



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

## “From the General Manager’s Desk” 3 November 2022”

### **LGNSW Conference**

Last week, the Mayor, along with Councillor Bartley and myself, attended the Local Government NSW Annual Conference. Hosted by Cessnock City Council, the Conference was held at the Hunter Valley Crowne Plaza and was the first standard format Conference for two (2) years with the Conferences in 2020 and 2021 having been impacted by COVID restrictions. It was my first Conference as General Manager. Comprising basically all 128 NSW Councils, LGNSW advocates on behalf of, represents and supports member councils as councils endeavour to deliver improved services and better outcomes to their various communities.

A wide array of most interesting speakers participated in the agenda, but where this Conference is somewhat different to many conferences is that member councils are able to submit motions prior to the Conference which, if they meet the required criteria, are then submitted for consideration by delegates at the Conference. After each motion is moved, generally by the submitting Council, and then seconded, some motions go straight through. Other motions, however, are debated fiercely, often along political lines, and then voted upon. The votes are often very close. This year there were some 140 motions up for debate. Some of the issues debated included general funding requirements, including funding for roads and disasters, planning legislation, animal control, health services, waste services and housing availability. All in all, it was a most interesting exercise.

### **Methane Pledge**

In my previous Column, my “Quote of the Week” related to proposals by the Federal Government to reduce methane. Early last week the Government confirmed much speculation by formally joining over 120 other countries in pledging to reduce methane emissions by 30pc below 2020 levels by 2030 across the energy and resources, agriculture and waste sectors. As I understand it, the Global Methane Pledge is a voluntary commitment with 122 signatories including the United States, United Kingdom and the European Union. As a signatory to the non-binding pledge, Australia has committed to undertake a range of domestic actions including the reduction of emissions in the energy and waste sectors and seeking opportunities in the agricultural sector to reduce methane emissions through technology and partnerships with farmers. Whilst the Government calls the reductions an “aspirational global target,” as in all like targets, the devil will be in the detail with the Australian Government advising that it will not legislate or introduce taxes or levies to reduce livestock emissions. The Methane Emissions Reduction in Livestock (MERiL) Program will provide \$5 million in funding to develop technologies to deliver low emission feed supplements to grazing animals and determine their technical viability and commercial potential.

With cattle being a large producer of methane, Australian agricultural industry leaders have had varying views on the move. For example, Cattle Council of Australia CEO, John McGoverne, stated that “We are supportive of the Commonwealth signing up to the pledge, provided there are no new taxes or

reduction of herd numbers.” Mr McGoverne said that the Australian beef industry was already on track to reach net zero emissions without reducing livestock numbers noting that millions in cattle levies had been invested in new feed additives that significantly reduce methane emissions including asparagopsis, or pink seaweed, which can cut emissions by more than 90%. Conversely, the Australian Dairy Farmers have come out against the pledge, saying it is too early to make such a goal. Time will tell how all these targets turn out.

## **Potholes**

In driving to the Hunter Valley for the LGNSW Conference last week, the standout was the extremely poor state of the roads upon which we travelled. As road users, we have all witnessed the poor condition. These roads were basically affected by the ongoing wet conditions, as opposed to what we see locally and on television in terms of the devastation caused by flood damage. Here in Bourke, there are numerous examples of roads that have been destroyed by flooding causing chaos for locals and for people and transport trying to move around the state. I was pleased to receive advice last week that the NSW State Government has allocated \$50 million to help regional and rural councils fix the increasing number of potholes brought on by this year’s extreme wet weather. Under the new Fixing Local Roads Pothole Repair Round, councils can apply for funding to help them address their highest priority pothole repairs, and Bourke Shire will certainly be seeking funding under the funding program. With an estimated 135,000 potholes having been repaired on State Roads in Regional NSW since February 2022, many many more potholes still require attention, particularly on council-managed roads, with more than 420,000 potholes estimated on council roads. This new funding is in addition to the \$500 million provided by the State government through the Fixing Local Roads program to help regional councils repair, maintain and seal local roads across the state, with Council having undertaken sealing works on roads in the Shire such as on Coronga Peak, Weelong, Weir, River, Parkdale and Toorale roads.

## **Live Traffic**

On the topic of damaged roads, the NSW Government has announced the first regional expansion to its LiveTraffic system, with the status of roads across 22 local government areas now available for navigation software such as Google Maps and Apple Maps. If you're taking a trip, log into LiveTraffic and check out what you're potentially driving into. With the widespread heavy rain and flooding and the resulting deteriorating roads, many roads now pose quite a safety risk.

## **Darling River**

An interesting exercise is to examine a map of the numerous tributaries that flow into the Murray Darling Basin and particularly what flows into the Darling River above Bourke. With this in mind, Flood Warning No 98, as issued last week by the Bureau of Meteorology, didn’t provide great reading in terms of expected flows past Bourke in upcoming week's, with major flooding occurring at Bourke from last Thursday.

Rainfall over recent weeks and months has caused prolonged flooding along the Barwon and Darling Rivers with flood peaks flowing into the Barwon-Darling River System from multiple tributaries. Upstream along the Barwon River, major flooding has occurred at Mungindi. Major flooding was expected to occur at Mogil Mogil last Friday and moderate flooding is possible at Collarenebri from early November as the Mehi and Gwydir flows join the system following the recent rainfall and flooding at Moree. Major flood levels were expected to be exceeded at Walgett from last Sunday and at Brewarrina during this week. At Bourke, flows along the Darling River combined with flows from the Macquarie, Bogan and Culgoa Rivers saw the major flooding level reached here last Friday, 28 October 2022. The

Bureau has now predicted that the River at Bourke is likely to reach around 13.20 metres during next week and further, reach around 13.80 metres during the third week of November (18 - 23 Nov 2022). For those who have been in our community for some time, and have a good memory, the Bureau is saying that the levels expected for Bourke in late November 2022 are levels similar to those that were experienced at back in September 1998 and March 2012. Major flooding is also occurring at Louth with a height of 13.50 metres predicted for late November 2022. In anticipation of these levels, work to increase the height of the levee at Louth are underway.

Locally, the Local Emergency Management Committee, whose role is to prepare and review plans in relation to “the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the Local Government Area for which it is constituted under section 29 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, has met on numerous occasions of late to ensure required preparations in respect of this flooding event are undertaken. With Police, State Emergency Services, Rural Fire Services, Fire and Rescue, Health and various other Government and non-government organisations at the table, preparations are well developed. I take the opportunity to thank the various representatives of these organisations for their dedication and diligence as they go about their work to protect the community. During COVID last year, the Bourke LEMC met on some 50 occasions and when meetings have been called in respect of this latest event, all in attendance have been focused on the issue at hand. If you require assistance due to flood or storm emergencies, please phone NSW SES on 132 500. If someone is seriously injured, in need of urgent medical help, if your life or property is being threatened, or if you have just witnessed a serious accident or crime, call 000 and “Stay focused, stay relevant, stay on the line.”

**Quote: “This is a malicious attack that has been committed by criminals with a view of causing maximum fear and damage, especially to the most vulnerable members of our community.”** Medibank Health Fund CEO, David Koczkar, as part of revelations that hackers had, in fact, taken customers data.