



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 17 March 2022”

Flooding Tragedy

As the clean-up from the devastating flooding of recent times continues, south-east Queensland, northeast NSW and Western Sydney again faced severe rainfall and thunderstorm warnings last week with concerns that the rainfall may lead to more flash flooding. At one point on Monday 7 March, there were 10 active flood warnings and a severe thunderstorm warning in place in Queensland, with heavy rainfall and winds a possibility for Ipswich, Logan and other areas in the south-east. In NSW several warnings had been issued for severe weather, including the South Coast, Illawarra, parts of the Tablelands and parts of the Sydney metropolitan region. The Hawkesbury-Nepean River ultimately surpassed the major flood levels reached in early March 2021. Lismore, on the NSW North Coast, is still lacking in basic services, such as power supply and a sewerage treatment plant that is expected to take four (4) months to repair and make operational. The La Nina weather pattern, which as I understood was weakening back in December, has certainly flexed its muscle in recent weeks with unprecedented rainfall in many localities.

Mayor Barry has written to his fellow Mayors at Ballina and Lismore, on behalf of the Bourke Community, to extend best wishes and thoughts at these most trying of times. The loss of life, the emotion in the voices of the flood victims and the pictures of the destruction of property have been very harrowing. If there is to be a bright spot in all this it is the way the various communities have come together to assist one another and of course, the story of the Fijian Abattoir Workers who came out as a group and rescued numerous elderly people from a rapidly inundating aged care facility in Lismore.

Locally it is expected that the Darling River will receive another flow in weeks to come with a low to moderate river height expected. A friend of mine told me last year that we were in for a very wet summer with flooding expected. She was very right!

Tour de Roc

The Toyota Tour de OROC Cycle Classic was an initiative of then Dubbo City Council Mayor, Mathew Dickinson, back in 2013 to raise funds for Macquarie Home Stay. After being postponed last year due to COVID, the 2022 version of the event will run from 21-26 March 2022 and see 25 dedicated riders and their support crew travel over 1,100km around the region in support of Macquarie Home Stay. The event, now organised by South Dubbo Rotary, will see the riders arrive in Bourke late afternoon on Wednesday 23 March 2022 with Council and Bourke Rotary Club organising a barbecue dinner for the riders at the Bourke Bowling Club, followed by a charity auction to be held after the Bowling Club’s

badge draw. Come along and get bidding. There could be a bargain or two! Interestingly the support crew for the event includes Ashley Weilinga and Paul Loxley, both who have strong ties to Bourke.

I wrote last week of the opening of the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo and the importance that Macquarie Home Stay will play for Bourke residents who require accommodation in Dubbo as they receive treatment at the Centre. After many years of community fundraising, and I should say that Mathews initiative with the Tour was essentially the first major amount of funds provided towards the Project, the first stage of Macquarie Home Stay was opened on 29 January 2019. More funds are now needed to develop further stages of the facility. Macquarie Home Stay services people throughout the entire Orana Region with the Home Stay being a crucial facility to give patients and their loved ones a home away from home during their stay. The facility provides affordable accommodation for people in the region in a range of circumstances.

Aboriginal Language Program

The Aboriginal Languages Trust is calling for applications for the refreshed and simplified Grants Program to support projects that reawaken, grow, nurture, promote and raise awareness of Aboriginal languages in communities across NSW. The Aboriginal Languages Revival Program provides one-off funding to Aboriginal Community organisations and groups to support them to commence or build on smaller scale Language revival projects. The program aims to promote and raise awareness of Aboriginal Languages in communities across NSW, consistent with the objectives of the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2021 (NSW)*.

The Aboriginal Languages Trust has allocated \$650,000 for the Aboriginal Languages Revival Program in 2022. The program has been redesigned in response to feedback which cited that the previous program was too complex. As part of the new process the Trust has given applicants the option to answer some questions using audio or video recordings in a bid to create a more flexible application process for Community. Applicants can apply for grants from \$1,000 up to \$15,000 with this being an open and competitive grants program. Applications are now open and close at 5pm, on Friday 1 April 2022. Application forms can be completed online at <https://alt.smartygrants.com.au/> Successful recipients will need to deliver their projects between 1 July 2022 and 1 June 2023.

NSW WILD DOG FENCE EXTENSION PROJECT

The economic impact of wild dogs is estimated to exceed \$100 million every year across Australia, with around \$22 million of this attributed to NSW. The proposed extension of the existing 583 km NSW Border Wild Dog Fence by around 750 km will be a game-changer for livestock producers and community members in Western NSW, offering employment and procurement opportunities for local businesses. Prior to construction commencing, the project is undergoing an extensive assessment, approvals and community consultation process, providing relevant experts and local landholders and stakeholders an opportunity to have input into the project.

Preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project is currently underway and will address biodiversity, construction methodology, soil and sediment, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage, flora and fauna and sustainability issues. To input into the document, community consultation for the project is being held next week, 21-25 March, at locations along the NSW and South Australian border. The community sessions, covering all aspects of the project, have been organised for landholders, community members, fencing and employment contractors, environmentalists, as well as targeted sessions for the Aboriginal community. The targeted sessions for the Aboriginal community will focus on the assessments for cultural heritage and biodiversity, as well as employment opportunities, while each session will include a presentation on the project. The project team have advised that they

are keen to see a broad range of feedback, ideas, suggestions and concerns raised during the sessions. Such feedback will be considered and help inform the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Once the EIS is drafted, it will be lodged with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, where it will be put on public exhibition for further feedback. Full details on the Wild Dog Fence Project and this latest round of consultation can be obtained from <https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au> and search the news section.

Bourke PCYC

Since taking on the role of Manager at the Bourke PCYC towards the end of last year, George Dickson has been very busy successfully resetting the Club such that it is a major component in the overall mix of activities for youth in Bourke. I received an email from George during the week advising that PCYC's across the State are seeing an urgent and growing need to develop mental resilience skills amongst our youth.

To this end, the PCYC have developed a new preventative program called GRIT, which aims to build mental resilience by combining physical well-being and nutrition with emotional and social intelligence skills. George is very keen to get the GRIT Program to the Bourke Club. To assist, the PCYC is conducting a Star Jump Challenge during Youth Week from 3-10 April 2022. You can get involved and donate to this cause in hope of bringing the GRIT program to the Bourke Club. The following link will allow you donate: www.pycystarjumpchallenge.org.au/fundraisers/PCYCBourkeTeamCaptain

PV Jandra

Monday saw the Paddle Vessel (PV) Jandra commence operations on the Darling River for the 2022 tourist season in Bourke. It has been a rather quiet time for the Jandra during the last two (2) years due to COVID and it is pleasing to see, of late, an increased number of caravaners both passing through and stopping at Bourke for a period of time to experience Bourke and surrounds. As a community we should be thankful for the vision shown by those who both initiated and subsequently delivered the Jandra and the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre to enhance the tourist experience here in Bourke. They are excellent products and I look forward to seeing figures that reflect ever increasing tourism numbers attending Bourke in coming months.

Quote: "Anyone who's been watching the numbers over the past few days would have seen an apparent rise in (COVID) cases. That is concerning for us." NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazzard on preliminary modelling that show cases COVID could double in the next four to six weeks, as the new Omicron version becomes dominant.