



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

15 February 2024

Regional Development

Late last month, in the company of Councils Manager Economic Development, Mel Milgate, the opportunity was taken to meet with the recently appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Regional Development Australia Orana, Justine Campbell. Justine is most familiar with far northwest NSW having lived in Bourke in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Justine has over 25 years’ experience in the private, not for profit, government, education, and community development sectors. She originally hails from the Coonamble region (Moorambilla) and is a passionate advocate for regional Australia. From our discussions she has a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the region. Justine has extensive board experience in the arts, community development and tourism. She is well recognised for achieving outcomes through strong relationship/stakeholder input, collaboration, and consideration. Justine is the Chair and co-founder of Moorambilla Voices, which is an award-winning arts organisation that provides music and arts education programs for children living in regional and remote Australia. Founded in 2006, Moorambilla Voices mission is to inspire and empower young people to explore their creativity and express themselves through music, dance, and visual arts.

It was good to be able to discuss with Justine opportunities for growth in the business space of our Shire, including opportunities for new business, staffing limitations within regional areas and the reactivation of main street areas. We drove with Justine around Bourke and North Bourke to showcase the town. Justine had previously departed Bourke before the Back O’ Bourke Centre had been constructed and the PV Jandra had been floated. She was most impressed with these two (2) initiatives and equally impressed with the upgrade works in and around the Bourke CBD. Both Mel and I look forward to working with Justine to progress potential regional development opportunities for the region and our Shire

Oxley Street Sealing

The sealing of Oxley Street with an asphaltic concrete (ac) seal, between Richard and Sturt Street, took place over the weekend of 19, 20 and 21 January 2024. This work had been proposed for a number of years; however, the work was unfortunately delayed due to the pandemic, and then the unavailability of materials and contractors. It is also necessary with ac seals to ensure that the air temperature is at a correct level for the laying of the new seal with January being a perfect month for such work. The works were undertaken by contractors, Newpave Asphalt, with Council staff undertaking the traffic control duties over the 3 day construction period. Whilst completing these works brings works associated with the beautification of the CBD area to an end, it is pleasing to hear regular positive comments regarding the CBD from both community members and visitors, alike.

The sealing works to complete the CBD project was made possible via funding from the Commonwealth Government under the Roads to Recovery program. Without grants such as these, Council would find it difficult to maintain/improve our assets. Councils thanks are extended to the Commonwealth

Government for their continuing support to provide funds to Councils across Australia through the Roads to Recovery program.

Free Solar and SunSPOT webinar

The Far Northwest Joint Organisation (FNWJO), comprising the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett shires, has received funding to undertake a review of the energy used in each Council to work towards meeting the Net Zero efficiency targets set by the Government. The project is focused on solar opportunities and the councils have found the platform used by SunSPOT to be very useful in determining the space available for solar on a particular site and the benefits of installing solar infrastructure.

Sunspot has recently opened the opportunity for not only local councils to benefit through its platform but expanded access such that the community can also benefit. To learn about how to get free, Government-backed solar estimates with SunSPOT, the community is invited to join solar experts from the Australian PV Institute to a free webinar to learn about solar and get answers to questions using SunSPOT, the free Government-backed solar and battery calculator. The webinar will be held next Tuesday, 20 February 2024 commencing from 10.00am to 11.15am. Part of the National Sustainable Living Festival, registration for the webinar is available at the following address:

<https://events.humanitix.com/sunspot-solar-tool-discover-the-savings-you-could-make-with-solar-and-batteries>

As part of the webinar, presenters will demonstrate how to use the free, Government-backed calculator to get independent reliable answers to questions such as:

- How much will my power bills be after installing solar or a battery?
- How many solar panels will fit on my roof?
- What size system do I need?
- Should I get a battery?

SunSPOT (www.sunspot.org.au) is a not-for-profit and is backed by the Australian Government. It has been developed by the Australian PV Institute and the University of New South Wales to assist Australians understand what solar and batteries can do for them. It is free and private to use and given the very obvious shift to renewable sources of energy, worth investigating.

Local Emergency Management Committee

In my capacity as Chair of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) I attended the quarterly meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024 at the Rural Fire Service Offices at the Bourke Airport.

The LEMC comprises representatives from all government agencies based locally who provide services and assistances during times of an emergency. The need to have a coordinated approach to emergency situations was most evident during the floods of 2022 which impacted the State and more recently, severe weather events. The purpose of the quarterly meetings is to make all agencies aware of current issues and to ensure, that if required, the agencies can come together to address any emergency situations as they arise. This happened recently when the LEMC came together at short notice to address concerns that were raised in respect of the prospect of significant rainfall, and associated flooding, emanating from the remnants of ex Cyclone Kirrily. Whilst the weather event was ultimately not as significant as predicted, significant falls of rain were received in the Louth and Wanaaring districts of the Shire from the weather event.

Bourke is indeed fortunate to have a good deal of cooperation amongst all emergency services, some of whom rely on the efforts of volunteers to undertake their responsibilities and do so in a very professional manner.

Water Engagement

The Water Group, being part of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will shortly be undertaking its February live monthly webinar to provide water users with information about ongoing and upcoming engagements and consultation on important water policy, reforms and programs for NSW, including a guest speaker presenting a different topic each month. This month the guest topic is Climate Variability and Change in Water Management which will explore how the department is ensuring that future water management, planning and policy decisions properly consider climate risk and uncertainty. The guest presentation will also include an open question and answer session.

Titled the Water Engagement Roundup, the webinar is held on the third Wednesday of each month from 11:00am till 12:00pm. Accordingly, this month's webinar will be held on Wednesday 21 February 2024, with the speakers being Mark Simmons, Director of Climate and Strategic Projects and Chris Bath, Senior Advisor Water Engagement Team. To join the webinar, contact the Water Inquiries team - water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 081 047.

Holidays

I would imagine that most readers would recognise that many fellow locals retreat from Bourke for a well-earned holiday with their families in the early months of each year with the Gold Coast in Queensland being a particularly favoured holiday location. I have it on good authority that on a recent Monday, no fewer than 30 Bourke locals were in attendance at the Wet-n-Wild theme park on the Gold Coast, on the same day. It's a small world!

Booking of Council facilities

Council has various ovals and facilities that are regularly used for sporting and community events. Users of these ovals and facilities are reminded to please contact Council and place your booking for use, in advance. The staff at Councils front office can assist you with making sure the sporting oval or facility is available and make sure you have all of the correct documentation to hold your event. Parks also require booking. If you are wanting to have an activity at a local park, please also make contact with Council on 02 68308000 or email aso@bourke.nsw.gov.au

Quote: "His Majesty has today commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone public-facing duties." - Statement from Buckingham Palace advising that King Charles has been diagnosed with a form of cancer.