



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 14 April 2022”

Shane Warne’s Memorial Service

If you haven’t watched the Shane Warne Memorial Service, I would encourage you to do so. According to various sources, the Service was watched by some one (1) billion people around the world. Yes, a billion people. That’s one in eight, or 12.5% of the world’s estimated eight (8) billion people who reportedly tuned in. From my perspective I thought the producers of the Memorial did an excellent job with people on the night speaking about Shane Warne with emotion, humour and respect.

Merv Hughes certainly broke the ice when, as part of a panel, he was asked to describe Warne in one word, and he came back with “bogan”! In addition to the large crowd on hand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, including many of Warne’s former teammates and sporting greats, people of the ilk of Hugh Jackman, Elton John, Kylie Minogue and Robbie Williams, to name but some, paid tribute to Warne via video link. Hugh Jackman said Shane Warne reminded us “to make the most of every single second, and he sucked the marrow out of life”. From the content of the Memorial, it was evident that Shane Warne certainly lived quite a life.

Federal Election

By the time this week’s Column is published, I suspect that a date for the 2022 Federal Election will have been announced. It has been a busy time in Federal Politics with the Budget having been delivered just a couple of weeks ago. Local Government in Australia has long advocated that the level of Financial Assistance Grants made by the Commonwealth to local councils across the nation should be at least one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue. In the 2022-2023 budget, the Australian Government will provide \$2.8b in Financial Assistance Grants funding, an estimated 0.55% of the tax take (and down from 0.6% in 2021-2022). Independent analysis shows increasing Financial Assistance Grants to at least one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue would create 16,000 jobs and add about \$2.37 billion a year to Australia’s GDP. Financial Assistance Grants are particularly important and valuable to councils, as the funding is untied and can be spent in areas where it is most needed.

In terms of other funding programs for councils, the Budget allocates \$501.7 million over three years to extend the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, which supports local councils to maintain and deliver social infrastructure, improve road safety and bolster the resilience of the local road network. The funding will allow councils to further engage local businesses and workforces to deliver priority projects and support economic recovery.

In the last round of this program, as announced in August 2021, Bourke Council received \$868,000 for the following works: Additional swimming pool shade for the marshalling area and communal areas surrounding the pool; Shade at the Swimming Pool carpark Medical Centre external upgrade and automated sprinkler system; Back O' Bourke function centre disability access path; Men's Shed relocation of toilet; Solar lighting on the footpath/ bike track from the Bourke Wharf to North Bourke and Fixed chairs, tables, furniture for public spaces, parks and reserves.

The Federal Budget also included \$1.3billion in funding for telecommunications investment, with such investment being so critical for regional communities. In addition, funding to establish a Cell Broadcast National Messaging System (CBNMS) to deliver near real time warning messages to mobile phones, to inform the public of emergency and disaster events, was provided.

Futsal

George Dickson from the Bourke PCYC advised during the week that he is starting a Futsal Competition at the Club from 27 April 2022 for the term 2 school period. Futsal is a 5-a-side version of soccer that caters for both male and female participants. It is the only 5-a-side version of football officially recognised by FIFA and is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Futsal is played on a smaller, hard-court surface and usually indoors, as is the case at the Bourke PCYC, making it the perfect sport for all weather conditions. Due to the smaller court size, all players are constantly involved and there is never a dull moment, as defence transforms to attack in a split second. The small court size also helps players develop close control, quick decision making and speed and agility. There are some handy modifications in futsal, including a smaller, low-rebound ball which aides control and improves striking technique. The goals are also smaller, and players wear rubber soled shoes to aid their agility and speed.

If this sounds like you, grab a few mates and register a team or get in contact with George or his staff at the Club on (02)6870 1670 or via email: gdickson@pcycnsw.org.au

Major Infrastructure Project

A significant number of Bourke residents travel regularly to Dubbo for shopping, health and professional services or just for recreation. I would presume that most Bourke residents would have heard the ongoing debate regarding the proposed construction of a third (3rd) major river crossing across the Macquarie River in close proximity to the City. The decision by the NSW Government, and the correct one in my opinion, is for a new bridge to be constructed at the western end of River St in North Dubbo. Last week a major milestone was reached in the New Dubbo Bridge project when it was announced that tenders for the lead construction contractor to build the Australian and New South Wales Government-funded project will be invited in late April 2022. The successful head contractor for the main construction contract is expected to be announced by the end of 2022 with work set to start at the beginning of 2023.

With a total budget of \$220 million, the Australian Government has committed \$176.2 million to the project with the balance of funding being forthcoming from the NSW Government. It is obviously a significant spend, and as a result, the construction phase will inject many millions of dollars in economic activity into Dubbo and support an estimated 290 direct and 1200 indirect jobs. Undoubtedly, the new Bridge will improve travel efficiency along the Newell Highway, reduce traffic congestion for local and commuter traffic and improve access across the Macquarie River during flood events. Like the Inland Rail Project that I wrote about in a previous column, the Bridge project will provide significant economic opportunities for the western region of NSW.

Bourke MPS

Mayor Barry and I were able to meet last week with Chairman of the Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD) Board, Matthew Irvine; Board Member, Amanda O'Brien and Chief Executive Officer, Mark Spittal to discuss health matters in Bourke. Matthew, Amanda and Mark had been in Nyngan the day before for a LHD Board meeting. To their credit, they took the opportunity to travel to Bourke following their meeting, primarily to meet with staff at the Bourke Multipurpose Service (the hospital) and particularly to welcome Helen into her role as the Health Service Manager (HSM) and Roz as the Nurse Unit Manager. The appointments of Helen and Roz are major steps forward for the Bourke Community in respect of the operation of its hospital following some difficult times in recent months. On behalf of Council, I welcome Helen and Roz to Bourke and trust that they enjoy their time here.

Easter

Easter is upon us already. Regardless of how we celebrate Easter, I would ask the community to keep in mind all those people on the eastern seaboard of South-East Queensland and NSW who have been so affected by flooding in recent months. Some people have had to evacuate from their houses for the third time in as many months. I certainly feel for them. On a brighter note regarding Easter, don't forget this weekend's Bourke Easter Festival. A full calendar of events has been developed and if you need further information, please contact the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre who will be able to assist you. The phone number is 68 721 321. For those with children aged 14 years and under, the Giant Easter Hunt is on again, Easter Sunday, at the Back O Bourke Exhibition Centre commencing at 8.00am, sharp. Registrations for the hunt are now open at the Exhibition Centre or from 7.00am on the day. Last year there was quite a line up on the morning of the hunt to register, so I wouldn't be leaving registering until to the last minute. Happy hunting.

Quote: "History is written backwards but lived forwards." Madelaine Albright – 64th United States Secretary of State.