



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
6 October 2022”

More La Nina

With the Bureau of Meteorology having recently confirmed another summer of La Nina, it would certainly appear that we are in for more rain in coming months. The Darling River continues to flow at a high level with more flows expected given this confirmation of a continuing La Nina and ongoing major flooding across the central and north west of the state, including flooding of the Macquarie River at Warren and the recent flooding of the Namoi River at Gunnedah. The waters at Warren flow into the Macquarie Marshes and then ultimately into the Darling River above Bourke. Similarly, the Namoi River also flows into the Darling River above Bourke. With catchments so wet, it doesn’t take a lot of rain in one location resulting in river heights rising very quickly downstream. With all the moisture, agriculture has been at record levels, however in some places it has stopped producers from getting onto paddocks to plant or harvest their crops. Not perfect, but far better than drought conditions.

Burrendong Dam

On the subject of river flows, Burrendong Dam at Wellington is a long way from Bourke, 450km by road in fact. With so much water currently about, water released from Burrendong Dam flows by way of the Macquarie River and ultimately into the Darling River above Bourke. Without Burrendong Dam, towns on the Macquarie River would undoubtedly be in significant trouble in respect of flooding during periods of prolonged wet weather. Some information recently came my way in respect of the dam which identified that the dam was currently at 130% of capacity. The reason that the dam’s capacity can be identified at a figure above 100% is as a result of the ability for the dam to utilise air space through radial gates located on the dam wall. This capacity above 100% is referred to as the flood mitigation zone of the dam with this zone increasing the dam’s capacity to 142%. This additional capacity equates to some 490,000 megalitres. At 142%, the total capacity of the dam is 1,678,000 megalitres, which is approximately 3.4 times the volume of Sydney Harbour. Spread over 72 km², it’s certainly a large dam.

The really interesting point however is that when water is released thru the radial gates, the gates are raised, and the water level can increase as the gates raise. This creates significant additional storage. During a very wet period in August 1990, the peak inflows were about 560,000 megalitres a day with the peak outflows being some 160,000 megalitres a day and the storage of the dam was surcharged to 160%. During the 2010 floods the storage was surcharged to 150%, after being at 105% at the start of the flood inflows. It certainly becomes a balancing act between inflows and outflows and the impact on downstream localities in terms of the water released. Needless to say, at a current level of 130%, releases from the dam will undoubtedly be continuing for some time.

Mitchell Highway

If you have travelled on the Mitchell Highway between Bourke and Nyngan in the last 18 months you would have seen significant widening works being undertaken as part of a \$12 million safety upgrade to

the Highway. This major project commenced in April 2021 with the work undertaken by Bourke and Bogan Councils in their respective Shires on behalf of Transport for NSW. I am happy to advise that the works along several sections of highway, totalling almost 47 kilometres, have now been completed. Prior to the works, the various sections of the highway only had a narrow-sealed width, with multiple edge breaks and failures which increased the risk of run-off road crashes and little room for correction if vehicles left the road. The installation of one-metre-wide sealed shoulders on both sides of the road at various narrow sections of the Highway has reduced the crash risk on the Highway. Other works undertaken include the selective reshaping of pavements on the existing alignment, as well as drainage improvements. A final seal will be applied within 18 months, after which rumble strips on the edge line will be installed.

The upgrades were funded jointly by the Australian Government's Road Safety Program and the NSW Government as part of implementing safety upgrades and improvements on regional roads. Council staff worked closely with officers from Transport NSW in undertaking these works on the Mitchell Highway, which is a state road, under a formal arrangement known as a Road Maintenance Council Contract (RMCC). The RMCC establishes a contractual relationship between Transport for NSW and Council, with both parties committed to shared values and trust. The concept of continuous improvement is central to the RMCC with Council participating in a process which aims to lift the standard of risk and asset management by fostering the exchange of ideas, work practices and planning methodologies, with the ultimate result of improving value for money. Council very much appreciates the work it receives and undertakes on behalf of Transport NSW.

Visit by Deputy Premier

Bourke was recently honoured to receive a visit by the NSW Deputy Premier (DP), the Hon Paul Toole MP and Minister for Western NSW, the Hon Dugald Saunders MP. What a busy day. Flying into Bourke on the Dubbo to Bourke Airlink Flight, it was out to the airport to transport our VIP visitors to the Thomas Foods International (TFI) Bourke Abattoir for a visit. Here, the Deputy Premier announced \$5 million in funding for the Abattoir from the Regional Job Creation Fund to expand and create a workforce of up to 250 people at the reopened abattoir. So exciting for the Region. From there it was back to the Bourke SES depot in Sid Coleman Drive where the NSW SES Commissioner, Carlene York, handed over a new light storm trailer, worth about \$37,000, to our local SES volunteers. Finally, the DP and the Minister joined with Mayor Barry to officially open Bourke's new Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

In his address on the day, Mayor Barry made point of the irony that as the opening was taking place, the Darling River was at a height well above 10 metres and that this was "a far cry from when the contract for the new Plant was awarded to LC Water when, at that time, stagnant water, dead fish, Bourke's most popular tourist attraction, the Jandra Paddle boat, was resting on the sandy base of a dry Darling River and a desolate townscape bereft of green grass, or any grass for that matter. It all seems a distance past when compared to the 40,000 megalitres of water that is currently flowing past Bourke on a daily basis in the Darling River."

The new Bourke WTP replaces the original Bourke WTP constructed in 1957 which had a design capacity of 3ML a day. During those times Bourke relied on 3 days of potable water and 4 days of non-potable water until the new filtered water mains were installed. As testimony to the old water plant, the heritage listed rustic water tower remains at the site. Council applied to the NSW Government for funding for a new plant in 2017 through the Safe and Secure water funding program. Council's application was successful with Council receiving \$10.5M from the Government for this project. Mayor Barry acknowledged in his address that without this funding "we certainly would not be here today opening this plant." It was great to have the DP and Minister for Western NSW opening the facility and the opportunity to allow Council to express its appreciation of the support of the NSW Government for

funding for not only this project, but also the funding that has allowed the installation of bores and pipelines and a new water reservoir, all working towards Drought proofing Bourke's Water Supply. In closing, Mayor Barry acknowledged and thanked the various Council staff; its Project Managers, NSW Public Works Advisory; and contractors, Laurie Curran Water, who all contributed to the success of the project. I add my thanks to all involved, it was a large project that very much adds to the liveability of Bourke.

Quote: **"Inflation has become "broad-based" and will gradually ease throughout 2023, but still remain exceptionally high, as tighter financial conditions resulting from steep hikes in interest rates slowly yield results."** The OECD making comment on the world's economic outlook for 2023.