



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
23 February 2023”

February Council Meeting

The initial Council Meeting for 2023 for Bourke Shire Council will be held on Monday 27 February 2023 commencing at 9.15am in the Council Chambers, Mitchell St, Bourke. No meeting was held by Council in January 2023 due to the holiday period. Whilst the meetings are livestreamed via a link on Councils website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au), members of the public are more than welcome to attend.

Council meetings in Bourke are rather placid meetings when compared to inappropriate behaviour at a recent meeting at a Victorian Council. At this Council, the Mayor was forced to shut down the fiery gathering citing “safety concerns” after a number of outbursts from members of the public. Apparently Police were called to assist with the crowd of some 100 agitators, who didn’t follow the rules as set down for Council meetings!

Sale of Land For Unpaid Rates

As of 30 June 2022, the percentage of rates and charges outstanding for Bourke Shire was 14.74%. Whilst down from 16.93% and 16.72% in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 respectively, it is imperative that Council seeks to collect these funds to assist in the liquidity of Councils operations.

In this regard, Section 713 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides Council with the authority to sell privately owned land to recover unpaid rates and charges. To this end, Council may sell any land (including vacant land) on which any rate or charge has remained unpaid for more than five (5) years from the date on which it became payable. In addition, Council can sell any vacant land on which any rate or charge has remained unpaid for more than one (1) year from the date on which it became payable if Council obtains a valuation of the land from the Valuer-General, the total amount of unpaid rates or charges on the land exceeds the valuation and the land is sold within six (6) months of the date of the valuation. The sale of any land to recover unpaid rates and charges that have been outstanding for the legislated periods of time is regarded as a last resort enforcement measure to be undertaken only after other Council debt management processes have failed.

Accordingly, a comprehensive report in respect of the sale of 47 parcels of land across the Shire was considered and determined by Council at its October 2022 meeting with Council resolving to proceed with the sale of the properties. Arrangements have now been made such that the properties will be offered for sale by Public Auction on 17th March 2023 at 11am at Bourke Bowling Club, 44 Mitchell St, Bourke.

Notification to those persons who are known to Council to have an interest in the land is an essential component in the sale process and whilst letters have been sent to known owners and information has been advertised in the Western Herald, I draw readers attention to the Noticeboard on Councils homepage of its website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au) for a list of properties to be sold.

Tourism Marketing Campaign

Since its proclamation in July 2018, the Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO), comprising the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett, has been working hard to improve the quality of life for its various resident's base. For instance, the provision of funding by the NSW Government has allowed the JO to successfully return air services to the region and in doing so, has substantially improved accessibility to each of the member Councils areas. The Joint Organisation has more recently been successful in obtaining further funding from the NSW Government to undertake tourist related projects with a view to increasing the number of tourists visiting the region.

Following on from the previous development by the JO of the Far North West Tourism Marketing Strategy, the JO is now in the market seeking consultants to implement a Tourism Marketing Campaign aimed at increasing both visitation numbers to the far north west region and also improving the visitor experience once people arrive in the region.

A major component of the Marketing Campaign will be the development and marketing to visitors of a unique historic hotel touring experience across the region. The various wayside hotels peppered across the Far North West Region tell the story of the great Australian "Watering Hole" with the yet to be developed tour seeking to acquaint visitors with rich and vibrant stories that go behind the region's legends, history, heritage and culture that built the far north west.

In inviting tenders, the JO is seeking submissions for the development of content, marketing initiatives and finally, the installation of signage infrastructure along the touring route. In this regard, the intent is that this signage will enable visitors to have their own 'personalised tour' by accessing QR codes on their iPhone such that they have access to directions, information and a video documenting each story.

With potentially its own website, social media accounts, promotion at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, celebrity involvement, influencers and a potential annual historic hotel event, the vision is to drive more overnight visitation to the region by not only "Baby Boomers" and "Grey Nomads" but also by the younger generation who are also taking the opportunity to travel domestically in greater numbers.

Tenders close at midday on Tuesday 7 March 2023 and I am excited at the prospect of reviewing the outcomes of the tenders and further the engagement of a contractor to bring this project to fruition.

Live Traffic

Motorists will soon have access to more real-time traffic information data at their fingertips with the NSW Government adding more local roads to the Live Traffic NSW website. 32 more councils have been trained to use the real-time road information platform to deliver more accurate information to motorists. Bourke Shire Council is one of those Councils.

The Government has fast-tracked the onboarding of councils who have been severely impacted by the flooding events of late last year meaning that councils like Bourke are able to upload road closure and incident information to Live Traffic NSW (www.livetraffic.com) in real time. This information also feeds data into third party apps like Google Maps, Waze and Tom Tom.

This is a great outcome for the travelling public, especially during times of emergencies. For instance, when major flooding affected so many of the state's roads late last year, sessions on Live Traffic NSW increased up to 10-fold. Likewise, in Bourke during times of wet weather, and certainly during extended

periods of flooding, traffic on Councils website and the number of phone enquiries to Councils Customer Services, both increase dramatically.

Obviously, it is imperative that the most timely and accurate data is available for all of our roads in the one place. With the length of the road network in the Shire, Council is most appreciative for the assistance of landholders in providing regular information to Council as to the situation regarding roads adjacent to their properties to input into decisions regarding road closures.

Keep Mozzies Away

I take the opportunity to remind the community to continue to protect themselves from mosquito-borne diseases during our continuing warmer periods. A number of mosquito-borne diseases have been identified in NSW, most recently Japanese encephalitis (JEV), with Bourke being an area of high concern. For Bourke residents, a free Japanese encephalitis virus vaccination is available for people aged 2 months or older for those who regularly spend time outdoors placing them at risk of mosquito bites, or are experiencing homelessness, or are living in conditions with limited mosquito protection (e.g. tents, caravans, dwellings with no insect screens), re are engaging in outdoor flood recovery (clean-up) efforts, including repeated professional or volunteer deployments.

If you meet the above criteria and you are interested in pursuing a vaccine shot, make an appointment with your GP, pharmacist or the Aboriginal Medical Service. It is suggested that you let them know it is for the Japanese encephalitis vaccine as they may require a few days' notice to order the vaccine.

NSW Health is pushing the point that it's important to take extra steps to protect you and your family by keeping mosquitoes away. In doing so, they are using the slogan "spray up, cover up, clean up and screen up." In other words, apply mosquito repellent evenly to all areas of exposed skin; wear loose, long-sleeved, light-coloured clothing and covered footwear and socks when outdoors; clean up your backyard and remove all water-holding containers, including buckets, tyres, toys etc, and store them in a dry place; and install fly screens on windows, doors, vents and chimneys.

Quote: "We cannot have a situation in NSW where families are broken and people are putting their life savings down poker machines." Premier Dominic Perrottet reflecting on the usage of the States near 90,000 poker machines.