



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

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

## **Flooding**

As I write this Column, well in advance of it being published, the Darling River is falling, albeit slowly at this point, having peaked at 13.95 metres around 10:15 pm on Wednesday 23 November 2022. Hopefully by the time this Column is published, and I must say that it’s a big hope, both the Sydney and Cobar roads are either fully or partially reopened to the general public. With 400mm to 800mm of water having been over sections of these roads, significant concerns were held by both Council and Transport for NSW, as the owner of these roads, as to the integrity of the road due to a saturated road base. If the road was to collapse and a truck or car was to fall through the road, the consequences could be dire for all. Accordingly, the decision was made to limit access to resupply and essential service vehicles. As of last Thursday, the Mitchell Highway (South) was opened to high clearance 4WD vehicles, under escort, during the hours of 8am to 7pm daily. Given the saturation of the roads sub-base, by now it may have been necessary for further closures having to be enacted at short notice. Whilst I would prefer to be able to say with certainty what the situation will be, there are still many unknowns at this point.

During events such as a major protracted flood, you learn a fair bit about “fine print” in documentation. One such instance is the NSW Flood Plan. Under this Plan, where a town is isolated, the NSW Government organises and funds the required logistics. An anomaly in the plan is that a town has to be totally isolated in terms of available access. With access to Bourke during the flood still being available from the north, under the plan Bourke is not categorised as isolated. This is despite that a trip from Dubbo to Bourke, via Cunnamulla, adds some 900km’s to the journey. The Mayor has written to the Deputy Premier on the issue who had requested the Minister for Emergency Services review the matter.

To assist those who need to get to Dubbo or Sydney rather than drive via Cunnamulla QLD, Airlink Air Services have come to the fore, working with the Far North West Joint Organisation and Council such that they are providing flights between Dubbo Bourke on a Monday to Friday on a daily basis. Reasonably priced, the extra flights have been well received.

With an expected peak of 13.60 metres expected at Louth last Friday, eclipsing the levels of the 1998 flood, its fair to say that all in the Shire will be hoping for a general reduction in levels in coming weeks.

## **Government Funding for Council**

Council recently received advice of two (2) separate tranches of funding associated with the flooding at Bourke and surrounds. Council will receive \$1 million in funding to assist with their recovery, as part of the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. As a disaster declared Council, an upfront payment of \$1m will be received by Council with Council then required to submit a Program of Works within three (3) months of receiving the funding with expenditure to be completed by June 2024. It would be proposed that these funds are injected into fixing the communities roads and infrastructure damaged by the flooding.

Council then also received advice that it was one of 94 Councils across the State to share in \$50m of funding under the NSW Government's \$50 million Fixing Local Roads Pothole Repair Round. The Government's allocation to Bourke Shire was \$843,000 with these funds to be utilised repairing our weather damaged local and regional roads. Funding for repairs to the State Highways that traverse the Bourke Shire are separate to these funds with works, once confirmed by Transport for NSW, will either be undertaken by Council as part of its Roads Maintenance Council Contract (RMCC) that it has previously entered into with the NSW Government, or by emergency crews maintained by the Government.

Council is most appreciative of this funding and thanks the Australian and NSW Governments for their assistance. Thanks must also go to the numerous people who worked behind the scenes to make this funding reality.

### **Government Funding for the Community**

The Federal Member for Parkes, the Hon Mark Coulton, MP, recently provided information as to the availability of various grants available to flood affected community members. I thank Mark for his information which I share herewith in the event that you have been impacted by the flooding and are eligible for assistance.

- Primary Producer Recovery Grants see: <https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/storm-and-flood-programs> have been increased from \$25,000 to \$75,000 for eligible primary producers, providing assistance for flood-affected farmers. Eligible impacted landholders will also be able to access Rural Landholders Grants of up to \$10,000, helping them to recover from flood damage to their properties.
- The Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA): providing income support fortnightly for up to 13 weeks for eligible people who can demonstrate that they have experienced a loss of income as a result of flooding within eligible LGAs. Claims can be lodged until 18 May 2023 through Services Australia, see; <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>
- Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA): include a range of financial assistance for areas declared a natural disaster from 14 September onwards. For details on available recovery assistance, visit the Resilience NSW website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/resilience-nsw> and the Service NSW website: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/floods>

For further information on disaster assistance, you can contact the Australian Government Information Hotline on 180 22 66 or visit the Disaster Assist website: <https://www.disasterassist.gov.au>

### **Christmas Events in Bourke**

On a lighter note, I advise of two (2) upcoming Christmas events in Bourke for the community. This Sunday, 11 Dec 2022 from 6-8pm, the Combined Bourke Churches will host the Bourke Community Christmas Carols on the Billabong Lawns at the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre. With the Café open for limited service, come along for some carols but don't forget to bring a chair and mozzie spray. On Friday 9 December 2022 from 6pm -9pm at Central Park, Council in conjunction with the Maranguka Community Hub will host the annual Christmas in the Park event. With entertainment, a giant slide, jumping castle, sumo wrestling, a kid's playground, market and food and drink stall, along with the obligatory visit by Santa and his Elves, a great evening is again anticipated. All are most welcome.

## Australia Day Awards

Nominations for the Bourke Shire Council's annual Australia Day Awards for 2023 have been extended until 9 December 2022 due to the limit number of nominations received.. After such a hectic year, the Australia Day Awards allow residents to recognise those that have made outstanding contributions to the local community during 2022 and/or contributions to the local community over a number of years, by nominating them for one of the award categories. The various categories are: Citizen of the Year; Young Citizen of the Year (18 and under); Sportsperson; Young Sportsperson (18 and under); Shire Village Community Service and Emergency Service Volunteer of the Year. Nominations can be downloaded from [www.bourke.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bourke.nsw.gov.au) or by accessing a copy from Council at 29 Mitchell St, Bourke. I encourage the community to take up the opportunity.

## 2021/2022 Annual Report

One of the major components of the NSW Governments Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements for NSW councils is the preparation of an Annual Report. Section 428 of the Local Government Act requires that within 5 months after the end of each year, a council must prepare an Annual Report as to its achievements and activities along with addressing numerous other statutory matters. A copy of Council's Annual Report must be posted on the council's website and the Minister notified of the appropriate link to access the report on the council's website.

Councils 2021/2022 Annual Report was uploaded to Councils website last Wednesday and the Minister advised accordingly. For information, the Report can be viewed on Councils website by accessing the home page and by then scrolling down to the section "Noticeboard" where there is a link to the Report which includes reports on Councils Delivery Plan along with Councils audited financial reports for 2021/2022.

**Quote: "As much as it kills me to inconvenience everyone, I have to get this fixed so I can jump around onstage for another 50 year's."** - Australian singer Jimmy Barnes cancelling his upcoming summer touring schedule to undergo back and hip surgery.