



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 16 March 2023”

NSW State Election

The 2023 NSW State Election is rapidly approaching. To be held on Saturday 25 March 2023, voting on the day for the State Seat of Barwon will take place from 8am to 6pm. Here in the Bourke Shire, voting will take place at the Bourke Public School Hall and at the Enngonia Public School. There are four options available to voters in casting their vote in the NSW election. These options are to either vote in person on election day; voting early in person at a pre-polling station; submitting a postal vote or, if you are blind or have a vision impairment, by undertaking telephone-assisted voting.

Early voting in the NSW election commences this Saturday, 18 March 2023 and runs for a week, finishing on Friday, 24 March 2023. While there are some criteria for early voting eligibility, from what I read, basically anyone can vote early in person by turning up at an early polling station in their own electorate during the pre-polling period. Early voting in Bourke is available at the Bourke PCYC in Wilson Street. The Opening Hours for the Bourke Early Voting Centre are Saturday 9:00am to 6:00pm; Monday to Wednesday 8:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday 8:30am to 8:00pm; Friday 8:30am to 6:00pm.

Residents whose "circumstances make it difficult for them to get to a voting centre on election day" may be eligible for a postal vote. Applications can be submitted either via the NSW Electoral Commission Website (<https://elections.nsw.gov.au/voters/voting-options/postal-voting>) or sent in by post. Regardless, the Electoral Commission must receive the application by 6pm on Monday, 20 March 2023. Those persons who have already registered as a general postal voter will not need to submit a new application; their papers will automatically be mailed out. For a postal vote to be counted, it must be received by the Electoral Commission by 6pm on Thursday, 6 March 2023. Usually, the deadline is the second Friday after polling day, but it has been brought forward by a single day for this election due to Easter Friday falling on Friday 7 April this year.

Remember, voting is compulsory such that every Australian citizen, 18 years old and above, who lives in NSW must vote in the election, unless there is a "sufficient reason" – like catching COVID-19 or otherwise being so unwell you can't make it to a voting centre – for failing to do so. The penalty for not voting is a \$55 fine, but this can rise to \$110 if it is unsuccessfully disputed in court. If the fine is overdue and referred to Revenue NSW, an extra \$65 can be added and then if you don't do anything in response, your drivers' licence or car registration can be suspended.

Runway Reseal

One of the more important pieces of infrastructure that Council owns and manages, on behalf of the community, is the Bourke Airport. Built during 1942 and 1943, the aerodrome was constructed jointly between the Australian and United States defence forces (Allied Works Council for Defence Purposes) as a secondary base located within close proximity to Darwin. The airport has two active runways, these being a gravel strip, known as RWY 18-36, being 1,000 metres in length, and a sealed 1,830 metre

runway, known as RWY 05-23. This sealed runway (05-23) was constructed using a cement stabilised base within the central 18m strip. The shoulders on both sides were later sealed by the Federal Airports Corporation (Department of Civil Aviation) in 1958 to enable operations by Fokker F27 aircraft which were once operated on a regular schedule into Bourke.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the Commonwealth Government funded the transfer of a significant number of local and regional airfields and aerodromes to local government authorities under the Aerodrome Local Ownership Plan (ALOP), with this being the case for the Bourke Airport, as transferred to the Bourke council of the day.

Regular maintenance of airport infrastructure is essential to ensure that the myriad of legislative requirements are met such that the airport retains its licence that allows all important air travel to operate into and out of Bourke. A trip on any day to the airport shows the importance of the airport in terms of say, health alone, as an example. With a fleet of Beechcraft King Air aircraft, the Royal Flying Doctor basically operates at least one aircraft into Bourke each day either to conduct patient transfers or to transport doctors and specialists to our remote locality. I would hate to think if we didn't have a serviceable airport and the resultant impact on the wider Bourke community.

With the need for regular maintenance being front of mind, Council late last year was successful in achieving Federal Government funding of some \$500,000 made possible under the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program (RAUP), to fund approximately 50% of the cost of resealing the main strip (05-23) at the airport. As a result of a tender process, the Downer Group was the successful contractor. The Downer Group is a massive organisation that employs approximately 33,000 people across more than 300 sites, primarily in Australia and New Zealand. They retain specific airport expertise in house. Works commence on 18 March 2023 with sweeping of the existing sealed runway taking place for 2 days with the actual resealing taking place from 20 to 22 March 2023 with the contractor working from 7am to 7pm.

During the period of work, runway 05-23 will be closed to aircraft with Council staff, Peter Brown and David Matthews, busy organising the necessary NOTAM (an acronym for Notice to Air Missions) so that pilots are aware of the closure. The dirt strip will still be operational for aircraft.

Grassfires

For the last few months, former Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, Greg Mullins, has been warning that Australia could face its biggest grassfire threat in coming years. Mr Mullins has said that normal or above-normal bushfire conditions would probably return to Australia next summer. "The basic message is, brace yourselves, the fires are coming back - not quite on the same scale as the Black Summer ones, but fires are coming back," Mr Mullins has said. His warnings are worth listening to with history showing that extended and consecutive periods of La Nina bringing heavy rainfall and flooding for much of the east coast have been followed by prolific vegetation growth and then extensive grass fires across the country.

After a wet 2022 and a relatively mild summer, evidenced by significant vegetation growth across the western region, it didn't take much for strong westerly winds, high temperatures and relatively low humidity, to see a grass fire get away and cause damage to not just pasture, but also to infrastructure at Girilambone last Monday week. As we are no doubt all aware, the fires damaged the electricity feeder line from Nyngan to Bourke, across to Tilpa and then up to the Queensland Border, and all points in between. A massive area with electricity. I grew up on a rural property with a generator and certainly no air conditioning. It is amazing how quickly we miss the luxuries of life when they become unavailable. Special thanks go out to the Essential Energy team for working in difficult conditions to restore the

power as quickly as they did and for keeping Council “in the loop” so that residents could also be kept informed.

Dolphins

I was very surprised to hear that the new team to the National Rugby League, the Dolphins, were first round winners against the much lauded and high-flying Sydney Roosters. I had to google the Dolphins to learn that they were based in the Redcliffe Peninsula area of the Moreton Bay Region, Queensland and, ironically, that the legendary Arthur Beetson captained the Dolphins back in 1965, well before they joined the NRL, and also the Roosters in 1974 and 1975. Whilst their name, the Dolphins, doesn't appear all that energising to me when compared to some of the other Clubs names such as the Tigers, the Dragons, the Storm and so on, there is no doubt that supporters will savour their first game in the NRL when they beat the mighty Roosters. Good on them!

Quote: “The (Reserve Bank) board expects that further tightening of monetary policy will be needed to ensure that inflation returns to target and that this period of high inflation is only temporary.” Reserve Bank Governor, Philip Lowe, announcing another interest rate rise in early March 2023 for the 10th consecutive time.