



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
20 October 2022**

Electricity Pricing

The Australian Financial Review newspaper recently hosted an Energy & Climate Summit in Sydney. At this conference, the Chief Executive of Alinta Energy, Jeff Dimery, told attendees that “Next year, using the current market prices, tariffs are going up a minimum 35 per cent,” with the forecast increases apparently due to the cost of wholesale energy, as the “system grapples with the transition to clean energy amid a global supply crisis.” Mr Dimery’s comments were widely reported, and when I initially read his comments in the media, I almost fell off my chair. Bad news for consumers and bad news for businesses that rely on electricity for their production.

Whilst Mr Dimery warned that Australia was “out of time” on putting in place policies to support investment in new renewables capacity to replace coal power plants exiting at an accelerating rate, other CEO’s of electricity suppliers such as TransGrid and AEMO voiced their confidence that the huge building of the new grid can be completed on time, including \$8 billion worth of projects in the pipeline alone for Transgrid. The investment being made in renewables across NSW alone, is in the many billions of dollars, however it all takes time to construct. My view is that high electricity costs will be with us for many years to come. In the UK, the phrase “fuel poverty” is used in respect of those households who simply can’t afford electricity. Some seven million households are reported as experiencing such poverty and with prices being predicted to rise so extensively, undoubtedly the number of Australian residents who already experience financial difficulty as a result of energy prices, will increase.

The electricity market is now a very complex operation. As a large electricity purchaser, Bourke Shire Council utilises the services of a professional electricity consultancy to track usage, ensure it is being charged as per the agreed contract price and provide advice such that Council can procure its electricity at the best available market price. Like any energy user, when prices increase, Council has to source additional funds for the energy by making cost reductions in other areas. For a Council, this invariably results in a reduction in particular services.

Disaster Assistance and Roads

The wet weather over the past 12 months, whilst significantly improving the regions agricultural outlook, has decimated the condition of regional roads across the State. I was recently pleased to hear that the issue of the condition of regional roads was being reported as an issue by mainstream media. The issue needs wide exposure and is a massive issue for the Government, Councils and importantly, road users. Some of the potholes are simply dangerous and significant funding to undertake repairs is required, as is a period of drier conditions. The Bourke Shire Council Rural Road Network is certainly no exception. As it stands, our unsealed Shire roads are in a high state of disrepair, with the number of unfulfilled requests from residents for repairs ever increasing. The other bad news however is that the extended period of wet weather is not finished yet with the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) advising on

10 October 2022 that the severe weather outlook “warns of an increased risk of widespread flooding for eastern and northern Australia and an increased risk of an above-average number of tropical cyclones and tropical lows.” It also finds normal bushfire potential in eastern states but an elevated risk of grass fires in southern Australia, along with an increased risk of prolonged heatwaves in southern areas, along with higher humidity. The BOM also predicts that there is a normal risk of severe thunderstorms “but a possible increase in risk of thunderstorm asthma events if conditions are dry in late spring and early summer.”

With damaging weather events in recent times, the Federal Government has again declared the Bourke Shire Local Government area a Natural Disaster Area, eligible for disaster assistance for flooding that has occurred, on this occasion, from 14 September 2022 onwards. This declaration will provide funding to undertake repairs to roadways and in this regard Council staff will be reviewing the condition of all roads in the network, when accessible, to document the damage, obtain funding approval, and ultimately undertake agreed works. It all takes considerable time and money.

Aside from support to councils to help with the costs of cleaning up and restoring damaged essential public assets, assistance is also available to members of the public under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Such assistance includes; help for residents whose homes or belongings were damaged; concessional interest rate loans for small businesses, primary producers and non-profit organisations and freight subsidies for primary producers. For information on personal hardship and distress assistance, contact Service NSW on 13 77 88. To apply for a concessional loan, contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593 or visit www.raa.nsw.gov.au. Information on disaster assistance can be found at www.disasterassist.gov.au.

Recruiting Staff

Giving the current tight employment market, it is more difficult than ever to recruit the staff that businesses need. Unfortunately, it would appear that the situation is worsening, with the National Skills Commission having released its Skills Priority List which shows a “significant tightening in the Australian labour market”, with the lowest unemployment rate in decades and shortages facing most industries. To this end in terms of recruiting staff, for example, are quality candidates seeing your vacancy advertisements or do you need to somehow make your business stand out in the job market? Are you interested in attracting offshore skilled migrants? Interesting questions and just some of the questions that RDA Orana, in partnership with Tracey Parsons Strategic Consulting, will aim to address as part of a four-series webinar in November with the theme of a “recruitment masterclass” as part of NSW Small Business Month. You can register for these free events, attend live, or register for access to the recordings with RDA – Orana seeking to maximise the availability of the sessions to all businesses across the Orana region. The webinar series will focus on the specific issues facing regionally based businesses and the widespread labour shortages with tips, trends, and practical insights that HR Managers and business owners can utilise immediately within their businesses. The initial webinar will be held from 5.30pm on Wednesday 8 November 2022. To register phone RDA -Orana on 6885 1488 or email: admin@rdaorana.org.au

ANZAC Community Grants

Community groups can apply for grants of \$3,000 for projects supporting local veterans or boosting awareness of their role in Australia's military history, with applications now open for the Anzac Community Grants Program. Veterans past and present served to keep us safe and this is a great chance to recognise their sacrifices while enriching our communities. Grants cover four categories: local community historical research and education; preservation or display of war memorabilia; public commemorative events; and support to members of the NSW veteran communities. Applications can be

submitted online until 5 pm on 11 November 2022, with further information available at www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/grants.

Bourke Library

The Bourke Library “LEGO Kids Club” started last month with sessions being held on a monthly basis. Challenges are taken from the Brickman Dictionary with last month’s challenge relating to the letter B. Children in attendance had a great time designing some amazing book ends and bugs with the designs subsequently being on display in the library window. The club is open to kids of all ages. The Library is also looking to run some LEGO sessions for adults, so keep an eye on the Library Facebook page for upcoming events.

The Geoscience Australia team will be visiting the library in coming days. Their visit is aimed at increasing awareness of Geoscience Australia and the work they do, both in the Bourke area and in Australia more broadly. Everyone is welcome to come along and meet the scientists and learn about what they do. Drinks and nibble’s will be provided. The session will commence at 5:30pm on 24 October 2022.

The Bourke Library website, www.bourkelibrary.com.au provides a source of information to find out what the library has to offer. Make sure to also follow the Library Facebook page to keep up to date with what’s happening at 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!

Quote: “.....from January 1 you will see all mobile speed camera vehicles having those signs before and after the (camera) cars on every road.” NSW Roads Minister, Natalie Ward MP announcing that NSW motorists will once again be alerted to all mobile speed cameras across NSW from January next year.