



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

Big Sky Country

Under the heading of “Big Sky Country”, I was delighted to come across and subsequently read a two (2) page review by a Steve Madgwick of his stay at Trilby Station at Louth, in the Easter Sunday edition of the widely read Sunday Telegraph. With various forms of accommodation including self-contained cottages, campsites and powered caravan sites, the author, understandably, was full of praise for what Gary and Liz Murray do at their 130,000 ha Station. Apart from being most complimentary of Liz’s home cooking and the quality of the accommodation, the author was in awe of the sheer size and openness of Trilby Station. As part of the article, the author recounts a story from Liz where a “German guest once asked her to drive him out to the middle of the property and just leave him there.” Liz said to the visitor, “what do you want me to do that for? He said, ‘in Germany, it’s all people, mountains and light pollution – this is what I’m looking for’.”

Well done to Liz and Gary on being part of such a widely distributed publication. In doing so, such articles promote our wider region as we continue to ensure tourists are aware of the beauty of outback NSW. Obviously, Gary and Liz aren’t the only operators to provide farm stays in the region. In this regard, as we see the number of caravaners and campers already increasing for our 2023 season, I wish all involved in our tourism sector, the very best for a successful season. Whilst I know of numerous locals who regularly travel to the likes of Trilby Station just to get away for a weekend, as residents, we possibly often forget what we have in our own back yard. To assist, staff at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre would be delighted to assist locals with information, the same as they do for our many tourists.

Operational Plan Exhibition

Time is running out if you wish to make a submission in respect of Councils draft 2023/2024 Operational Plan (the budget) and associated documentation which is currently on exhibition until 5.00pm Monday, 1 May 2023. The Plan is available for viewing at Councils Website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au) with a copy also available at the Council offices in Mitchell St, Bourke. Council is required to have considered any submissions received prior to adopting its annual Operational Plan. Such considerations will take place when a report on submissions is presented to Councils 22 May 2023 Ordinary Meeting. So, if you wish to have your say about where Council is proposing to spend funds for the upcoming financial year, for consideration by Council, now is your opportunity.

Road Funding

Following the recent NSW State Election and the subsequent determination of Ministerial portfolios, Mayor Barry took the opportunity to write to the new Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Hon. Jenny Aitchison MP, on various road matters relating to the Bourke Shire. With Bourke’s landscape

being vast and beautiful, Mayor Barry advised that Council's vision was for our landscape to be witnessed by as many people as possible travelling on safe and accessible roads.

Barry recounted that funding assistance from successive State and Federal Governments had enabled Council to reconstruct and seal dirt roads that were once near undrivable at times. In this regard, the Bourke – Wanaaring Road, which was once a 190km bone jarring five (5) to six (6) hour journey will in coming months, with the completion of the current round of works, be sealed for all but 13 kilometres of this once horrendous road. Road works such as the Wanaaring Road have opened up areas of Far North West NSW to a wider visitor base. In addition, and importantly, the sealing of this, and other roads, have simply changed the life of many of our residents who live along these roads, in a most positive way. The Mayor sought from the Minister the continuation of programs that allow for the sealing of roads in remote areas. Naturally, Mayor Barry sought funding that would allow for the final 13 kilometres of the Wanaaring Road to be sealed.

As all locals would be aware, during the peak flows of the floods in November/December 2022, access to Bourke via the Mitchell Highway (south of Bourke), the Kamilaroi Highway (east of Bourke) and via the Kidman Way (south west of Bourke towards Cobar), were all cut and closed for an extended duration. Whilst not only significantly impacting travelling locals and the provision of products both into/out of our community, the closure of these roads impacted the freight task in terms of inland Melbourne to Darwin traffic. Light and heavy vehicles had to travel many extra hundreds of kilometres to achieve their required destinations. Council continues to undertake repair works to these Highways as part of its Road Maintenance Council Contract (RMCC) with Transport for NSW (TfNSW). In addition, Council officers have commenced discussions with TfNSW Officers regarding the potential raising of a portion of the Mitchell Highway, south of Bourke, such that the highway is not cut, except perhaps in the most extreme of floods greater than a 1:100 year event. Mayor Barry in writing to the Minister brought these important discussions to the attention of the Minister.

Speed Signage

I would advise motorists that where highways or local roads have been damaged and have yet to be repaired or are currently in the process of being repaired, the identified speed signage at the relevant location is enforceable and is enforced by NSW Police. If the roadworks speed sign says 40 km/h and it's 7.00pm in the evening and there is not a worker in sight, the speed limit is still 40 km/h. I make this comment off the back of social media by the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command of the NSW Police Force over Easter after a Road Train travelling west on the Kamilaroi Highway near Bourke was detected travelling at 95 km/h in a signposted 40 km/h zone. The 51-year-old male driver from Perth was stopped and issued a \$3966 penalty notice and instantly lost 12 demerit points, given double demerits being applicable over the Easter Weekend. His driving privileges in New South Wales were also immediately suspended for a period of six months. Not a good outcome, especially when you come from Perth. I again reiterate however, that speed signs are regulatory signs and under the current requirements of the NSW Traffic Act, drivers must not drive faster than the limit shown on the sign.

During the recent NSW Election campaign, now Premier, Chris Minns, advised that a Labor Government, will amend legislation such that roads subject to temporary speed limits due to construction work, will return to normal outside of construction hours, where safe to do so. At this point, this legislation has yet to be forthcoming, so nothing has as yet changed.

The Cut Line

Further west of Bourke, in the unincorporated area of NSW, is a currently unsealed road called the Cut Line. This road links Wanaaring with Tibooburra, all but 140 kilometres from Cameron's Corner in the

Sturt National Park. Council has previously provided letters of support to TfNSW as part of its endeavours to secure funding for the sealing of this 234km section of road. With the road from Broken Hill – Tibooburra now fully sealed and tourists making use of the road and experiencing corner country, the sealing of the Cut Line would allow an alternative route, via Bourke, for travellers wishing to experience the arid far north western corner of NSW. Travel to Tibooburra via Broken Hill and return via Bourke, or vice-versa. Whilst funding for this road has not as yet been forthcoming, Mayor Barry, in writing to the new Regional Roads Minister, also took the opportunity to confirm Councils position in respect of this potential project. With various and beautiful National Parks surrounding Bourke, a sealed Cut Line road would undoubtedly bring larger tourist numbers to the far west and far north west regions of NSW.

Quote: “I can confirm that China has agreed to undertake an expedited review of the duties imposed on Australian barley over a three-month period, which may extend to a fourth if required.” Foreign Minister Penny Wong in response to China agreeing to fast-track a review of trade bans on Australian barley exports.