



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

“From the  
General Manager’s Desk”  
18 August 2022”

### **Airport Grant Funding**

I recently wrote in my column of the importance to the community, and to the region, of the Bourke Airport and that such importance should not be underestimated. The connectivity link that is provided to our remote location as a result of a well-maintained Bourke Airport is just so important. Last week, Council received advice that a grant application it had submitted to the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program as part of the Australian Government's Regional Aviation Access Program, had been successful. The objective of the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program is to enhance the safety and accessibility of aerodromes in remote and very remote areas of Australia. The Australian Government also recognises that safe, operational aerodromes are vital in the delivery of essential goods and services in remote and very remote communities, particularly where road access is unavailable, unreliable or disrupted for extended periods due to seasonal weather conditions. An effective airstrip, accessible all year round, improves the delivery of health care services such as those provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service or other aeromedical providers, improves access to work and education opportunities and helps connect residents of remote communities. Council received \$330,000 from the Program to re-seal the Bourke Airport runway. Council will also contribute funding of \$330,000 towards this important project with work to be undertaken in coming months.

### **Active Sports Vouchers**

The NSW Government is helping kids to get active with its “Active Kids” program. The aim of the Program is to increase the level of participation by school-enrolled children in sport and physical activity by providing vouchers to assist in covering the cost of sporting registration and membership fees. The program provides two (2) x \$100 vouchers for parents, guardians and carers of school-enrolled children to use towards sport and active recreation costs each year. Data collected for the “Active Kids” program for the Bourke Local Government Area identifies that since the commencement of the program in 2018, a total of 1,181 vouchers have been taken up. The issue for parents in Bourke is that for the 2022 year, only 153 vouchers have been taken up. This is a take up rate of only 30% of the eligible population. Active Kids is funded until June 2023 so there is still plenty of opportunity to be part of the program. Put simply, not enough families are accessing the vouchers in Bourke. The application is easily accessed through a My Service NSW Account or by accessing the link at:  
<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-active-kids-voucher>

### **Auditors**

Councils Auditors are in Bourke this week to undertake the audit of Council’s 2021/2022 Annual Financial Statements. Councils finance team have been busy in the lead up to the Auditors visit preparing the necessary documentation. For the past two (2) year's audit, the Audit Team has been

unable to attend Council in person due to the COVID restrictions. I take the opportunity to welcome the Auditors on their visit to Bourke this week.

### **Rate Notices**

The 2022/2023 Rate Notices have recently been issued with the first instalment due for payment on 31 August 2022. If you are having difficulties in meeting your commitments in relation the payment of your rates, you are invited to contact Council's Revenue Officer so that arrangements can be put in place that are to the satisfaction of both parties. Simply phone Council on 6830 8000 to make an appointment.

### **Tourism**

It is most pleasing to see that there are still a good number of tourists who are making their way to Bourke and taking the opportunity to enjoy the attractions that our region offers. As has been said on many occasions in the past, tourism is a vital part of our economy in Bourke with most businesses being direct or indirect beneficiaries of tourism and as such, allows local business to either maintain or expand their level of employment. Accommodation providers in town have reported that rooms are very much at a premium during weekdays with Bourke's food outlets also appearing to be busy. The level of tourism activity is certainly good to see after a rather disjointed previous two (2) years. With the Darling River back in its banks, once the river falls to below 7 metres, the Paddle Vessel (PV) Jandra will be back in operation. It is expected that good numbers of tourists will take the opportunity to cruise the mighty Darling River. Captain Stephen Coad will be welcomed back to Bourke as the Captain of the vessel once operations commence.

### **Vaccination Clinic**

The NSW Governments Strategy that we "must learn to live with virus" continues to operate. NSW Health has recently been reporting approximately 7000 COVID cases a day and unfortunately, numerous fatalities each day. I was interested to hear that one of the Australian women cricketers playing for the Gold Medal at the Commonwealth Games had contracted COVID yet was still permitted to play in the game. 12 months ago, the whole team would have been quarantined and the position to allow this COVID positive player play in the game, reflects that "learn to live with it" approach.

COVID is still very much part of our community. Whilst I am confident that residents have also "learnt to live with the virus", I certainly do not consider we should relax in our approach to the virus. To this end, the WNSWLHD commenced further vaccination clinics for the 4<sup>th</sup> booster shot in Bourke from 15 August this week with these clinics being held one day a week over four (4) weeks. COVID vaccination doses administered in NSW to people aged 16 and over are – First dose 96.8%; Second dose 95.3% and Third dose 68.9%. Whilst the vaccination does not stop you from getting COVID it may prevent you from getting a severe strain. An additional booster, or 4<sup>th</sup> dose, is now recommended for people aged 50 and over along with people at higher risk of serious illness from COVID. People aged 30-49 can get an additional COVID-19 booster if they wish.

### **Street Lights**

Street lighting in the Bourke Shire Council Local Government Area is installed and maintained by Essential Energy with Council paying for the electricity and maintenance bills for such lighting. Generally, requests for the installation or the upgrading of Street lighting are initiated by Council. As part of their maintenance of streetlighting role, Essential Energy has developed an online tool that helps residents to easily report streetlight faults. The tool helps to identify that a streetlight is in fact managed by Essential Energy and allows you to report faults using an online form for such Essential Energy managed lights.

If you have a light near your house, or for that matter a light anywhere in town, that you see is flickering, not working, or is on during daylight hours, simply type the location of the streetlight into the tool at the address as follows, and raise the issue with Essential Energy direct:

<https://www.essentialenergy.com.au/outages-and-faults/streetlight>

## LEMC

Following my piece in last week's Column regarding a recent meeting of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), I received some questions as to what is the role of the Committee? In response to such inquiries, it is advised that the LEMC provides a forum for both government and non-government agencies operating, in this case, in the Bourke Shire Area, to discuss issues relevant to the committee including climatic conditions, and other matters, which may lead to the Committee having to be activated. Emergency situations are generally controlled by the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON), which in most instances is the Commanding Officer of the Local Police. That role in Bourke currently falls to the local Police Commander, Inspector Peter Walton.

The committee ensures that appropriate accreditations are held and also coordinates exercises to allow the agencies to hone their skills in situations that are as life like as possible so they are well prepared to face real situations which unfortunately will arise. Whilst a number of the members of the committee are paid officers of the various agencies, there are a number of members who are volunteers and give freely of their time to ensure that the safety of the community is protected and that the community is equipped to handle all emergency situations. In my capacity as the Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) I chair the meetings of the regular quarterly meeting of the Committee to bring together those Agency representatives who will be required to respond to various emergency situations should they arise. During emergencies, such as last year's COVID pandemic, the Committee meets on an Extraordinary basis. Interestingly, during that period of COVID, the Bourke LEMC met on some 51 occasions discussing the response to the emergency at hand.

**Quote: “The last time I introduced Olivia Newton-John I described her as the most popular Australian on the planet, and not much has happened since then to change my opinion.”** Media presenter Richard Wilkins reflecting on the recent passing of Olivia Newton John.