



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”

28 September 2023

Local Roads Congress

Mayor Barry and Councils Roads Manager, Paul Flanagan recently joined with local government leaders, engineering and works staff from across Australia who gathered in Canberra for the 2023 National Local Roads, Transport and Infrastructure Congress. Both the Mayor and Paul agreed that the congress provided participants with a forum to learn from each other and address urgent issues relating to all things roads, transport and infrastructure.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) estimates that the cost of repairing flood damaged roads across NSW, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia is \$3.8 billion. For many regional, rural and remote councils, like Bourke Shire, undertaking these repairs will not be possible without increased support from other levels of government. In this regard, Congress delegates were happy to hear that ALGA had committed that it will continue to advocate for the \$500 million federal Roads to Recovery fund be increased to \$800 million per year, and Financial Assistance Grants to be restored to at least one percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

The Mayor and Paul advised that this year’s Congress included a broader focus on community infrastructure, with sessions on emissions reduction, housing, active transport, disaster response and recovery, waste and recycling, telecommunications infrastructure, and affordable housing. Councils need more funding to build, maintain and revitalise the local infrastructure vital for liveable and productive communities, and extending the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program – or replacing it with an untied funding stream – will deliver long lasting benefits for all Australian communities. Delegates at the Congress affirmed their commitment to working with state, territory and federal governments towards building better, more resilient infrastructure that will serve all Australians, and help build communities that are safer, stronger and smarter.

Wild dog control

Wild dogs significantly impact on livestock and native animals and restrict production options in many areas. The economic impact of wild dogs has been estimated to be up to \$111 million per annum nationwide, with up to \$22 million of this cost attributed to NSW. With work progressing on the NSW Wild Dog Fence Extension Project, Western Local Land Services is set to undertake its spring aerial baiting program for the control of wild dogs, foxes and feral cats. This important program is scheduled to occur between 25 September and 8 October 2023, with 1080 (pronounced ‘ten eighty’) poison meat baits issued along pre-determined bait lines with the rate of application being 10 baits per kilometre.

The area to be covered through the program is from Enngonia in the north-east, to Broken Hill in the west, near Pooncarie in the south-west and to Mt Hope in the south-east. Following the aerial baiting

campaign, ground baiting will be carried out. On behalf of Council, thanks are extended to participating landholders and stakeholders for their involvement in the program. To find out more you can contact Western Local Land Services via 1300 795 299 or www.lls.nsw.gov.au.

Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The Australian, NSW, South Australian, Queensland and ACT governments have agreed to a package of measures, including the extension of delivery deadlines, that will enable “the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to be implemented in full.” The Australian Government’s proposed extension of the 30 June 2024 delivery deadline for various major water infrastructure projects under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan has required changes to Commonwealth legislation to give effect to the agreement. Once the amending legislation has been determined, government is of the view that the new deadline will provide a more realistic pathway and timeframe as well as a budget for delivering the work NSW has committed to under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The NSW Government has advised that it is focused on meeting its commitments under the Basin Plan and they continue to work with the Australian Government and other states in the Basin to deliver on these commitments with alternative programs and water efficiency projects rather than buybacks. A copy of the agreement can be accessed at: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/mdb/basin-plan/agreement2023>

Groundwater Rules

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment is seeking stakeholder views on proposed changes to the Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources 2020. These changes relate to current rules for the distance that new bores can be placed from other bores or features and may affect water supply works (bore) approvals. The proposed amendment seeks to correct and improve drafting and address unintended restrictions imposed on the placement of bores for basic landholder rights and other groundwater users. These changes would allow the department to place greater focus on local site conditions when processing bore applications, making the plan consistent with other inland groundwater sharing plans across the state.

With the Warrego Groundwater source effectively extending from north of the Darling River in the Bourke Shire to the NSW/Queensland border, landholders are encouraged to have their say on the proposed changes to the water sharing plan during the public consultation period, which will run until 1 October 2023. Further information is available by accessing the DPIE website at <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au> and then by searching “great-artesian-basin-groundwater.”

Referendum Staff

The Australian Electoral Commission, the independent federal agency responsible for the management of federal Australian elections, by-elections and referendums, has put out a “shout out” in Bourke looking for staff to be employed at the Bourke Pre Poll and on Polling Day itself, for the upcoming national referendum to be held on 14 October 2023. With the AEC having advised that they have 100,000 employment opportunities available in cities, regional and remote areas across Australia, the agency is seeking 11 staff in Bourke, including the role of Officer-in-charge. If you work well in a team, enjoy working in a fast-paced team and are comfortable talking to people, this opportunity may be of interest to you. All jobs are paid, and training is included. If you are interested, please go to aec.gov.au/electionjobs and learn more about the various roles.

Fire Ants

Red imported fire ants (fire ants) are invasive introduced ants that cause serious social, economic, and environmental harm. They are aggressive and have a severe, burning sting with large numbers of ants swarming onto a person or animal, stinging over and over, causing the sensation of being on fire. Stings can become infected and in rare cases lead to fatal allergic reactions. Infestations restrict the use of backyards, parks, playgrounds, beaches and sporting fields and can damage electrical, irrigation and agricultural equipment. Fire ants feed on seeds, insects, spiders, lizards, frogs, birds and mammals. They can displace or kill off native plants and animals and change whole ecosystems beyond repair. All in all, they certainly don't sound very pleasant.

Fire ants are a prohibited matter under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*. Their possible movement is regulated under the *NSW Biosecurity (Invasive Ant Carriers) Control Order 2023*. The NSW Control Order defines 'fire ant infested areas' as being land within a Queensland fire ant biosecurity zone AND land within a 5km buffer around known fire ant nests. The following items are considered 'fire ant carriers' for the purposes of the order: organic mulch, soil and anything with soil on it, baled material, potted plants, turf, agriculture or earth moving machinery, and mining and quarrying materials. An Interstate Biosecurity Certificate or equivalent must accompany 'fire ant carriers' that have been procured from a Fire Ant infested area and brought into NSW.

Whilst fire ants are thankfully not known to occur in NSW, they currently infest a large area of southeast QLD with nests having been found very close to the NSW border. With numerous NSW councils in the far north of the state and the inland local government areas of Inverell, Gwydir, Moree Plains and Tenterfield already on alert in respect of the above Control Order, as a shire also adjacent to the NSW/Queensland border, residents should as a minimum be aware of the threat that Fire Ants pose. Relevant information is available at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/insect-pests/fire-ants>

Quote: "I'm a bit used to it mate, and after that I probably deserve a bit more. They should be throwing, what do they throw here, baguettes, croissants at me. It's not good enough so I deserve whatever I get mate." Wallabies coach Eddie Jones after losing to Fiji at the Rugby World Cup.