



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

29 February 2024

Tidy Nature Strips

With the various rainfall events of late, the appearance of the town and surrounding areas has attracted much positive comment. Whilst these comments are pleasing, the resulting growth in town of grass and weeds on footpaths, or nature strips, outside residential and commercial properties can be visually detrimental to the look of our community.

To assist in making our town look even better, I would ask that residents and business operators make a concerted effort to mow and trim the grassed area at the front of their properties. Such actions will make a significant difference to the appearance of the streetscape. It should only take a few minutes each week to attend to this grass and if you have a vacant house next door, I ask that you take five (5) minutes to mow that stretch of grass as well.

Welcome to Bourke

Councils “Welcome to Bourke” evening for 2024, held in conjunction with the Bourke Rotary Club, is scheduled for Wednesday, 13 March 2024. This year the event is being held in the garden at the Port of Bourke Hotel in Mitchell Street, Bourke, commencing at 6.30pm.

All new residents to Bourke are encouraged to come along and take the opportunity to meet their fellow residents. In addition, new residents can find out more of what our town has to offer, and they can meet with representatives from the various sporting and social organisations within Bourke. Each new resident will be given a new residents pack with information regarding the town and attractions. If you know a new resident to Bourke since the last event in March 2023, please bring the event to their attention and encourage them to contact the team at the Back O’ Bourke Exhibition Centre on phone 6872 1321, between 9am-3pm, to register.

For any Bourke community organisations that would like to attend and help welcome our new faces, please contact the Exhibition Centre team to advise of their involvement. Staff will also request that you provide any promotional materials to be delivered to the Exhibition Centre prior to the evening, so that the information can be added to the individual gift packs that are provided to the new residents on the night.

Easter in Bourke

I wrote in last week's Column that preparations for the Back to Bourke Celebrations over the 2024 Easter Weekend are well advanced with the comprehensive program of activities for the weekend taking shape. Whilst I wrote of some of the various events being held on the weekend, I inadvertently overlooked advising of the Official Opening of the Percy Hobson Mural at 1pm on Good Friday, 29

March 2024 at Percy Hobson Park. Since its completion, the mural has been an essential stop for visitors to Bourke as they view and have a photo taken in front of the mural.

I look forward to the official opening to recognise the late Percy Hobson. As is evident from the mural, Mr Hobson was a prolific high jumper and a resident of Bourke, who, at the 1962 Commonwealth Games, became the first Indigenous athlete to win a gold medal for Australia at the Commonwealth Games. Aged 20 years at the time, Mr Hobson claimed the high jump gold medal with a jump of 6 foot 11 inches, or 2.11 metres, setting a new games record at the time. History reports that when Mr Hobson returned to Bourke following the Games, he received a hero's welcome with the local brass band playing "Hail, the Conquering Hero."

Born in Bourke on 5 November 1942, Mr Hobson taught himself to high jump on home-made stands. I understand that in practicing at home, he would run in from the adjacent back lane to extend the limited space in the backyard of the family home.

Bourke Show

The annual Bourke P&A Show held at the rejuvenated Renshaw Oval is a most important event on the Bourke calendar, having been an integral part of Bourke's culture for 150 years. With a hard-working committee in place, the Bourke Show would normally be held in early May each year as part of an overall 'show circuit' for NSW. Following, undoubtedly, numerous discussions, the Committee has taken the decision to change the date of the 2024 Bourke Show till Saturday, 1 June 2024. Considered necessary due to an unavoidable clash of dates with another Show, the Committee decided a change of date was the best course of action. So, 1 June 2024 is the new date with the Bourke P&A Committee inviting volunteers to join their ranks and assist with the conduct of what will undoubtedly be, once again, an excellent event for Bourke Shire.

Air Service to Dubbo

I had the opportunity to recently utilise the air service operated by AirLink between Bourke and Dubbo on route to meetings in Sydney. It was a great opportunity to experience the flight and the service certainly gets a big "thumbs up" from me. With funding from the NSW Government, and as auspiced by the Far Northwest Joint Organisation, comprising the Councils of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett, the air service provides excellent linkages to Dubbo, Sydney and beyond. Whilst passenger numbers continue to fluctuate, they are still a little less than both Air Link and the Joint Organisation would like, however, there is a general upwards trend in numbers. In this regard, this is a big positive. I encourage residents to consider the utilisation of the service when the opportunity next arises taking advantage of the very competitive fares that are available.

Asbestos

The issue of asbestos in the wider community has been the focus of much attention following reports of the banned product having been found in mulch in recently completed playground and park projects across the Sydney metropolitan area. Asbestos is a natural mineral that was used in many building products before it was banned in Australia. It is common in homes and structures built before 1990 and was commonly used in cement sheeting (fibro); drainage and flue pipes; roofing, guttering and flexible building boards, such as Villaboard or Hardiflex etc. Similar cement sheeting products are used today but are 'asbestos free.'

Living or working with asbestos, or just being around it, is low risk as long as the asbestos product is in good condition and not disturbed. Asbestos occurs naturally and in the built environment.

There are two (2) different forms of asbestos and they have different risk levels. Firstly, there is bonded, or non-friable asbestos. This form of asbestos, which is mixed with cement or other hard bonding materials, and in good condition, is likely to be low risk. Friable asbestos however can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure. If asbestos fibres then become airborne and breathed in, they can be a health risk. This is the most common way asbestos enters the body. The more fibres that are breathed in, the higher the risk and where asbestos-containing materials are disturbed, fibres may be released into the air. Breathing in asbestos fibres can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. The risk of contracting these diseases increases with the number of fibres inhaled with the risk of lung cancer from inhaling asbestos fibres also being greater if you smoke. People who get health problems from inhaling asbestos have usually been exposed to high levels of asbestos for a long time. The symptoms of these diseases do not usually appear until about 20 to 30 years after the first exposure to asbestos.

Following the discovery of asbestos in mulch at sites across Sydney, the NSW Government has announced an Asbestos Taskforce to support the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA's) investigation into asbestos in mulch. The taskforce includes senior representatives from NSW Government agencies and local government. It will help co-ordinate government agencies and help prioritise sites that are high risk to the public to ensure all resources are available to secure and remediate sites. The government is seeking to "contact trace" the complex supply chain, then facilitate testing, reporting and management of any positive results. I suspect that this matter will be one that is ongoing for some considerable time yet.

Quote.

"I've given up two things for Lent. One is drinking, the other one's talking about other people in regards to that." - Former Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce MP, talking about alcohol in Federal Parliament.