



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
1 December 2022”

Flooding in Bourke

With Bourke having essentially been an island for some time, it has been a most hectic of times for so many in our community as action is taken to protect life and property. Events such as the flooding of the Darling River at Bourke are an interesting exercise in watching how people react to the issues at hand. Many simply take the necessary action to protect their property by themselves and not impose on anyone else for help or assistance. Others rise to the occasion and work themselves to the bone to assist their neighbours or community. Others volunteer their services to community organisations. Others however are unfortunately most demanding of service providers or take actions that have no regard for others. Pleasingly, the large majority of people in our community have taken positive actions and I again thank them for their tremendous work.

With so many areas of inland NSW affected by flooding, the NSW and Federal Governments have rolled out the next stage of natural disaster response funding. Recently, recovery grants to help begin immediate clean-up and recovery costs, and to repair extensive damage, were increased from \$25,000 to up to \$75,000 for primary producers. Rural landholders were able to apply for grants of up to \$10,000. These grants were made available to all of the local government areas (LGAs) that had been disaster declared since 14 September 2022, of which Bourke Shire is one. Personalised financial support to assist flood affected people is available online at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/floods/financial-support> This site provides a link to a “Disaster Assistance Finder”. Alternatively, you can speak to someone on the phone at Service NSW on 13 77 88. Isolated residents on properties requiring the resupply of essentials are encouraged to call NSW SES on 132 500. The operator will issue you with a reference number and advise you on how to go about ordering and receiving your required needs. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Local Land Service (LLS) are providing help to landholders who require emergency assistance with animal welfare. Please call the Agriculture and Animal Service Hotline on 1800 814 647 if you require these services.

Western Cancer Centre

I recently had a friend attend the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo for a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan as part of a regular follow up program following the removal of a melanoma. My friend was full of praise for the recently opened Centre in terms of the staff and the facilities. “First class,” she said. A PET scan is an imaging test that uses radioactive material to diagnose a variety of diseases. Doctors use it to find tumours, diagnose heart disease, brain disorders and other conditions. Whilst my friend is fine, she was telling me that apart from PET machines in Albury, Wagga Wagga and now this one in Dubbo, there are no other such machines west of the Blue Mountains. To have this service in our region is obviously of great benefit to us here in Bourke Shire should the need arise for such a scan, and I would like to think that is none of us, we only need to travel to Dubbo. My friend had previously travelled to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney for her regular scans and Dubbo is obviously much more convenient for her and all patients in the western area. In addition to the PET scanner, the Western

Cancer Centre includes 16 chemotherapy treatment spaces and a bunker for radiation treatment. I searched the web for information on the Centre and was pleased to read on the NSW Health Infrastructure website that in building the facility, it was very much on the basis of delivering “life-saving cancer treatment and diagnostic services to the communities in Dubbo and the regional and remote areas of western NSW.”

Bourke Police Station

The Deputy Premier, the Hon Paul Toole MP and the NSW Commissioner of Police, Karen Webb, were recently in Bourke to confirm the upgrading of the Bourke Police Station with \$13.9m in funding available. Council has received a Development Application for the work with Council staff currently assessing the application prior to a report on the matter being submitted to Council. After a previous false start due to insufficient funding, I would imagine that all who work at the current cramped and antiquated Bourke Station are very much looking forward to the provision of new facilities. Like all construction projects, where you invariably have to go backwards to go forwards, my understanding is that alternative premises will need to be sourced for staff to work from during the construction phase. I am sure that any inconvenience will be well worth it and I look forward to the ultimate completion of the project.

Pre-Kindergarten

The NSW Government recently announced that families in Bourke along with families in Cobar, Coonamble, Kempsey, Mt Druitt, Nambucca, and Wagga Wagga will be part of a pilot program to explore and trial key features as the state moves towards the introduction of a universal pre-Kindergarten year of education for every child in NSW by 2030. Early childhood services in these pilot locations are understood to be commencing their roll out of the first stage of the universal pre-Kindergarten policy in early 2023. I was delighted that when the Deputy Premier, Paul Toole, was in Bourke last month, he announced that the NSW Government had committed \$4.8 million to help build a new facility for Bourke and District Children’s Services through its Start Strong Capital Works Grants program.

With more locations across NSW to be added ahead of the full state-wide implementation of a full new year of education for children by 2030, the \$5.8 billion 10-year investment in universal pre-Kindergarten is on a scale that apparently has not been seen before in Australia and will benefit our youngest learners’ physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Early learnings are so important. The Government has advised that the first stage of the universal pre-Kindergarten reforms will help shape the rollout of the initiative across the state and allow the Government to gather crucial information ahead of implementation of the program across NSW with Government obviously keen to develop the best model of universal pre-Kindergarten for NSW. The Bourke and District Children’s Services is to be congratulated on its initiative in being part of the pilot program for the Pre-Kindergarten Year and further for their success in achieving the level of grant funding.

Library Funding

On the issue of funding, back in 2019/2020, the NSW Government committed additional funding to public libraries for the 4 years ending 2022/2023. These funds enabled increases to the annual library subsidies for all councils in NSW, including the Bourke Library. An improved capital grants program to support councils with library building renewal was also made available. I recently received advice that this increased level of funding for public libraries will continue. I view this funding announcement as recognition of the value that libraries bring to communities all over NSW, and the same for Bourke. The Bourke Library is very much a most important piece in the fabric of Bourke, and I encourage the

community to utilise the many services that the library, and its passionate staff, provides to our community.

Australia Post

December is here and the Christmas period is rapidly approaching. With 52 million parcels having been delivered in December 2021, Australia Post has now issued deadlines for when gifts need to be sent so they are delivered around the country before Christmas 2022. With mailrooms across Australia expected to be inundated in coming weeks as presents are sent ahead of the holiday season, if you want your gift to land before Christmas Day I am advised that you will need to send such packages before 12 December 2022. Pay extra and send via Express Post, it is understood that this deadline will push back to 19 December 2022. Australia Post however has warned those sending to or from Western Australia or the Northern Territory will need to allow additional time. It would be my view that having regard to the severe and widespread weather events that have caused, and continue to have, significant logistical impacts for so many across the country, that cards, parcels and the like be sent as soon as possible to avoid missing delivery before that invariably hectic, Christmas Day.

Quote: “it makes absolutely no sense ... to spend billions of dollars in disaster recovery while we continue to see housing built on floodplains.” Federal Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt.