



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

7 December 2023

Christmas in the Park

All is in readiness for Friday evenings Christmas in the Park event (8/12/2023) being held from 5:30pm until 8.00pm in Central Park. With Council again partnering with Maranguka Community Hub, another great event is envisaged with Jumping castle, food stalls, homemade goodies, crafts, candles, local jewellery to name just a few. There will also be cool drinks and delicious food from the Men’s Shed, Schools and others. Dress your car up for Christmas and join Bourke’s Historic Vehicle Club for the People’s Choice Awards, judging starts from 5:30pm. Support local business, schools and clubs this Christmas and shop local. Santa and his Elves will be visiting with all community members and visitors being most welcome.

Electric Vehicle Charges

I question the viability and practicality of electric vehicles in remote localities. Despite seeing the odd electric vehicle recharging at the NRMA EV charging station at the corner of Mitchell and Sturt streets, in Bourke, I have worked out that, for me and my circumstances, an EV would bring with it a case of range anxiety. Simply put, range anxiety is the fear that an electric vehicle will not have enough battery charge to reach its destination, leaving its occupants stranded. I consider that many western based people would suffer the same range anxiety affliction both in the purchase process and following any acquisition!

Back in 2017, the NRMA organisation committed \$10 million in what it calls “social investment” by providing charging infrastructure in regional localities across NSW. To their credit, the NRMA network has grown to over 100 chargers across regional and remote communities and enabled over 1.7 million km of free charge to EV drivers, including obviously the chargers at Bourke.

The NRMA has now recently advised that to ensure they can continually reinvest in their network and offer more locations to charge across Australia, they have introduced a fee for the use of their chargers. In this regard, from late October 2023 all chargers across the NRMA Electric Network now require payment with users being required to pay via the My NRMA smartphone app. With other charging stations already coming at a cost to users, the decision by the NRMA seems fair to me.

Scams

A scam is a way of tricking people into handing over money or personal details. Scammers seek to reach us in a variety of ways including via text or SMS, by phone, email, by social media, through websites and in-person. Scammers reach out to us so that they can pursue investment scams, buyer and seller or product and service scams, threats and extortion scams, job and employment scams, impersonation scams, unexpected money scams and romance scams. It is difficult to know what’s genuine and what’s not. With the use of cash as a percentage of all transactions being at an all-time low of 13% and falling, and based on the current downward trajectory and decline, Chanel 9 news recently reported that “cash

will be dead” with three (3) years. I’m not so sure of that timing but with most payments now being made by electronic means, it certainly makes it more necessary than ever to be aware of scammers and their despicable methods to get at all of us, particularly elderly residents.

Last week was Scams Awareness Week. When reading some information during the Week, I considered it a timely reminder that anyone can fall victim to a scam. As well as learning more about the different types of scams and how to spot them, the documentation suggested starting a conversation with family members or friends. You might know the red flags to watch out for, but do your loved ones? Raising awareness and educating yourself and others are important steps to help combat scams and even prevent them from happening in the first place.

I mentioned a variety of scams above, but I will limit my comments to three (3) types of scams. Impersonation Scams. Have you ever received a call or an SMS out of the blue that just didn’t seem right with the caller/texter stating that they’re from a bank or other service company (eg NBN or a telephone provider)? In calling you they’re asking you to authorise transactions, make a payment, or provide personal information. You’re not alone, with the Australian Government’s Anti-Scam Centre advising that three in four reported scams include some form of impersonation of a legitimate entity. The big question is how can you be sure that the person calling you is really from where they say they’re from? Not easy to answer, however be aware that banks don’t ask you to transfer funds to another account or ask for your passcode. Remember not to share your passcodes with others; avoid using phone numbers or links from text messages and check contact information using a trusted source such as the company’s website.

Investment Scams. To date in 2023, Australians have lost over \$240 million to investment scams. Investment scams are often sophisticated which means they can be hard to spot. Investment opportunities offering fast results and big returns can have the potential makings of a scam. Common investment scams include unsolicited investment offers such as cryptocurrency, fake corporate or treasury bonds, and fake share IPOs (Initial Public Offerings); people claiming to be from reputable businesses; fake endorsement of an investment or other business opportunities from celebrities; and early access to superannuation with a fee. If looks too good to be true, it’s a fair chance it is.

Buyer/seller scams. Buying or selling on an online selling platform is great when it’s quick and hassle-free. However, scammers are popping up everywhere, so it’s harder to stay safe online. Here are some red flags to look out for: being approached by someone who has no profile photo; the price seems too good to be true; a request for personal information such as your phone number or email; the buyer overpays for an item and wants you to refund the excess amount, or the buyer wants to pay using a gift card or wants to send a prepaid shipping label.

In this day and age, we all need to be very cautious in our dealings. Most of the financial institutions have a significant amount of information on their websites regarding scams and it’s worthwhile to have a regular read so that not only do you maintain your awareness, but you can have that discussion with your elders in a bid to avoid the pain of potentially being scammed.

Christmas Close Down

With the Christmas/New Year period rapidly approaching it is advised that, as in previous year's, Council will close its main Office and Library during the period between Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. All other facilities (including the Swimming Pool, Waste Depot and Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre) will also be closed on Christmas Day and re-open during the balance of the Christmas/New Year period but may operate with changes made to the hours and days of operation, as required. Council will continue

to provide essential services to ensure the health and safety of the community, during this Christmas/New Year Period and during January, when many staff are on leave.

Accordingly, it is advised that Councils Shire Office and Library will close at 4.30pm on Thursday, 21 December 2023 and re-open at their respective regular opening times on Monday, 8 January 2024.

Council will be uploading a list of opening times for its various facilities in coming days to its website. (<https://bourke.nsw.gov.au>). If you have need to contact Council due to an emergency during the closedown period, you can contact the Duty Officer on 0419 722 055.

“Light up the Night” Competition

The Back O’ Bourke “Light up the Night” Christmas Competition is being held again this year. Stock up on your Christmas decorations and lights by purchasing them from our local businesses and be in the running to win the award as the best Christmas Light display in Bourke for 2023. Residents and business operators are encouraged to decorate their home or business premises and get into the festive season.

Judging will commence next Thursday, 14 December until Sunday, 17 December 2023 with the winners to be announced over 2WEB on Tuesday 19 December 2023 with business voucher prizes to be won. If you wish to nominate a house or a business, simply email the name and address of the property to info@backobourke.com.au or phone the Back O’ Bourke Information and Tourism Centre on 6872 1321.

Quote: “Catch it [mental health struggles] early, and then don’t wait till it’s too late. Actually, go out, seek help, and let them [friends] know that it’s OK not to be OK.” Goanna Academy Principal and former Rugby League player, Greg Inglis, talking in the Sydney Morning Herald.