



## “From the General Manager’s Desk” 8 September 2022”

### Henry Lawson

Bourke, the most iconic Australian outback town proudly boasts its connections to Henry Lawson who, having spent a few very formative years here, once quipped "If you know Bourke, you know Australia" Bourke Shire Council honoured this great Australian writer by hosting the only major event in Australia celebrating the 100th anniversary of his passing in a festival of his poetry and music.

Co-funded by Regional NSW and Bourke Shire Council – many locals, artist, enthusiasts, and bush poetry fans experienced the three day Festival last weekend which included an historic cemetery tour, a tag along tour to Toorale Station, Henry Lawson's Wake - featuring Jason and Chloe Roweth, Geoffrey Graham, Andrew Hull, Paul Row, plus local talent. The weekend concluded on Sunday afternoon with the Mt Oxley 'Sunset Send Off' for Henry – a spectacular setting with amazing performances to say one last farewell.

One of our visitors to town on the weekend was Mr Andrew Furphy – a gentleman who has a great love of the work of Henry Lawson. Andrew called Councils Economic Development Manager, Mel Milgate to see if there would be any room on the itinerary for a couple of short films relating to Lawson to be played over the weekend. Mel set Andrew up in the Exhibition Centre and he was extremely grateful to be involved over the weekend. Andrew and his wife thoroughly enjoyed the Lawson weekend and as they left Bourke commented that they will be back to visit, only next time they will take their time to explore more of our sights. Mel mentioned when someone comes to find you in a crowd to thank you – you know you’ve done the best you can. Well done to all involved for an excellent weekend.

### Charles St Water Tower

Work on the replacement of Councils water tower at Charles St, Bourke has been proceeding to plan and is rapidly approaching completion with the tower having recently been painted. Super chlorination, which means the dosing of water with a high dose of chlorine, often much larger than the usual condition of the water demands with a view to killing off any bacteria in the tower, will take place in September for a two-week period before the tower is ultimately commissioned in late September. With the old tower having undergone repairs when the tower ruptured back in 2018, the completion of the new tower will be one less matter that Council needs to be concerned about in respect of ensuring the provision of potable water to the Bourke community.

When Council originally invited tenders for this important project, a shortfall in funding of some \$520,000 was identified. At the time, Mayor Barry was able to make urgent representations to the then NSW Minister for Water, the Hon Melinda Pavey MP, such that further funding was made available by the then Minister. Melinda Pavey was a great supporter of Bourke during her term as Water Minister when Bourke faced some fairly ordinary times during the drought towards the end of the last decade. I note recent reports that Ms Pavey will be retiring from the NSW Parliament and won't be contesting the next State Election in March 2023. On behalf of Council, I wish Ms Pavey the best in her future endeavours and thank her for her assistance to Bourke during difficult times created by drought conditions.

## **Works Around Town**

Councils Works Services Branch is anticipating a very busy spring and summer season with expected above average rainfall expected to bring perfect conditions for grass and vegetation growth in and around Bourke. With grass growth limited during the cooler months, it is expected that given the rain to date, and as expected into the future once the weather warms, grass growth will be prolific. The challenge for the Works Services Branch, and I am confident they are well and truly up to it, is to keep on top of this growth and keep the communities grassed public areas neat and tidy. I call on the community to also keep grass and vegetation on their properties in town in a neat and tidy condition. Regular mowing by all makes the amenity of our town all that more pleasant.

In terms of other improvements to the amenity of Bourke, Works Services staff will shortly be completing required maintenance to the back lanes in town, which includes the poisoning of weeds and undertaking maintenance to the laneways gravel roads.

In addition, Council recently applied for a \$75,000 grant to improve pedestrian and cycleway access around Bourke and villages for the whole community.

It is also advised that Council will shortly commence installing street signs on many corners of town to assist motorists navigate their way around town.

## **Darling River**

The water in the Darling River keeps flowing! Based on predictions provided by the Bureau of Meteorology, the height of the Darling River at Bourke may reach a level near 10.50 metres around 14-16 September, with minor flooding expected. The river gates in town have been closed since the height of the River reached the 9-metre level. This action is to stop river water from entering the town and further allow Council to pump rainwater from within the town should a significant rain event takes place while the flood gates are closed.

## **Road Works**

Two (2) major potential sources of funding provided by the NSW Government to Councils in respect of road construction activities are currently open. The fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) round of the Fixing Local Roads Program is currently open with applications closing tomorrow, 9 September 2022. To date, the Fixing Local Roads Program has supported 499 projects across NSW, totalling over \$547 million in financial investment and in doing so, assisting 95 eligible councils with their road maintenance backlog. Bourke Shire is an eligible Council and will be submitting an application for the upgrade of various Council roads, following success in achieving funding in the initial three (3) rounds of the program.

Also open at the moment are applications for funding from the Fixing Country Roads 2022 Program. Council's across regional NSW, including Bourke Shire, have been invited to apply and submit an application which close on Friday 14 October 2022. Under this program, Council will be seeking up to \$13m to undertake the construction and sealing of the final 28 km's of the Bourke-Wanaaring Road. I am quietly excited at the prospect of the sealing of this last section of road being completed.

In respect of Councils Roads Construction Crew, works to reconstruct and seal 3.37km of the Weelong Road at Louth have been completed. Construction works for sealing of 3.5km, in total, of roadway at the bends on the Toorale Road at Nulty Station have commenced as has construction works for the sealing of 10km of road on Toorale Road, from the Weelong Road intersection towards Tilpa. All these works are being undertaken as result of funding from the State Governments Fixing Local Roads Program.

## **Residential Swimming Pools**

Now that we are in Spring, and with warmer weather already with us, a reminder to residents that have a backyard swimming pool, that the NSW Government requires that all swimming pools in NSW must be registered. Access to information regarding the process is available at [www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au](http://www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au)

The registration process is relatively simple where you will be required to enter your name, address, contact details, the type of pool and the approximate age of the pool. You will need to complete a self-assessment checklist about your pool to assess if your pool meets the appropriate Australian Standards. If you need assistance, Council officers can assist and complete the registration process for a fee of \$10. If you need help, drop into Councils Mitchell St office or phone Council on 68 308 000. As a last-ditch effort to ensure registration, Council *may* fine pool owners if their pool is not registered on the NSW Swimming Pool Register. Hopefully the issuing of any such fines can be avoided by residents taking the required action.

### **Drought Preparedness Program**

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) have announced the opening of the first program in the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative. The Initiative is funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and is designed to help agriculture-dependent communities across remote, rural and regional Australia enhance their preparedness for drought. The \$29.6 million investment over two years builds on the Future Drought Fund's previous Networks to Build Drought Resilience program (led by FRRR) and the Drought Resilience Leaders program (led by ARLF).

There are five elements to the Initiative, the first of which is the Community Impact Program. This is a program designed to support community members and not-for-profit organisations in 35 regions across remote, rural and regional Australia to drive local action that helps prepare for drought. Local Government Areas have been clustered into 35 regions with Bourke being in the NSW Far West Region and is an eligible locality for the Program.

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal is seeking a locally-based not-for-profit to act as the lead applicant and work collaboratively with other local organisations to plan and undertake activities that increase drought preparedness over a multi-year period. The program has an emphasis on engaging First Nations communities and younger people in leading drought resilience planning and action. Expressions of Interest close 26 September 2022, with shortlisted groups commencing co-design in their communities in November and funding confirmed in May 2023. Groups will have until June 2025 to implement the projects. To learn more about the program and lodge an EOI to be a local lead partner organisation, local non-profits are encouraged to visit:

[www.frrr.org.au/impact-program](http://www.frrr.org.au/impact-program)

### **Land Sale**

Council was recently formally advised of the sale of a large parcel of land in the Bourke Shire to the NSW Government for the purpose of usage as a National Park. Under the Local Government Act, and as a result of Government ownership and use, the property is now deemed non-rateable. Accordingly, Council has written off rates levied for this financial year in the amount of some \$7,000.00 with future year's rates not able to be levied.

### **Quote:**

**"Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get."** American Author, Mark Twain back in the early 1900's.