



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

Ministers Visit

Early last week, the NSW Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Western NSW, the Hon Dugald Saunders MP, was in town to host a Ministers Forum regarding the implementation of mandatory sheep and goat electronic identification (eID). Held at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre, some 60 people attended, with a further 14 attending virtually. Various sectors of the sheep and goat industry were represented on the day, including producers, stock and station agents, advisers and abattoir management. With foot and mouth disease already in existence in the close by Indonesian region and eID already rolled out for sheep in Europe, I read that with electronic identification, 99.64% of sheep can be traced back to the vendor or property of residence for the previous 30 days as compared to 70% traceability with visual tags for the same period. I am certain that the rollout is not without its issues however with a foot and mouth disease response cost estimated at some \$80 billion over 10 year's and a trade impact of over \$300 million per week if F&M was to get a hold in Australia, the hosting of the Forum by the Minister certainly underlines the importance of the project.

Cancer Research Project

Back in January this year, Councils former General Manager, Mark Riley, received a call from Emma Webster, Senior Lecturer of Rural Research, Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Sydney, School of Rural Health in Dubbo. Emma advised Mark that she was going to be undertaking a research project into utilising teleoncology services for the treatment of cancer in remote communities, with Bourke and Brewarrina being the two (2) localities the subject of the report. As part of the project, Governance Groups were to be established in both localities. Emma was keen for a Council representative and Mark “nominated” me to join with Pat Canty, Joseph Clarke, Possum Swinton, Alister Ferguson, Louise Brown, Stuart Gordon and Tracey Coyne to form the Bourke Group. With chemotherapies currently not available in Bourke or Brewarrina and people travelling 800kms for treatments at the nearest cancer centre in Dubbo, I was happy to be part of the Group with a view to hopefully improving the quality of life for residents in the Far West.

Emma recently presented the Study at the University of Sydney Research Showcase and in doing so, won the best cancer network presentation, which is fantastic. In addition, Emma was invited to join the organising committee for the NSW Cancer Conference to be held in Sydney next year. This invitation is a wonderful opportunity to bring rural and Aboriginal voices into the cancer conversation. Change doesn’t happen overnight; however, I firmly believe that small opportunities like Emma being part of such an important conference will ultimately help cancer sufferers out our way. Congratulations to Emma and thank you to her and Sydney University, School of Rural Health for pursuing this important research.

Active Transport Strategy

Transport for NSW recently released its Active Transport Strategy (<https://www.future.transport.nsw>).

[gov.au/future-transport-plans/active-transport-strategy](https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/future-transport-plans/active-transport-strategy)). The NSW Government wants walking and bike riding, known as active transport, to be the preferred way to make short trips and a viable, safe and efficient option for longer trips. The Government has estimated that more than 1.5 billion walking and bike riding trips are taken annually across New South Wales with the Government seeking to double this number in 20 years. Walking and bike riding is the most sustainable form of transport, contributing to great places, cleaner local environments, healthier lifestyles, and providing economic benefits to local neighbourhoods. By encouraging more people to choose walking or bike riding for everyday journeys, the Government is seeking to improve neighbourhoods and the environment, reduce car use and traffic congestion, support busy local economies, and improve the general health of our communities. Whilst some of these issues aren't necessarily an issue in Bourke, it is considered that the opportunities for walking and bike riding in Bourke have never been better following the construction of the walkway/cycleway to North Bourke. With a large section of this route having been underwater for some time, active transport will again hopefully be back on the agenda for locals.

Staff are currently working with NSW Public Works in respect of preparing documentation for the restoration of the historic North Bourke Bridge. Whilst any works on the Bridge will require substantial grant funding, the preparation of documentation which clearly specifies and defines the works to be undertaken as part of an overall tender, will be most important in finalising this important active transport link for Bourke.

Police Tragedy

I was very saddened to wake up last Tuesday Morning to hear of the passing of 2 young Police Officers following a siege at Wieambilla in Central Queensland. The young officers aged 26 and 29, were killed along with a neighbour and three alleged gunmen. Very very sad. In my role as General Manager, I have the privilege to regularly interact with the hard working, dedicated and committed Police Officers at the Bourke Police command. As media commentators said following the incident, as people are running away from an incident and danger, it is the Police, and for that matter all emergency service personnel, who are running towards the danger. I suspect that last Tuesday was a difficult day for all Police across the Nation and I take the opportunity to thank them for the difficult work that they undertake.

Code of Conduct

At the November 2022 Council Meeting, a report, as required by the Local Government Act, was submitted to Council in respect of complaint statistics under Councils Code of Conduct. The information to be provided included details in respect of the total number of Code of Conduct complaints made about Councillors and the General Manager under the Code during the reporting period from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 and the total cost of dealing with complaints.

The report to Council noted that there were no Code of Conduct Complaints made about Councillors and the General Manager, or costs incurred, during the reporting period. I would suggest that the fact that Bourke had no complaints for the reporting period, makes it somewhat of a rarity when compared to other NSW Councils where, unfortunately, there is a proliferation of conduct complaints made and investigated every year. I was able to source information for the 2019/2020 reporting period and found that NSW councils had spent more than \$1.5 million investigating 395 Code of Conduct complaints that had been made against councillors and staff but found fewer than 50 breaches had been finalised. This and like information have led to the industry being concerned that the current accountability framework is not serving the best interest of local communities. In response, the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock MP, initiated an independent review of the framework for dealing with councillor misconduct in New South Wales. The draft review

has now been completed and is on public exhibition by the Office of Local Government. A copy can be accessed at: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au>

Christmas In the Park

A most successful “Christmas in the Park” event was held in Central Park on Friday 9 December 2022. Presented by Maranguka and Bourke Shire Council, the annual event proved to be another fantastic community event with Central Park transformed into a wonderland for all kids with activities abounding including the visit, of course, by Santa and his elves, entertainment, a giant slide, sumo wrestlers, food and drink stalls and of course, market stalls. A big thank you to all who contributed to the staging of the event, the biggest yet. The next public event is Australia Day activities to be held on 26 January 2023 at the Bourke War Memorial Swimming Pool.

Best Wishes

And “that’s a wrap”, well at least for the GM’s Columns for 2022. My time as General Manager at Bourke Shire Council since 4 July 2022 has gone very quickly with a most interesting last 6 week’s as a result of an ever-rising Darling River in major flood. My Christmas wish is that flood waters have receded such that all our roads are open and Shire residents, and their families, can come together at this important time of the year to celebrate with each other. To all readers, I wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Quote: “My condolences to all who are grieving tonight – Australia mourns with you.” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reflecting on the shooting of the two (2) Queensland Police Officers.