



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

**“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
15 June 2023”**

Burn Off

The volunteers at the Bourke Rural Fire Service (RFS) will be undertaking a controlled burn exercise on Council land this Sunday, 18 June 2023. The exercise will address significant fuel growth at two (2) Council owned locations and importantly, provide on the ground training and experience for various new RFS recruits in using RFS equipment and experience first-hand, the behaviour of fire activity. You can learn all the theory, but it is the on-ground experience that comes to the fore when a fire does ultimately break out. The two (2) areas that will be the site of the burns will be around the saleyards and the adjacent old truck wash site, south of Bourke on the Mitchell Highway and behind Council’s Depot in Anson Street near the stockpile site. Residents may recall the stockpile site being utilised a couple of years ago for a similar exercise. That burn allowed for a large area of overgrown land to be cleaned up and made safe. As with all controlled burns, decisions as to whether the burn proceeds are dependent on the weather, especially wind direction. In this regard, the RFS will undertake the necessary investigations prior to proceeding, complete the necessary paperwork and inform the public of the proposed burn activity.

Winter Sickness

The number of Bourke residents that have fallen ill as a result of influenza (flu) in recent times, is certainly of concern. With much of the health focus having been on COVID-19 for so long, it is easy to forget that the flu is a serious disease and each year in NSW many people get very sick, may need hospital care or may die.

With the weather getting colder and we start to spend more time indoors, the risk of catching respiratory illnesses such as colds and influenza (flu) increases. Some people in our community are at a higher risk of severe illness from colds and influenza, including children under 5 years of age, people aged 65 years and over, people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women and Aboriginal people. If you, your loved ones or people you regularly interact with are part of these groups, it’s important to act now to help reduce the risk of serious illness. These actions include:

- Getting vaccinated. The flu shot is available through your doctor for everyone 6 months and older and from pharmacies for those aged 5 years and over. It is free for priority groups at higher risk of severe illness from the flu. Some providers may charge an administration or consultation fee. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if this applies to you.
- Protect your family by getting children vaccinated. Flu can cause serious illness in young children. Young children are also the most likely to spread flu to others. The flu shot may be given at the same time as other childhood vaccines. Speak to your doctor about how best to get your child vaccinated.
- If you’re pregnant, vaccination protects you and your baby. Changes to your immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy mean pregnant women are more likely to get severely ill from

flu. The flu shot can be given at any point during pregnancy, but protection usually takes around 2 weeks to develop. Speak to your doctor about getting vaccinated for winter.

- Those with serious health conditions are at higher risk. If you or your loved ones suffer from severe asthma, diabetes, cancer, immune disorders, obesity or kidney, heart, lung or liver disease, you are at higher risk of serious illness from flu. Speak to your doctor.
- If you're aged 65 or over, vaccination helps protect you. If you are aged 65 years and you are at higher risk of severe illness from flu, which can lead to hospitalisation and in some cases death, speak to your doctor to prepare yourself for flu this winter.

In addition to getting vaccinated, we can all keep up our regular hygiene behaviors to protect ourselves, loved ones and communities this winter. Stay home if you feel unwell; wear a mask in crowded, indoor places; meet and gather outside when you can and wash or sanitise your hands often. If you're planning on visiting people at higher risk of severe illness, consider doing a COVID-19 rapid antigen test before you go and please don't visit anyone if you have cold or flu symptoms. If you know you're at higher risk, make a plan with your doctor about what to do if you get flu or COVID-19. For more information on influenza and getting your flu shot, head to nsw.gov.au

Déjà vu

Déjà vu, which translates in French to "already seen" is a transitory sensation of having already lived a totally identical situation at some point in the past. Neurologists estimate that 97% of people have experienced the sensation at least once in their lives. I had my own déjà vu moment recently when it was announced that the NSW Government had agreed to set up a parliamentary inquiry to investigate and report on governance systems for local water utilities in consultation with local government, as part of its decision to amend the NSW Constitution Act to preserve public ownership of Sydney Water and Hunter Water. I certainly had this sense that I had been here before!

In researching the matter, it became evident that the Government had established a parliamentary inquiry that will examine what can be done to safeguard and support regional water utilities. This includes preventing privatisation, and an examination of any additional protections these assets might require now and into the future. If that's the outcome.....perfect.

My déjà vu moment arose from memories dating back to 2007 when the then State Government was looking at potentially taking over the provision from councils of water supply and sewerage services in regional NSW. An enquiry was undertaken at the time by the then recently retired Director General of the NSW Premiers Department, Dr Col Gallatly AO.

His review was promoted to local water authorities as "part of an evolving process of reform for the provision of water supply and sewerage services to non-metropolitan NSW and builds on the reform agenda of the National Water Initiative that is currently being implemented through the Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage Guidelines."

As I said, the big concern back in 2007 was the potential removal of water and sewer functions from NSW regional councils. This concern arose from data which showed that over many years across Australia, state governments had increasingly been taking control of water and sewer utilities from Local Government. It is understood that these take overs have resulted in increased costs to residents, as well as the loss of local autonomy in decision making that guarantees future growth direction. Bourke Shire, as a member of the then Shires Association was most concerned and on 14 Dec 2007 the ABC reported:

"The Western Division Group of the Shires Association of New South Wales has opposed any moves by the State Government to take over the provision of water supply and sewerage services in regional NSW.

The councils say resources devoted to a review under way by Water Utilities Minister, Nathan Rees, would be better spent on ensuring local government has the long-term capacity to provide the services.

The acting chairman of the Western Division, Bourke Mayor Wayne O'Mally, says the nine member councils have voted to fight any transfer of responsibility.

"Even if the State Government was to take over these services it would require quite a deal of funding to be found, so either way the funding has to come from somewhere, but the people to run these systems the best ... are the local councils with the local knowledge," he said."

Whilst the Government ultimately determined not to pursue the take-over of water and sewer utilities, for the Western Area it did result in proactive activity by Orana based councils that resulted in the creation of the Orana Water Utilities Alliance. This award-winning Alliance, which still operates today, initially focused on all Councils in the region achieving best practice in the provision of water and sewer services to their communities.

Quote: "I am unable to accept the proposition that the evidence establishes that Ms Folbigg was anything but a caring mother for her children," former NSW chief justice Tom Bathurst, KC, in a memorandum to NSW Attorney-General, Michael Daley which resulted in the pardoning of Kathleen Folbigg.