



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”

7 September 2023

Job Vacancies

As highlighted in a recent edition of the Western Herald, filling staff roles has been a real issue for many employers and Bourke Shire Council is no different. We recently had four roles that closed in the areas of Weeds Officer, IT Support Officer, Town Precinct Maintenance Officer, and a Payroll Officer. I was concerned that such a number of vacancies was just a specific Bourke issue. My concerns were dispelled considerably when I was recently in Dubbo where I heard an advertisement on commercial radio for a western based Council who was advertising the availability of numerous positions at their Council. Whilst the subject Council will remain nameless herewith, I searched the subject Councils website and to my surprise found that they had 14 current vacancies across all sectors of the organisation. As a Council only slightly larger than Bourke Shire, in terms of staff numbers, the 14 vacancies would, I suggest, be almost 10 percent of their total workforce numbers. We certainly live-in interesting times!

New Plant

Council has recently taken delivery of a new piece of heavy equipment as part of its cyclical Plant Replacement Policy. The subject piece of equipment is a Caterpillar 966GC Loader which is utilised by Council, in the main, to win and load gravel at Councils various quarries located across the Shire. The new loader replaces Council’s former Caterpillar 950 Loader which, whilst having serviced Council most capably, was 10 years old and was starting to need more repairs, which means higher operating costs and results in more down time.

The new machine is a “state of the art” machine that comes with improved electronic, fuel, and air systems, when compared to the previous loader. It comes with an Engine Idle Management System that reduces idle revolutions per minute and this assists to lower fuel consumption. Interestingly, it has a variable speed fan that adjusts to meet the varying cooling requirements of the machine which results in a reduced average fan speed and lowered fuel consumption and noise levels. It also has load sensing hydraulics that produce flow and pressure for the hydraulics upon demand and only in amounts necessary to perform the needed work functions. All these features add to the efficiency of the loader and are part of reduced maintenance time and costs.

The new Caterpillar is a bigger loader than the machine that it replaced and importantly comes with a bigger loading bucket. This means that gravel trucks can be loaded at a faster rate noting that the old machine took some 5 to 6 buckets to load Councils tippers with the bucket on the new loader taking but 3 buckets to fill Councils tip trucks. That is a significant improvement which will certainly improve the turnaround time of Councils tipper fleet. Being a taller machine, which results in better visibility to load the tippers, the new loader also provides a comfortable working environment for our operators.

A considerable amount of work goes into process of acquiring such major plant items and I thank Councils staff in its Roads Department on acquiring this major plant item, which as part of the purchase criteria, was the largest that Council could acquire without having to update its float or needing permits to transport it between jobs.

Enngonia Races

With Council having recently completed the installation of new village entry signage at Enngonia and following the success of the recent Louth Races, the Organising Committee for the Enngonia Races, to be held this Saturday, 9 September 2023, are planning for a similar successful event. Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the meet, a six (6) race program has been organised with a staggering \$90,000 in prize money on offer. Whilst time is running out, I understand that you can purchase a single membership of the historic club for \$25. This membership covers entry to the course on race day and includes a limited-edition Enngonia Race Club Membership Pin. Donations over \$100 receive a complimentary membership. Club President, Callum Robinson or Secretary, William Ridge, (walridge92@gmail.com) can assist you with membership. With generous Jockey and Trainer rebates, amazing prizes for the highly contested Fashions on the Field, catering by the Outback Shack and entertainment after the last race by Sam McBride, it will undoubtedly be a great day for all.

Like the Bourke Easter Picnic Races and the Louth Races, the Enngonia race meeting event is much anticipated on the social calendar of many people, both local and from afar. As always, these events are only possible with the hard work of the Committee, the financial support of sponsors and those who attend such events. I congratulate all involved.

Flood Warning Equipment

Council has received advice from the Bureau of Meteorology that it will be upgrading Bureau-owned assets across Australia that assist flood warning by improving the hardware and software that underpin riverine flood and weather warning data. From December 2023 the Bureau will replace manual rain and water gauges with automatic equipment in Bourke Shire with Bureau-owned sites at Enngonia (Warrego River) and Wanaaring (Paroo River) being upgraded. The works will see gauges that are currently read manually replaced, resulting in rainfall and water level information being provided in real-time. This will improve the speed and volume of information that is available and assists in monitoring and predicting riverine floods. Importantly, the new automated systems will improve the safety for volunteer observers during severe weather, replacing the current reliance on manual gauge readings.

The Bureau also advised that it is upgrading its supporting infrastructure, such as communication equipment and antennas that transmit data back to the Bureau. This is to make the network more reliable, resilient and secure. In the recent federal budget, the Australian Government committed funding of up to \$236 million over the next 10 years to address critical, long-standing risks in Australia's flood warning network in the nation's most flood-prone regions. As I understand it, some flood warning assets in the Bourke Shire area have been identified as high priority, and therefore the Bourke region will be a direct beneficiary of this initiative. The funding aims to simplify ownership and maintenance of high-priority flood warning assets by enabling the Bureau to acquire, upgrade and integrate key local government-owned, and some state government-owned, rain and water level gauges in high-priority areas into its existing flood warning network across Australia. Once complete, the work will improve community access to rain and water level observations and enhance provision of flood forecasts and warnings.

Whilst detailed planning for this initiative, which will include remediation and maintenance schedules for specific assets, has not been finalised, I look forward to working with the Bureau to confirm which

gauges the Bureau will remediate and acquire, such that a schedule of works is ultimately coordinated and implemented.

Young Entrepreneurs

Councils Manager Economic Development, Mel Milgate, recently completed an entrepreneurial bootcamp with Bourke High School Students as part of the NSW Governments Regional Youth Entrepreneurial Activation Program (RYEAP). With Investment NSW having engaged with the Scale Institute, an organisation focused on “fostering entrepreneurial leadership that seeds innovation and helps to solve urgent and complex business problems,” to deliver the 2023 Program, Bourke High School was one of 20 high schools selected in the State to take part in the bootcamp to learn the skills and mindset needed to become a successful entrepreneur.

Each school partnered with a local business who will present students with a current challenge they are seeking to solve. For Bourke High, they partnered with Council with the challenge being how might we design activities or events that celebrate and educates visitors about Bourke, whilst appealing to young people. Mel advised that the students then collaborated, and were mentored by Entrepreneurs in Residence, Nick and Nicola from the Scale Institute, to generate innovative solutions which they will present at the Regional Pitch Fest showcase in November and receive valuable feedback.

Council was happy to be involved and assist as the students build their capabilities and knowledge to prepare them to be work ready and receive important life skills including creative and critical thinking.

Rugby World Cup

With the Rugby World Cup kicking off this weekend, on current form, I can't see the Wallabies reproducing either the success or the hype achieved by the Matildas at the recent Women's Football World Cup. Unless of course, Wallabies coach, Eddie Jones, pulls an absolute “rabbit out of the hat” and claims some unexpected results. Let's hope.

Quote: “It's the friends you can call up at 4am that matter.” Marlene Dietrich