



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk” 21 September 2023

September Council Meeting

The September meeting of Council will be held next Monday, 25 September 2023, commencing at 9.15am in the Council Chamber. Whilst all Council meetings are important, this meeting is especially so given that one of the early items on the agenda will be the election of the Mayor, followed by Councils consideration as to whether they will have a Deputy Mayor. On the assumption that Council will continue its past practice, the election of the Deputy Mayor will then proceed.

The NSW Local Government Act provides for two (2) methods that mayors in NSW are elected to the position. One method is where the voting residents of a council area vote and determine the holder of the position. Mayors elected in this manner are known as ‘popularly elected’ mayors and they hold office for the term of the Council, which is generally a four (4) year period. The other method of electing the mayor is where the elected councillors, at their first meeting following the ordinary council election, vote for one of their own who will be mayor for a period of generally two (2) years. A further election for Mayor is then held midterm for a mayor to cover the remainder of the Council term. This is the method that Bourke Council has successfully utilised for many years in determining its mayor.

It wasn’t that long ago that mayors elected by their fellow councillors were only elected for a twelve (12) month term however changes to the Local Government Act last decade extended this term to a two-year period. The COVID pandemic however played havoc with the mayoral term, with the ordinary Council elections that would normally have taken place in September 2020 being ultimately postponed until 4 December 2021. As a result, the term of the current Council is three (3) years, whereas council terms are normally four (4) year terms. Given this, mayors who were elected by their fellow councillors in 2021 hold office until September 2023 and mayors elected in September 2023 will then hold office until 14 September 2024, the day of the next ordinary Council elections.

Getting back to next week’s meeting, as is the case with all of Councils meetings, it is open to the public, except for certain matters that comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act that are deemed to be of a confidential nature and are thus considered in a closed session of Council. In respect of such confidential matters, before the Mayor closes the monthly meeting, he invites me, as General Manager, to read out in open Council what Council determined during its closed session. Monday’s meeting will be live streamed from 9.15am and can be viewed by accessing the meeting link on the front page of Council website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au).

As I have previously mentioned, a Public Forum is scheduled prior to each meeting commencing at 9.00am, if required. If you wish to participate in the Public Forum and address the Council, it is requested that you please contact Councils Executive Assistant, Margo Anderson, on phone 6830 8000 or by email at ea@bourke.nsw.gov.au by 4.00pm on the Friday prior to the Council meeting to allow your item to be placed on the Forums agenda and Councillors advised accordingly.

National Drowning Report

With the warmer weather rapidly approaching, the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia has recently released its 2023 National Drowning Report. Any drowning, whether it be at a beach, a dam, a river or in a backyard swimming pool, is tragic.

The report shows that whilst drownings across the Nation declined overall with 281 deaths, down 17 per cent on the previous year when there were 339 deaths, NSW recorded the greatest number of drowning deaths with 107 fatalities. Men made up 77 per cent of drowning deaths with adults over 45 years of age making up 57 per cent of the drownings. The report attributes these high number of male drownings to men in their actions in trying to save a family member from the water. Coastal environments accounted for 44 per cent of deaths, inland waters 37 per cent and backyard pools 10 per cent. For us folk who live in the Far West, the report notes that although 59 per cent of drownings involved major city residents, people from outer regional and remote areas were almost twice as likely to drown. That's not a good statistic. One piece of good news from the report is that drowning prevention efforts have resulted in a 33 per cent decrease in the deaths of children, four years and younger, compared to the 10-year average.

If you and your family are heading to the coast this summer for holidays, be aware that rip currents at beaches are the number one coastal hazard and are a contributing factor in more than a quarter of coastal drowning deaths. Please understand your swimming limitations and swim at patrolled beaches between the red and yellow flags. If you're at the river or at a dam swimming, boating or even just relaxing on the bank, there are many hidden dangers that you may not be aware of lurking below, such as fast-flowing water, submerged objects such as rocks, snags and tree branches and slippery banks and uneven surfaces.

Welcome Baby

With no operating birthing unit at the Bourke Multipurpose Centre resulting in expectant Mothers having to generally travel to Dubbo to deliver their pride and joy(s), the annual celebration to "Welcome Baby to Bourke Community" is an excellent initiative of the Western NSW Local Health District.

To be held next Tuesday, 26 September 2023 commencing at 10.30am at Darling Park at the corner of Mitchell and Sturt Street, Bourke, this year's 2023 Welcome to Community Baby Ceremony will be the third such event following the initial ceremony in 2021. With the event having been named as a finalist in the 2023 NSW Health Awards, the Ceremony is open to all infants aged from birth to two years with the introduction of babies to the community being a traditional practice that has been implemented through generations dating back thousands of years.

The ceremony is coordinated by the WNSWLHD Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Directorate and funded by the NSW Ministry of Health. My thanks go to the various key stakeholders who continue to make the free ceremony possible, including all Childhood services and Non-Government Organisations across Bourke.

I understand that registrations closed on Monday. Notwithstanding, if you haven't registered your child, you can still attend the Ceremony and let Pat Canty or her team know you are there. Whilst your baby may not receive the Welcome to Bourke Certificate on the day, arrangements will undoubtedly be made for your child to obtain a certificate.

Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service

Council at its July 2023 meeting resolved to sell five blocks of land located at the eastern end of Mitchell Street for the purpose of the Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service (BACHS) constructing a new Primary Health Care Centre. With an area of some 4700m² and the land having sat idle for well more than 20 years, Council very much looks forward to the construction of the facility commencing and ultimately, being completed and operational. With more than \$8m in funding being provided to the project by the Australian Government as part of the Government's funding of 52 new health infrastructure projects across the country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health facilities, it is an exciting project for Bourke and the region.

On behalf of Council, I extend congratulations to the BACHS for their efforts in securing this funding. Council staff have held pre-Development Application discussions with planning consultants working on behalf of the Service in preparing the necessary development documentation. Given the high value of the development, the development application will be determined by the Western Regional Planning Panel rather than Council, with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor representing Council on this Panel. Planning Panels have been a part of the NSW Planning regime for some time now with the Western Regional Planning Panel having been originally created in September 2009, Planning Panels are independent bodies that seek to strengthen decision making on regionally significant development applications and other planning matters. Importantly, determinations made by Planning Panels are not subject to the direction of the Minister for Planning.

Quote: "If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you." Zig Ziglar- Motivational Speaker.