



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 17 August 2023

Everything Old Is New Again

As most people would know, late last year singer John Farnham underwent a 12-hour operation for mouth cancer. With his son being recently on television advising that his Father was now “cancer free”, hopefully we will see John Farnham performing again in the goodness of time. In May this year a documentary titled ‘John Farnham: Finding the Voice’ was released to the public via Australian cinemas with the documentary subsequently screened on national television in July 2023. The interesting thing is that John Farnham’s popularity has had a massive resurgence as a result of the documentary with his previously released albums from the 1980’s and 1990’s returning to the Australian Records Industry charts of today. Entertainment reporter Peter Ford said that “everybody has kind of rediscovered John Farnham” having 12 of the top 20 in the ARIA albums charts and then another five albums in the top 20 to 40 albums.

In addition to this resurgence, former Beatle Paul McCartney is touring Australia in late October and early November this year. McCartney is now 81 years of age and such is his popularity that as a result of initial demand for tickets for his Sydney concert of Friday 21 October, a second concert at Allianz Stadium has been announced. I have seen television clips of the crazy scenes when the Beatles toured Australia way back in 1964. McCartney has gone on to be arguably the most successful of the “Fab Four” in terms of their individual careers. I certainly enjoyed recently watching when British Talk Show Host, James Corden, headed to Liverpool for a day with Paul McCartney, the city of Paul's youth, visiting his childhood home where he wrote music with John Lennon, performing songs in a local pub and driving around singing some of McCartney’s biggest hits, as part of Corden’s Carpool Karaoke segment. You can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvzCTqkBDQ>. As I say, “Everything Old Is New Again”!

Cancer Treatment In Bourke

In May last year, the University of Sydney – School of Rural Health, in conjunction with the Western NSW Local Health District, invited involvement from members of the Bourke community to join a Committee to design how cancer services can best be provided to people in Bourke.

With cancer levels being so unfortunately high across the Shire, great strides have been made for the region in terms of treating cancer with the construction and operation of the Western Cancer Centre at Dubbo. The Centre provides significantly expanded chemotherapy services and provides access to radiation therapy and PET CT services in the western area for the first time. It’s easy to forget the “inconvenience” and cost that western area patients had to endure travelling to either Orange or Sydney for extended periods to undertake required treatment. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is nothing better than a physical on-site medical professional to attend to one’s issues, it is further acknowledged that the provision of various specialised services will not generally be available on a one-

on-one basis with specialists in many western localities, let alone in terms of infrastructure. This is where virtual or telehealth can come in. Recently Dr Emma Webster Senior Lecturer in Rural Research at the University of Sydney - School of Rural Health in Dubbo along with Dr Florian Honeyball, medical oncologist based at the Western Cancer Centre Dubbo; Dr Sidney Pye, Senior Resident Medical Officer at Liverpool Hospital and A/Prof Rob Zielinski, Senior oncology physician and Director of clinical trials unit at Orange Hospital, authored an article which stated that research had shown that “patients in regional NSW had positive experiences of virtual health care.”

Whilst acknowledging that there were both “good” and “bad” views of virtual health care, they wrote of the positive experiences of seven cancer patients in western New South Wales who received video-assisted chemotherapy treatments remotely. Referred to in the article as teleoncology, the telehealth system allows patients to receive cancer treatments locally, in lieu of otherwise having to travel hundreds of kilometres for treatment or short routine treatment follow-up sessions.

The article provides that “research demonstrated to the researchers how important it was for rural patients to receive oncology treatments in their hometown where they had strong social networks and enduring connections with local health providers. These were the social and professional networks which had supported people through the health challenges life had thrown their way and would continue to support them no matter how successful their cancer journey was to be. For these patients, teleoncology brought expert advice and treatment to them at their local hospital, strengthening their local health care team rather than uprooting their whole existence to receive treatments far from home in a cancer centre. Patient experiences of teleoncology were enhanced when care was provided in a hybrid model (combining both in-person and telemedicine consultations) to foster the therapeutic relationship between oncologist and patient.”

Whilst virtual health care is still relatively young in its evolution, it certainly has its benefits and one that is a discussion point for the provision of cancer services in Bourke.

NGO Flood Recovery Program

The Commonwealth and NSW Governments have announced the launch of the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Flood Recovery Program. The Program focuses on the longer-term resilience of individuals, families and communities. A total of \$6.5 million in Open Competitive Grants are available to help communities thrive as they recover from the floods. Grants are available to run programs that support individuals, families and communities in four districts of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) including the Western District, of which the Bourke Shire area is part of. Funding at four levels, beginning at \$10,000, is available to support and embed resilience in flood affected communities. DCJ are keen for local NGO's to be aware of the program and give consideration to submitting an application. Applications are now open until 5pm Friday 1 September 2023. Information about the program can be found at: <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/flood-recovery-grants.html> including program guidelines, FAQs and a link to apply. Potential applicants can also contact the DCJ team with any queries at: SPCGrantsTeam@facns.nsw.gov.au

The Matilda's

By the time this Column is published, the Matilda's will have played either France or Morocco in their Quarter Final Game and if they had won that game, they would have played last night in a Semi-Final against either England, Columbia or Jamaica. Win or lose, the Matilda's have certainly captured the interest of the Nation. This is evidenced by the number of people watching their games on television. For the Matilda's game against Canada back on 31 July, the viewing audience was 2.46 million. For comparative purposes, 1.115 million viewers tuned into *Session One* of Day Five of the fifth *Ashes* cricket

test match. It was the first time that more than 2 million viewers had watched a female team sports match in Australia. For the Matildas game against Denmark on 7 August, it has been reported that some 3.5 million viewers tuned in with these numbers being well in excess of the number of viewers who watched either the 2022 AFL or NRL Grand Finals and the 2023 State of Origin (Game 1), which had a high of 1.98million viewers. To put this 3.5million viewer figure further in perspective, it is understood this figure equates to some 54% of the total viewing audience.

It is great to see the community's interest and support of the Matilda's. Whilst I clearly remember footage from back in 1983 when the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, famously declared after Australia won the America's Cup for the first time, "Any boss who sacks anyone for not turning up today is a bum!", I cannot go so far to agree with various calls for a public holiday to be declared should the Matildas win the World Cup. In NSW we already have 12 annual public holidays with these public holidays coming at a significant cost to employers. In this regard, employers are required to pay their full or part time employees their minimum pay rate for the ordinary hours that they would usually work on that day. Employees who work on a public holiday must be paid a penalty rate with this rate being higher than their minimum pay rate. It all costs. If people are that keen to celebrate the Matilda's journey, I would suggest they apply for a day's annual leave!

Quote: "We are aware ... we're probably facing our first significant fire season since Black Summer" – Murray Watt, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management Australia commenting on an expected El Nino weather pattern.