



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 24 March 2022”

Easter Festival

Preparations for the 2022 Bourke Easter Festival are well underway with television advertising, promoting the Festival to a very wide audience, now airing on television. I thought last year’s festival was a fantastic event and I am confident that this years will be of a similar quality, if not better!

Colour Run, Park Run, Tours on the Jandra, markets, street parade, wool bale rolling, rugby, the giant easter egg hunt, along with many other mainstay activities, are all back for another year. There are three activities that I wish to highlight in respect of this year’s Easter Festival. On Easter Friday afternoon from 4pm, the Sulli-Vans will be performing in the gardens at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre. Apparently Kevin Sullivan and his family previously appeared on the Voice Television Show, however I caught them performing in Bourke last year and I thought they were excellent. Kevin Sullivan was a forensic police crime scene investigator before he, his wife and three young children moved into the family caravan in 2020 to commence a tour of Australia. They started in Queensland and they have taken their music to communities and towns across the country. They’ve been touring, QLD, NSW, SA, Victoria, NT & WA playing over 110 LIVE shows, across the country. They have performed at the Cairns Casino, Roadhouses, Caravan Parks, House Concerts, at venues all the way from Cape York to El Questro Station in the Kimberly’s and at iconic Festivals such as ‘The Man From Snowy River Festival’ in Corryong Victoria, the Camooweal Drovers Camp Festival, the Nambung Country Music Muster where they received a standing ovation and shortly, the Bourke Easter Festival. The Sulli-Vans were to have performed during the 50th Anniversary for the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January 2022, however the Festival was cancelled due to COVID. Kevin and family will be ably supported by Kaitlyn Thomas throughout the evening.

On Easter Saturday, the traditional Bourke Easter Street Parade will be held. This year the Parade will be led by the NSW Police Marching Band. The attendance of the band in Bourke is a significant coup for the community with the band generally spending Easter at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Comprising some 30 band members, I very much look forward to the sounds of the band resonating through Bourke that Saturday. The final event I highlight is the Back O’ Bourke Picnic Race Club meeting. As I write this column, various local trades people are working hard to finalise the fit out of the new pavilion at the Renshaw Showground that will provide a large undercover area with enhanced food and beverage amenities for race goers and other users of the Renshaw. I am confident that those in attendance will be suitably impressed.

All in all, a fantastic weekend is available to the community and I congratulate and thank the various people who assist in delivering the many activities that make up the Bourke Easter Festival.

Tour de OROC

Yesterday afternoon, the 25 riders and support crew who are participating in the 2022 Tour de OROC cycling event raising funds for the Macquarie Home Stay in Dubbo, were welcomed to Bourke. Last evening, Council and Bourke Rotary Club organised a barbecue dinner for the riders at the Bourke Bowling Club and this was followed by a charity auction. In assisting in the garnering of auction items, I was reminded how generous people are in assisting with a worthy cause. Locally, Roz Milgate, Andrew Hull, Kath Sneddon, Sam Rice, Morrall's Bakery, Bourke Betta Electrical, Bourke Newsagency, Bourke's Butchery, Bourke Home Hardware, Peter and Eva-Lena Crothers, Bourke Furniture One and Central West Golf Centre in Dubbo were all to the fore in donating auction items.

With NRL games coming to the Central West in coming times, contact was made with Bathurst and Dubbo Councils who generously donated Grandstand Tickets to the Panthers v Knights and Rabbitohs v Raiders games respectively. Contact was also made with the Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo seeking some entry tickets. The Zoo came back and not only provided entry passes but they also provided an overnight stay at the Savannah Cabins at the Dubbo Zoo for 2 adults and 2 children. A quick phone call to the office of the Minister for Western NSW, Dugald Saunders, who has been to the fore in securing NRL games for the regions, and a signed South Sydney Jersey was made available for the auction. A call was also made to the President of the Macquarie Club in Dubbo, Chris Condon, who is a known St George Dragons tragic and strong supporter of the club. Through Chris, and Ben Thompson, the Commercial Business Manager at the Dragons, we were able to also auction a signed and framed St George jersey along with home game tickets with entry to the Captain's Lounge for the day. As I said earlier, people are most generous for a worthy cause and it was so pleasing to see the assistance provided by so many in providing auction items.

Jandra

The PV Jandra recommenced operations for the 2022 Tourism Season on Monday this week. For Tuesday mornings cruise, we had good numbers booked but come the time of departure we had six (6) no shows. They turned up just as the Jandra went around the bend in the river as it headed north. They had literally missed the boat. Keen to experience a cruise on the famous Darling River before their departure after lunch and before the next scheduled cruise mid-afternoon, staff advised that they could always hire the boat for a private cruise. Much to the surprise and delight of the staff member that's exactly what our customers did.....they hired the Jandra for their own private cruise. Good job. Don't forget, the Jandra operates scheduled one (1) hour cruises at 9.00am and 2.30pm daily from Monday through to Saturday (inclusive) and then a two (2) hour cruise on Sundays at 2.00pm. Bookings can be made at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre.

Anzac Day

Whilst still a month away, I was happy to receive correspondence this week from the NSW Minister for Veterans, the Hon. David Elliott MP advising that under the current health advice and public health order of 10 March 2022, "it is permissible to organise an outdoor Dawn Service, commemoration, or March with no limits on attendance numbers. There is no requirement for QR code check in." This is fantastic news and augers well for members of the Bourke community to come together and attend the traditional Dawn Service or March on Anzac Day this year.

COVID

With the awful floods of recent times, which have left close to 5,000 homes across south-east Queensland, northern NSW and Sydney uninhabitable, the media focus on COVID cases has relaxed somewhat. Rest assured, the virus is still out there with NSW Health reporting circa 15-20,000 cases a day and numerous fatalities each day. Here in Bourke, up until last week, there had been 254 positive COVID cases in the community since Christmas 2021. That's an average of some 21 cases per week for the 12-week period since Christmas. In NSW 94.5% of the population aged over 16 years are double-dosed. Interestingly, 57.6% of the same population have received their 3rd or booster dose.

For those in the Bourke community who have yet to have their COVID booster shot, I encourage you to get in contact with Ochre Health or the Aboriginal Medical Service in Bourke to make an appointment for their COVID booster shot. It won't be long and people will be soon arranging their annual flu shot.

Building Supply Shortages

I have heard that a major building company in Dubbo has a two (2) year waiting list for the construction of houses. This week I read that dongas and relocatable homes are also in short supply thanks to a shortage of building materials and labour. Farm Online reported that the waiting period on new transportable homes is now out to 18 months and prices of second-hand dongas have tripled. The Ukrainian war will impact the amount of softwood imported to Australia from Russia, noting that Australia's softwood production has been severely impacted by last year's bush fires and now the floods. Roof trusses and wall frames are reportedly taking longer than 3-4 months to supply. The limited supply has seen prices escalate. Structural steel is up nearly 40% with the price of pine having apparently doubled in 12 months.

Quote: "It is expected that the cost of the recent catastrophic flooding to be up to three times more expensive than the damage bill following the Black Summer bushfires." NSW Treasurer Matt Kean.