



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”

31 August 2023

Wilba Bus Service

Funded by a NSW State Government Grant through the Transport Access Regional Partnerships Program, Wilba the Empower Bus is a shared service that is currently operating on a 12-month trial in Bourke until, at this point, February 2024. The goal is obviously to see the program extended for a further long-term period. Like an Uber ride share vehicle, access to the Wilba Bus Service needs to be prebooked with the bus helping people get to healthcare appointments, visit loved ones, go shopping, attend sporting commitments or simply travel around our town. Operated by Tsukasa Hiraoka, she and her team are friendly faces to all passengers. It was pleasing to recently learn that the Bourke community is certainly embracing the Wilba Bus Service. For instance, statistics show that on a recent Thursday morning, the Wilba team had picked up 88 residents and provided a safe ride to their drop off, all before 11am that day. That is a fantastic number of passengers.

When the Service was initially launched, the Government said that “This new bus service will have positive outcomes for the residents and community of Bourke.” I am happy to confirm that such statement has proven to be correct with Wilba having a positive impact on the lives of our residents. In this regard, I am aware of a local resident, who before this service was provided to our community, felt isolated in her home for years. She mentioned that she now looks forward to her weekly bus trip with the friendly team and loves talking to other passengers and checking out the town while she is driven around. Wilba has provided more than just a ride share experience in the Bourke community and for one local lady, her weekly trips on the Wilba Bus is something exciting that she very much looks forward too.

The bus service operates from 8am to 7.30pm on Monday through to Friday, and 9am to 2pm on Saturday. To book a ride, call or text 0493 252 207 or visit <https://wilba.com.au/book-now//> Fares start from only \$1.15 for concession holders with children under 5 travelling free of charge when they are accompanied by a parent or carer.

Historic Key

Mayor Barry was recently delighted to receive correspondence from His Excellency General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. Such correspondence enclosed a key presented in 1923 to the then Mayor of Bourke, Alderman James Kessey, on the occasion of the provision of electric lighting to Bourke. As advised by His Excellency, this piece of historical significance for the Bourke region had been presented to him by a Ms Faye Combe during an event at Admiralty House, the Sydney residence of the Governor-General on Sydney Harbour.

The Governor General advised that Ms Combe had purchased various items from a Smith Family store and “whilst sorting them out, found the enclosed key.” In presenting the key to His Excellency she advised that “she thought the proper home for the key was with the people of Bourke.”

In respect of Mr Kessey, on his passing, the Western Herald of Friday 18 August 1944 reported that James Kessey was an Alderman in Bourke for twelve years, “occupying the Mayoral chair for nine years.” The paper further noted that during his time as Mayor, “he achieved one of the most successful undertakings that Bourke has secured, viz, the electric light. He was instrumental in the town getting this modern facility.”

Today we take electricity and street lighting for granted, notwithstanding its current high cost, and it was undoubtedly a momentous day for Bourke back in 1923 when electric lighting initially came to the Shire. Whilst history reports that there were various instances of electric street lighting being pioneered at localities in NSW dating back to the late 1880’s (eg Tamworth in 1888), it was on 8 July 1904, when Mrs Olive Lees, the wife of the Lord Mayor of Sydney at the time, Samuel Lees, turned a golden switch-key that turned on the streetlighting on Sydney’s streets. It was then a further 19 years before electric lighting arrived in Bourke, such is the tyranny of distance. Mayor Barry has requested that I take the necessary action to have the key framed and then appropriately displayed, as an important part of Bourke’s history, with such action now underway. Naturally the Mayor responded to His Excellency and in doing so thanked he and Ms Combes for the provision of such an important piece of Bourke’s history. He also advised that Council would very much welcome the opportunity to host both he and Mrs Hurley on a visit Bourke to allow the community to show them further pieces of not only Bourke’s history, but also the history of our Nation.

Fire and Rescue NSW

By way of background, Fire and Rescue NSW (formerly the New South Wales Fire Brigades) is the State Government agency responsible for the provision of fire, rescue and hazmat services in cities and towns across New South Wales. Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) is funded via the insurance industry which contributes 73.7% of the total cost of the service as per the FRNSW annual budget, from the State Government which contributes 14.6% and Local government which contributes 11.7% of the total. When people take out insurance, they contribute to the cost. We all contribute to the State's 14.6% when we pay taxes. Local Government (Councils) remit the amount FRNSW calculates as their share. When you pay rates, or pay rent to a landlord who pays rates, you contribute to the Council's contribution to FRNSW. For Bourke Shire Council, its contribution in 2023/2024 will be \$42,606.

With that funding model in mind, I was happy for the community when I was “greeted” by a new, state-of-the-art Regional Pumper firefighting appliance which was parked out the front of the Bourke Fire Station when I recently pulled up for work at the adjacent Council Chambers. Inquiries revealed that the truck is one of 18 new firefighting appliances being deployed across NSW to help better protect communities during bushfires and other emergencies. The multi-purpose vehicle is an Iveco 4 x 2 which is equipped with a 3000 litre/ per minute water pump, a compressed air foam system (CAFS) and a 2000 litre water tank. Bourke’s current Citizen of the Year, and Captain of the Bourke Fire and Rescue Brigade, John Milgate is naturally very happy with the new pumper which, in his opinion, will have a major impact on his crew’s capabilities in the field by allowing them to better deal with emergencies, such as truck fires on the highway. The new pumper will undoubtedly help reduce potential harm to human life and damage to property and land and assist our local Brigade to respond to emergencies as the pumper can deal with the difficult terrain that is the bush of Far Western NSW. With a very hot summer period predicted and the resultant rapid dry off of natural vegetation, the new pumper will no doubt be of great assistance in protecting the local community during this period. Bourke is very well served by its

on-call firefighters who respond to local emergency incidents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from their home or other workplaces. I thank them for their efforts.

Honour Roll

The NSW Government's Hidden Treasures Honour Roll recognises extraordinary women who volunteer in regional, rural, and remote NSW. Nominations for the Honour Roll are now open, and I encourage members of the Bourke community to nominate some of our amazing women volunteers who assist so many people across the Bourke Shire and in doing so, make our community a better place to live.

Women are so often the backbone of families and communities and without their support many groups including charities, emergency services, the arts, environment, social justice, education and sporting organisations would struggle to survive.

The NSW Government initiated the Hidden Treasures project to promote and archive the work of these remarkable women. It is not an award program but a public tribute to the vast number of women who give their time and energy to help others across rural, regional and remote regions. To find out more about past honour roll recipients and to nominate a rural who has made a difference in our community go to: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/rural-womens-network/hidden-treasures>

Quote: "No one is bigger than the team, you win together, and you can certainly lose together."- Sam Kerr, Captain of the Matildas.