



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 25 August 2022”

Active Fest Activities

Council in conjunction with the NSW Office of Sport have combined to engage the Creative Community Concepts team to shortly be in the Bourke Shire area to deliver another round of Far West Active Fest events. All are welcome to join in the fun, fitness and laughter at these free events which will be held to allow families and friends to come together to experience a range of sports, activities and most of all fun. Laser tag, league tag, roll-a-ball and footy for fun are just some of the sporting activities that will be available at the Fest. In addition, free entertainment and a free barbeque will be available for attendees. Active Fest will be held at Louth on Tuesday, 6 September 2022 at the Louth Public School from 1 – 3pm, at the Enngonia Public School on Wednesday 7 September 2022 from 10.00am till 12pm before moving onto Davidson Oval in Bourke that afternoon from 4 - 6pm. All are welcome to attend.

Tour de OROC

The Toyota Tour de OROC, run by the Rotary Club of Dubbo South, is a challenging 6-day biennial bicycle ride created in 2013 to raise funds for Macquarie Home Stay in Dubbo. Established to provide patients and their partner or carer with accommodation while preparing for or post treatment at Dubbo Hospital, the Macquarie Home Stay has proven invaluable for those who have accessed its facilities, including many patients from Bourke. This year, the tour departed Mudgee on Monday, 22 March 2022 and concluded in Dubbo on Saturday, 26 March 2022 with riders completing a punishing 1,132km ride taking in the sites of Mendooran, Armatree, Coonamble, Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke, Cobar, Nyngan, Warren and Dubbo with riders averaging some 190 kms per day.

President of the Rotary Club of Dubbo South, Dr Tony Geraghty, recently had the honour of presenting a cheque in the amount of \$177,500 to Macquarie Home Stay as a result of fundraising activities associated with this year's Tour. Bourke played a significant role in the fundraising total with \$22,000 contributed by the community when the Tour came to Bourke earlier this year. I was delighted to read in the Dubbo Daily Liberal the comments of one of the riders, Simon Friend, reflecting on his experiences on the Tour, when he stated, “Each town we stopped in, especially Bourke, showed us what true hospitality really is.” The Tour de OROC is scheduled again for Monday, 2 October to Saturday, 7 October 2023. Well done to all who participated and supported this important event for the region.

Doctor Shortage

There is no doubt that there is a general shortage of doctors however recent changes enacted by the Federal Government have raised concerns that it will be even harder for rural and remote communities to attract doctors. The Federal Member for Parkes, Mark Coulton, MP, recently spoke in Parliament against proposed changes to what is called the Distribution Priority Area (DPA) classification system. According to Mr Coulton, the changes will mean peri-urban (ie. an area immediately surrounding a city or town) and regional centres like Albury, Port Stephens and Newcastle will be competing with the likes of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett for doctors. The DPA classification system was set to up to address shortages of doctors in rural and remote areas, by mandating that overseas trained doctors and rurally bonded medical students spend time working in the bush.

One of the factors in determining the DPA status of an area is its remoteness based on the Modified Monash Model (MMM) geographical classification system - a scale of MMM1 to MMM7. MMM1 is a major city, such as Sydney, and MMM7 is very remote, and includes towns like Bourke and Brewarrina. Previously, MMM3 to MMM7 areas were automatically given DPA status, which means medical practices in those areas can access a broader recruitment pool of GP doctors. Under the changes it is understood that DPAs have been expanded to include all large regional centres (MMM2) and some outer metro areas (MMM1). As a result, there is understandable concern that communities across the western area, inclusive of Bourke, are at risk of losing their doctors to areas closer to the cities and coastal towns. This is a significant concern. Further information regarding Distribution Priority Areas is available at the following site: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/dpa>

Bourke Library

There have been some exciting things happening at the Bourke Library this month. August sees Children's Book Week celebrated, with competitions held and prizes won. Last Friday, the Library was very excited to announce the launch of the new Library Code Club. The Code Club is a self-paced learn-to-code software program, called Fiero Code, for kids aged 8-18. Young people who learn to code develop meaningful life skills such as creative thinking and problem solving. Library staff are now registering kids for the program. Simply contact the Library on 6872 2751 or call in and talk to a staff member to register.

In other exciting news, the Library now offers contactless self-service of materials from within the library's app. The free app can be downloaded by searching for Bourke Public Library on the iOS Apple Store or Google Play Store. Through the app, users can log in to their account, and also link their children's accounts, to easily see what is on loan and renew items on all linked accounts. You can also access the library catalogue and reserve items, and link to library eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and online resources, and lots more! Go to the library website, www.bourkelibrary.com.au, to find out more about what the Library has to offer. Make sure to also follow the Library Facebook page to keep up to date with what's happening in the library. If you're not already a member, call in to the library or sign up online on the library website. There's something for everyone at the library.

Darling River

When I drafted my GM's Column last week, I had initially written that it was expected that the PV Jandra would be shortly back in operation as a result of, at the time, an expected falling Darling River. I had to subsequently re-write that section of the Column given that the ongoing flows in the River. I now consider it is going to be some time before the PV Jandra is back in operation with continuing flows in the river also now expected to continue for some time. With widespread rainfall in recent weeks, rivers are full and the countryside very wet.

Feral Animals

It is considered that most readers of this Column would be aware of the impact that feral animals have on property owners in the far north west area of NSW. The State Government has recognised this with funding provided for various programs to address the wild dog issue and of course, fund the wild dog Fence on the border between NSW and Queensland and NSW and South Australia. It would appear however, that feral animals are not just limited to the far north west of NSW with members of NSW Farmers reporting an increase in the number of wild dogs and pigs, with deer also expanding their territory. Of most concern is the ever-increasing number of feral cats, which the CSIRO reported were responsible for 1.8 billion native animal deaths each year. I recently read of a farmer in the Tweed, on the north coast of NSW, who was reported as saying that there were shocking reports of livestock being attacked and ripped apart by feral animals in his area of the State and raising concerns that pests weren't being properly controlled by some public and private landholders which was giving the feral animals safe haven to breed and grow their territory. It is obviously a widely spread issue.

Feral animals are a significant cost to the Australian economy, primary producers, land managers, the environment, and regional communities. It is estimated that management of wild dogs by individual farmers and agencies costs \$50 million per year and feral pig incursions cost the Australian agricultural industry upwards of \$100 million a year. In our part of the State, in the far north west, there have been a lot of feral cats appearing on

cameras that had been set up across the region, with pigs and dogs remained the main concern for farmers tearing up paddocks and fences and attacking livestock.

Quote:

“We need to be there for our mates and get them to talk about their feelings and what they’re going through and seek professional help if they need it. We need to be able to talk about it.” Former Rugby League player, Johnathan Thurston speaking on the death of his close friend, Paul Green.