



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
27 April 2023”

Waste Management Facility

There has been some major excavation works being undertaken at the Bourke Waste Facility (aka the Bourke Tip) of late. Users of this important facility would have noticed a new waste cell being dug over the past few months. The cell is Cell Number 5 at the facility and forms part of the Environmental Impact Statement for the whole of the waste facility. Some may think that Council simply digs a big hole in the ground when the last cell is full, however that is not the case. There is a considerable amount of work that is required behind the scenes to get to a point where a new cell can actually be utilised by the public. These works include construction of the internal liner which forms an integral part of the new cell. The liner is constructed out of the clay rich soil which comes from the 3-4 metre horizon of the new cell. This is then placed inside the newly dug cell and watered and compacted to achieve the maximum density to meet EPA guidelines. Over the liner another layer of soil is placed to protect the liner from desiccation. The cells are programmed to last 2.5 years but with good management and compaction techniques being used, Council is currently exceeding this timeframe with the current cell (Number 4) still being in operation some 5 years after being initially commissioned.

Acting General Manager

Regular readers of this column over many year's will recall the name of Ross Earl who was Council's General Manager for a period of some 8 year's until his “retirement “ in October 2020. Since leaving Bourke, Ross has undertaken various locum General Manager roles including roles at Blaney, Bogan, Coonamble and Moree Plains Shire Council’s and undertaken the role of Executive Officer with the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils, comprising Bourke, Cobar and Walgett Councils. So much for retirement!

Anyway, I am taking some annual leave with Council engaging Ross as Acting General Manager during my period of absence. Ross achieved a lot during his time at Bourke which coincided with the worst drought in living memory. His achievement of gaining funding to “drought proof” Bourke’s water supply, such that the NSW Government funded the installation of a series of water bores and relating infrastructure and the construction of a new Water Treatment Plant for the town, would undoubtedly be high on a list of his numerous achievements during his term as GM. Ross will no doubt be out and about during his time as Acting General Manager. If you see him, please don’t hesitate to say hello and reacquaint yourself with him.

Caravan Parks

As part of my leave, I will be hooking up the campervan and heading north with Charlie and friends on a touring holiday. Whilst we will be staying at Caravan Parks, I was interested to recently read that many caravan parks are now facing a major hurdle as to their continuing viability as a result of soaring insurance premiums.

After a tough time stemming from the travelling constraints of COVID and unprecedented weather events, the increase in premiums is such that some parks are now facing the prospect of operating uninsured. The article I read quoted the Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA) CEO, Stuart Lamont, who said that "It has not been uncommon to see insurance prices increase five-fold, should insurance even be offered at all, with a well-known award-winning caravan park in North Queensland having annual premium increases from \$105,000 to \$945,000 across two years, with his long-term insurer bowing out of the sector, leaving the property subject to a thin insurance market."

Whilst the CIAA has been working with brokers, insurers, and the Insurance Council of Australia to present a better understanding of individual sites, so that insurers offer affordable policies, the concern now is that solutions may not be quick enough with some operators having to make the decision to either self-insure, close their doors, or remove important pieces of infrastructure which are attractive to guests.

Off the back of cyclones, floods and fires, the Insurance Council of Australia has advised that some insurers are simply excluding cyclone. If the Park is in a flood zone, you can't get flood cover, if you are in a bushfire zone you have a 40% increase and a high excess minimum of \$50,000. With caravan and camping sales having been at an all-time high given the COVID led increase in domestic tourism, it's an interesting time for the industry.

ANZAC Day

I was given the honour of presenting the Occasional Address at Tuesdays ANZAC Day Ceremony in Bourke. When Victor Bartley invited me to do so, apart from saying yes, my thoughts quickly turned to my family's connection to the First World War, that being my Great Uncle John James Bates, known as Jim to his family and "Unc" to his nieces and nephews. Unc grew up in the Louth District, the son of John and Alice Bates. He, like so many youngsters of the time, joined the Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force in 1915 at the age of 21. He was one of the "lucky" soldiers in that he physically survived and returned to Australia, being discharged in January 1920, having served in Egypt and France. Unc was wounded three times and was awarded The Military Medal For Courage In The Field. One can only imagine what Unc witnessed during his time on the battlefield. To Unc and to all those who have served since, I say a very big thank you. Lest We Forget.

My thoughts also moved to a new sculpture that was to be installed in Central Park in time for Tuesdays Ceremony. By way of background, part of the original plan of improvements at the Cenotaph in Central Park included works on the eastern edge of the Park, towards the Rotunda. The intention of the works was to give the cenotaph a suggestion of separation from the greater park area, and to balance the column arch entry and the granite Cenotaph obelisk. Titled the 'Mateship Icon' a large granite work by Richard Stutchbury was ultimately installed prior to last Tuesday's ceremony. The work comprises 2 granite 'sentry' posts placed alongside the pathway to mark the Cenotaph space and a three-piece granite form as installed in the eastern grass. The story of the 'Mateship Icon' is of a horse looking down at a lone slouch diggers hat. The horse reference is of the stock horses supplied from country NSW for World War One and of the Outback fellowship of horse and human. The reflection of the horse's gaze is that of the feeling of losing a mate. The intended sentiment is of service to country, mateship both abroad and at home. Mateship as a proud Bourke way, commonplace and treasured in daily outback life.

If you were unable to attend Tuesday's ceremony, I would encourage you to drop down to Central Park and view the new sculpture and in doing so, take time to reflect on the significant contribution made by all our soldiers to our quality of life in Australia today.

Bourke Show

With the Bourke Show having to be cancelled in 2019 due to the drought, cancelled again in 2020 due to COVID, back on in 2021 only to be cancelled again in 2022 due to wet weather, the 2023 Bourke Show goes ahead on Saturday 6 May. The appetite for Agricultural Shows appears to be as strong as ever with the recently finished 2023 Sydney Royal Easter Show being a great success with over 860,000 attendees over the 12 days of the Show. Dating back to 1822, the Sydney Royal Easter Show is the largest, annual ticketed event in Australia, and is the main fundraising event hosted by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS). The RAS is purposed to forge the future of Australian agriculture by engaging, educating and entertaining the community on the value of sustainable agriculture and quality produce, accomplished through events that support agricultural excellence and innovation.

Revenue generated by the Sydney Show allows the RAS to invest in agriculture, education scholarships, youth programs, competitions, and in rural development in NSW. In total, the RAS invests almost \$9 million annually in these initiatives, which are designed to promote agricultural excellence and to keep rural communities strong.

Quote: “I need you to back me in a bid to advocate for stronger laws to protect these people who serve the community with such passion and dedication.” Jeff Tougher, Father of murdered NSW Paramedic, Steven Tougher.