



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

Alliance of Western Councils

The Mayor and I recently attended the quarterly meeting of the Alliance of Western Councils held in Nyngan. The Alliance comprises Councils from Bogan, Brewarrina, Central Darling, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Mid-Western, Narromine, Walgett, Warren, Warrumbungle and Bourke Shires. Nyngan played host for the meeting bringing together Mayors and General Managers to discuss issues facing Councils and the community along with wider common issues facing Local Government in NSW.

Guest speakers at the meeting included The Hon. Dugald Saunders MP Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Western New South Wales; Ian George, Western NSW Regional Engagement Manager at Telstra; Ash Albury, Executive Director Regional Housing Supply, Department of Regional NSW and Fiona Nash, Regional Education Commissioner of Education, Skills and Employment. The Alliance Board will next meet in Bourke on 14 October 2022.

The Alliance is essentially a reiteration of the former Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) that, whilst a very successful collaborative Organisation, was disbanded by requirement back in 2017 when 13 Joint Organisations were formed throughout regional NSW. Whilst the Far North West Regional Organisation of Councils, comprising the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett, has been a success, the jury is still out as to the success or otherwise of the remaining organisations. The Orana Joint Organisation (JO), which comprised Bogan, Gilgandra, Mid-Western, Narromine, Warren and Warrumbungle Councils, with Dubbo and Coonamble Councils deciding back in 2017 not to join, has not met for a considerable time and member Councils were keen to form an alliance essentially based on the former successful OROC footprint.

NAIDOC Week

A full calendar of events was part of last week's NAIDOC celebrations in Bourke. Despite the rain and typical winter weather, the 2022 NAIDOC celebrations commenced with the opening on Monday, 4 July and concluded on Friday 8 July 2022. NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was great to see a large number of activities held here in Bourke and congratulations are extended to the organising committee.

Along with other activities attended during the week, on the Friday, the Mayor and I attended a Remembrance Ceremony convened by the Bourke RSL Subbranch and the Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service to recognise the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men and Women who served in every conflict and commitment involving Australian defence contingents since Federation. This includes both World Wars and the intervals of peace since the Second World War. It was most appropriate to gather for this solemn service during NAIDOC week to pay tribute to those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans who served in the Australian forces and recognise their significant contribution to Australia.

New Financial Year

1 July 2022 obviously saw the commencement of the new financial year. This means a considerable amount of work for the finance staff of Bourke Shire, as it does with most businesses. Council's finance staff have been busy undertaking the end of financial year processes including reconciliations, stocktakes and ensuring the rollover of ledgers. With Council's external auditors expected here in mid-August 2022, the team will be busy completing the Financial Statements for 2021/2022 noting that, as a result of the good work of staff, Bourke Shire Council was the 2nd Council of the 128 Councils in NSW to lodge its Financial Statements last year.

Mitchell Lane

Bourke residents and visitors to town would have noticed road works being undertaken around the wharf area and along Mitchell Lane, which runs past the rear of the Council building onto Richard Street. These works are the final works to complete the upgrading and beautification of this important historic part of Bourke. The roadway has been built up and drainage installed in preparation for a new seal of Sturt Street and Mitchell Lane. The carpark adjacent to the levee will also be sealed allowing more space for larger vehicles and caravans to park.

Council has received considerable positive comments regarding the improvements completed in recent times around town including Central Park, Renshaw facilities, Main Street upgrade and at the Bourke War Memorial Olympic Pool and it is pleasing to hear of the general appreciation of the improvements.

Back O' Bourke Information and Exhibition Centre

Every year, Tripadvisor celebrates attractions that consistently deliver amazing experiences with a Travellers' Choice Award. This year, the Back O' Bourke Information and Exhibition Centre has proudly made the list and are in the top 10% of attractions worldwide. Yes, worldwide. In the late 1990's the vision of an exhibition centre was first discussed. That vision has come a long way from those early days of meetings, design plans, funding applications and ultimately construction to become a reality when the Back O' Bourke facility was officially opened on 24 October 2009 by the current Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Anthony Albanese. At the time, Mr Albanese was Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Recognition as a top attraction worldwide is testimony to the efforts of all those involved from day 1 and onwards.

Congratulations to all our Council Tourism Staff that continue to welcome visitors to our beautiful Centre and town. The Staff do a brilliant job selling the features of Bourke and its many attractions. With the current school holidays, the Information and Exhibition Centre has seen a significant increase in attendance numbers, both at the Centre and Café, in recent weeks. Staff informed me that recently one morning, they sold 36 pieces of carrot cake during a 2-hour period! That's a lot of cake sold and an indication of the level of activity that is currently occurring. The team also tell me that it's been hard to find a spot to park out there in recent weeks, which is a good problem, as literally caravan after caravan attends the Centre. One can only imagine the attendance numbers on the PV Jandra if it was operating during this busy period, but for the height of the River. Essentially, once the Darling River reaches a height of 7 metres, the Jandra cannot operate due to safety concerns. Given the current flows in the River, and now the flood conditions in the Macquarie River which flows into the Macquarie Marshes, then into the Barwon River and ultimately into the Darling River above Bourke, I suspect that we may not see the Jandra operating again this tourist season.

Hydrometric Gauging Stations

Talking of the River, the NSW Government has commenced work on 5 new or upgraded river gauging stations for communities in the northern Murray-Darling Basin. The gauging stations will deliver critical water data to water users, communities, and water management agencies across northern NSW. One of the gauging stations is located near Bourke with others located near Brewarrina, Quambone, Walgett

and Wilcannia. The stations are part of the Hydrometric Network and Remote Sensing Program, funded by the Australian Government. The gauging stations will deliver transparent, accurate and accessible data in real time to water users, communities and stakeholders alike, building on more than 1300 monitoring sites already available in real time to the public. Information available from the new stations will include stream levels, flow volumes, and water quality.

The sites will enhance the network so Government can better manage stream connectivity, compliance, environmental water release, and extreme events . The new stations will add even more localised data, leading to a better understanding of local conditions with a view to balancing the needs of water users and the environment, and better prepare for floods and droughts.

Western Regional Water Strategy

On 30 June 2022, staff from the Department of Planning and Environment were in Bourke to hear from the community about the draft Western Regional Water Strategy, proposed amendments to the Barwon-Darling water sharing plan, and the proposed rules for floodplain harvesting access licences to be included in the Barwon-Darling water sharing plan. The Mayor, former General Manager Mark Riley and I, all attended the session. We spoke of the need to raise the height of the weir at Bourke and further spoke against any plans to remove the weirs downstream of Bourke, known as Weir 19A and 20A. Council has subsequently made a submission in respect of these matters.

Quote: “The bad news is that the across-the-board falls in commodity prices probably reflect a conviction that recessions around the world and a slump in activity and demand are looming.”
Stephen Bartholomeusz- Business Columnist.