services to patients and families and a patient car park.

My wish would be that no one gets cancer, however that unfortunately is not reality. This centre will provide patients from Bourke with improved access to life-saving cancer diagnostic and treatment services in Dubbo alleviating the need to travel to Orange, Canberra or Sydney for treatment. Earlier this year I had to get a PET CT scan undertaken. So, it was off to Sydney for me. I have to have another one later this year and that will be at the Dubbo Centre. So much more convenient.

With more services in Dubbo, more people from Bourke will travel to Dubbo and unless they have close friends and relatives in town, they will have to source accommodation. Recently, Mayor Barry completed a letter fully supporting a funding application being submitted by Macquarie Homestay at

Dubbo for the construction of 26 purpose-built oncology accommodation units, to add to the existing 17 units at the Homestay Facility. Oncologist's have predicted that 294 patients external to Dubbo will receive treatment on an annual basis and in doing so will need to source accommodation for the duration of their four (4) week treatment regime. This suggests that patients will utilise 1,176 weeks of accommodation per annum. Oncology treatment alone will result in 22.6 rooms at the Homestay facility being fully occupied across 52 weeks of the year. With increased accommodation demands on the Homestay, there is a real risk of patients limiting their treatment options if appropriate and affordable accommodation options are not available. This has been the unfortunate case in the past where there have been examples of Bourke residents not having undertaken treatment because they simply could not afford accommodation

Quote. "I was in disbelief and shock when I first heard the news of his death. Now, the overriding emotion is of great sadness. It will really hit home next summer when the cricket is on and there's no Warnie. There will never be another one like him. He is irreplaceable." Former Australian Cricket Captain- Mark Taylor