



“From the General Manager’s Desk” 28 April 2022”

Ministers in Bourke

The Deputy Premier, the Hon Paul Toole; the Minister for Western NSW, the Hon Dugald Saunders; and the Minister for Regional Health, the Hon Bronnie Taylor, were all in Bourke last week after a frenetic few days following the Easter break having been in Deniliquin, Broken Hill, Silverton, Wilcannia and then Bourke on Thursday. They headed back to Dubbo on the Thursday afternoon Airlink flight out of Bourke. It is great to see the Ministers utilising these flights.

Back in early February 2022 at the height of a particularly difficult time for Bourke in terms of youth crime, the Mayor wrote to the NSW Premier seeking assistance to the issues at hand, stating in part, that “current programs have unfortunately failed these youths.” Whilst much has taken place behind the scenes by numerous agencies in a bid to address the various issues, it was most pleasing to be able to meet with the Deputy Premier and Ministers Saunders and Taylor to discuss both social and health issues for Bourke. In addition to being Deputy Premier, Minister Toole is also Police Minister and Mayor Barry, Leonie Brown and I also took the opportunity, whilst at the Station in the company of Deputy Commissioner of Police, Peter Thurtell; Assistant Commissioner, Gavin Wood; and Officer-in-Charge at Bourke Police, Inspector Peter Walton, to press the case for funding to undertake the construction of new Police Station facilities at Bourke. The current facilities are inadequate and are in need of upgrading. In the company of the Deputy Premier, and the various Police hierarchy, we also visited the Bourke PCYC where we met with Dominic Teacle, CEO NSW PCYC, and heard from Bourke PCYC Manager, George Dixon on the various programs and initiatives that George and his team are rolling out for youths in Bourke. It was a busy morning!

As the Member for Bathurst in the NSW Parliament since March 2011, Minister Toole has held various ministerial portfolios including that of Local Government from April 2014 till January 2017. This included the lead up to and the period in 2016 when various Councils in NSW were merged. In my past role as General Manager at Dubbo Regional Council, being a merged Council, the Administrator, Michael Kneipp, and I would attend regular forums in Sydney with the other merged Councils to discuss issues affecting the various Councils. To his credit as the Minister for Local Government, Minister Toole would attend these sessions taking the time to meet individually with respective Council Administrators and General Managers to see how matters were progressing in the particular Council area. The mergers were not easy and the personal approach and the interest of Minister Toole at the time was much appreciated.

Easter Festival

I wrote in last week's GM's Column how good the Renshaw looked for the Bourke Picnic Races on Easter Sunday. I confidently wrote that statement on Easter Thursday following an inspection of the facility that morning. Writing this week's Column after the Easter Weekend, I can categorically state that the Bourke Easter Festival was a resounding success. There were a significant number of visitors in town to experience all things Bourke with the weather being perfect from when the estimated 300 people participated in the Colour Run on Good Friday morning right through to the last trip on the Jandra on Easter Monday afternoon. I attended the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre (BOBEC) at lunchtime on Easter Monday and there were still people making bookings for the 2.30pm cruise on the river that afternoon. In all, some 500 people took advantage of the Jandra Cruises over the long weekend. It was only a week prior that staff were wondering whether the vessel would in fact be able to operate over the Easter Holiday period due to the high-water level of the Darling River at the time. Interestingly whilst the river level dropped in time for Easter, the river height has again increased and river cruises have again been suspended, for the time being.

Some other impressive numbers from the Easter weekend included over 300 people at the Sulli-Vans and Kaitlyn Thomas performances at the BOBEC on Friday evening and then an estimated 800 people in attendance at the Street Parade on Saturday. Lachlan Ford tells me it was a packed house at the Bowling Club on Saturday evening for the Calcutta for the Races. The following morning, approximately 350 kids participated in the Easter Egg Hunt at the BOBEC. There were easter eggs and kids everywhere!

The Picnic Race Club advised that some 1600 people attended the races on Easter Sunday. There were excellent horse numbers, a strong betting ring, a new undercover pavilion for race goers, a well organised and stocked bar, and strong participation in the various best dressed categories. When all these features are coupled with the excellent organisational skills of the Bourke Picnic Race Club officials, it was a great afternoon. I know one gent, and it wasn't me, who became increasingly happier throughout the afternoon after picking the winners of the first three (3) races on the day. The race of the day, in my opinion, turned out to be the feature race, being Race 4, the Splash Cola Harry Hart Memorial Picnic Cup run over 1600 metres. The \$11,000 race was won by a Nyngan based, and Rodney Robb trained, horse by the name of Knee Slapper, which won at rather long odds having led all the way with the margin between first and second being a short head. A very tight finish. I understand there was a protest from the jockey of the third-place horse but that was ultimately dismissed, and correct weight called.

In all, close on 1200 people attended the BOBEC over the four (4) days of the long weekend and it's a credit to a community the size of Bourke that it has a facility such as the Exhibition Centre that can tell the story of Bourke's history, promote current day attractions and sell a coffee and food to residents and visitors alike. All hail to those that had the vision to develop such a facility.

Winners

"To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy" was, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, a quote by a William L. Macy back in 1832 when he was a US Senator with the meaning being that "the person who wins or succeeds beyond all others is entitled to the benefits or rewards associated with that success." Over the years the quote has been generally expressed as "to the victor go the spoils" and it is a most appropriate statement to reflect the efforts of the winners of the Wool Bale Rolling Competition held in Bourke following the Street Parade on Easter Saturday! In the Men's

Individual Event, it was Bourke local Will Brown who outpaced his Men's Team Counterpart from Dubbo, Cam Duffy, by a time difference of 1.02 seconds. 3rd place went to Scott Hayward who was but 0.1 seconds behind Cam. A very close competition. In the Women's Teams Event it was the "Crazy Ladies" team comprising of Karley Potter, Michelle Williams, Cecile Slattery, Sally Simmonds who took the spoils for 2022. In the Men's Teams Event, Will Brown teamed up with Cam Duffy, James Hand and Ben Howard to come out in front. Well done to all those involved, win or lose, for stepping up and participating.

Completion of the Sealing of Wanaaring Road

Bourke residents know that the village of Wanaaring is located 180km due west of Bourke on the Paroo River. What was once a bone jarring road full of bulldust and corrugations in the dry, and a road impassable to non-4WD vehicles following periods of minor rainfall events (<10mm), the Bourke to Wanaaring Road is now, for all but 36.33km of its length, a sealed all-weather surface. To date 144 km of this important road has been sealed, with 96km of the road sealed during Paul Toole's term as Regional Roads Minister when Council received \$25.222m in funding to undertake works on the road.

Whilst in Bourke last week, Mayor Barry took the opportunity to advise the now Deputy Premier of the difference that the upgrading of a large part of this road has made to the quality of life of residents both along the road, and beyond, and in the village of Wanaaring itself. Mayor Barry also sought funding of \$13.6m to complete the sealing of the final 36.33km of the road from Bourke to Wanaaring. It's fair to say that the request was well received with the Deputy Premier also keen to see what he started, in terms of the sealing of the road, completed.

Quote: "The best meeting I've been to in twenty years." High praise indeed for the 2022 Bourke Picnic Race Meeting from Tim Moses, on-course race caller and broadcaster, who would have been to hundreds of race meetings in that twenty year period.