



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
1 June 2023”

Thank You Ross

After a relaxing four (4) weeks of Annual Leave, I am now back and ready for the numerous challenges that come with being a Council General Manager. I must say thank you to Ross Earl who undertook, most capably, the role of Councils General Manager during my absence. Since “retiring” from Bourke Shire back in 2020, Ross has kept himself busy undertaking various locum General Manager roles and also undertaking the role of Executive Officer of the Far North West Joint Organisation of Councils. As readers would be aware the JO comprises the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett. Thank you Ross.

Country Mayors Association

The Country Mayors Association (CMA) represents 76 rural and coastal councils across New South Wales, covering the equivalent of about three quarters of the state in land mass. The Association is a formidable force in advocating for local government and the issues that affect their communities. Bourke Shire is a recent member. The CMA allows councils from rural and regional NSW to come together to discuss issues of specific interest as well as looking at the bigger picture of the whole local government sector within the state.

Led by a very energetic Councillor Jamie Chaffey, Mayor of Gunnedah Shire, the CMA seeks action from Government in areas such as skills and education, health, roads and transport, water security, housing, law and order, telecommunications blackspot coverage and disaster preparedness and funding. These are all most relevant issues for our Shire. Most recently, Clr Chaffey attended State Parliament in early May for the first sitting week of the new Parliament. As I understand it, he had a busy few days walking the halls of Parliament taking the opportunity to meet with as many Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Cross Bench MPs, from both the Upper House and Lower House, as possible. The good news from his discussions was that the CMA is recognised as an important partner in delivering for Regional communities across NSW.

Last Friday, Mayor Barry and I attended the quarterly meeting of the Association held at Parliament House in Macquarie St, Sydney. It was great to hear from the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Hon Jenny Aitchison MP; the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth and Minister for the North Coast, the Hon Rose Jackson MLC. In presenting to the meeting, the Ministers also took questions from the floor.

Asset Write Off Changes

Under changes announced by the Federal Treasurer, the Hon Jim Chalmers, as part of the recent Budget, the Instant Asset Write Off will end on 30 June 2023, meaning anyone who has not taken delivery of an order by that date – regardless of when the order was placed or paid for – would have to depreciate the asset over many years. Under previous laws, for instance, vehicles that are designed to

carry more than one tonne (like most utes) or nine passengers or more (minibuses), were eligible for a total instant tax write-off, up to a maximum price of \$150,000. For instance, if you could get your hands on a \$100,000 Landcruiser Tabletop, and had it delivered and paid for by 30 June 2023, the purchaser could claim the entire purchase price back on their tax for the 2022/2023 financial year. Not so from 1 July 2023, onwards.

Murray Darling Basin

Councillors and Staff recently had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) in Bourke to discuss “all things water”. Our visitors included Authority Chair, Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC (Ret'd); MDBA CEO, Andrew McConville; Executive Director Basin Plan, Tim Goodes and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Dr Simon Banks and Chris Golding from the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water – Water Division. Ross Earl advised me that it was a high-powered delegation from the Authority with issues discussed including the raising of the Bourke Weir, the need for river flows to be maintained, the importance of the River to the Aboriginal Community, environmental damage from the introduction of fish species and the historical impacts of water buy backs. In regard to the issue of water buy backs, the Federal Government is pursuing water buy backs to help achieve key targets under the Murray Darling Basin Plan. The water will be purchased from six catchments including another 1.6GL from the Barwon-Darling catchment. Council was at pains to advise that there has still been no review undertaken of the socio-economic impact on Bourke Shire resulting from the cap implementation of 173GL dating back to 1 July 2006. This water was resumed from the Bourke area without remuneration with Bourke forced to give up 70% of its licence allocation to the Environment. It is Council's view that at no point has the 173GL been taken into consideration in respect of the current 1.6GL buy back from the Barwon-Darling catchment. Further buyback from our catchment, particularly from irrigators within the Bourke catchment, will have further impacts on our community. It is Council's firm position that since 2006, Bourke has done its share of the heavy lifting and it is time to recognise this fact before the Bourke Shire economy is further impacted and the amenity of residents reduced.

The following week after meeting with the delegation, the 2023/2024 Budget was delivered. Information has now been sourced from the Murray Darling Association as to what the Budget broadly means for the Murray-Darling Basin. In this regard, \$103.7 million has been allocated for the MDBA to undertake a statutory review of the MDB Plan by 2026. Such review will consider climate change and set the Basin up for the next decade; look to deliver a sustainable Basin for future generations and build on previous science commitments: Sustainable Yields (\$9.8m), Sustainable Rivers Audit (\$8m), Climate Change and MDB Ramsar wetlands (\$3.5m). Funding of \$32.7 million has been included in the budget to improve water market information with the Government to strengthen insider trading and record keeping rules, with new laws to be introduced prohibiting market manipulation. The budget papers identified that the Government was committed to delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full, and in doing so will be working closely and cooperatively with state and territory governments. The budget papers also identified \$3.5 million for a First Nations Environmental Water Partnerships Pilot Program.

Councils Budget

Council adopted its 2023/2024 Operational Plan at its meeting held on 22 May 2023. A significant amount of work goes into the preparation of the Plan which includes Councils Budget and accompanying Fees and Charges, Revenue Policy, Plant Replacement Schedule, Sale of Plant Schedule and Councils 2023/2024 Loan Borrowing Schedule. I take this opportunity to thank Councillors and staff for their input into the preparation of this important document.

Rugby League and Union

I must admit that I do enjoy watching the State of Origin Rugby League games. There is just something about Origin. Maybe it's the media hype! I am hoping that as you read this column, the NSW Blues have skipped to a 1-0 lead in the 3-game series against Queensland, having won Game 1 played last night at Adelaide Oval. Time will tell. Talking winter sport, I was recently sent a clip of the NSW Waratahs scoring against Fiji, in what the media described as an "epic" try, with Waratahs Mark Nawaqanitawase and Joey Walton combining with Joey passing the ball whilst in mid-air and over the sideline to his unmarked colleague. Joey Walton is the Son of Jodie and Inspector Peter Walton of Bourke Police. It is great to see Joey back on the field after what I understand have been a couple of frustrating year's as a result of a series of injuries. No doubt Jodie and Peter would be glued to the tv screen for his games.

Quote: "Untreated obstructive sleep apnoea increases the risk of cardiovascular disease by about 150 per cent, diabetes by about 60 per cent, depression by about 160 per cent, and road traffic crashes by more than 200 per cent." Professor Lynne Bilston-Neuroscience Research Australia with 80% of people with sleep apnoea undiagnosed.