



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk”
14 March 2024

North Bourke Bridge

In my column of 23 November 2023, I wrote that Council had engaged NSW Public Works (PWD) and their expert bridge engineer, to undertake the brief of works that would be required such that Council would be able to seek funding to undertake the restoration of the bridge and when funding is available, be able to invite tenders for the actual works. I also wrote that the initial phase of the bridge project will comprise the development of documentation and a recommendation regarding the engagement of a contractor to undertake the deconstruction of the timber approaches to the bridge, such is the significant level of deterioration of these timber approaches.

The necessary work by PWD and the bridge engineer is progressing well. As part of the statutory planning processes in respect of both deconstructing the timber approaches to the bridge and the ultimate adaptive re-use of the bridge, it is necessary that a Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) document is prepared. I was pursuing a draft of this document recently and was most interested in various aspects of the delivery and opening of the bridge some 140 years ago. The report noted that the bridge was “*designed in 1878 by NSW Public Works and opened on 4 May 1883 by Mrs. Richard Green (the wife of the previous Bourke Mayor) with the then current Mayor Mr. Scrymour in attendance. It was only the second lift-up bridge in NSW (the first being at Balranald, NSW). Original plans for the bridge date back to April 1878 and were signed by the Commissioner of Roads: William Bennett and designed by J.H. Daniels.*

The bridge components were partly brought up the Darling River by paddle steamer and barges and partly by road; an expensive 400-mile-long haul from the railhead at Bathurst. The initial contractor for the bridge was the prominent colonial bridge builder David Baillie, whose signature appears on the WAE drawings. Unfortunately, he died at some time during the project and his business associates McCulloch & Co. completed the work and got all the credit. The cost of the bridge was £37,900 pounds and it was built and operated by an Echuca contractor William McCulloch and Co. with the assistance of locals V. Lambert and J. Blackshaw.

The opening of the bridge was reported as follows: “On Friday afternoon the new Darling Bridge at West Bourke formally opened by the wife of the ex-Mayor Mrs. Richard Green, in the presence of one of the largest crowds yet seen on the Darling. One of McCulloch’s steamers travelled up the river from Bourke, being literally crammed with passengers; and every available vehicle in town was engaged carrying passengers. The town was completely emptied of its inhabitants. Appropriate speeches were made in honour of the event by the Mayor, Judge Docker, and others. No accidents of a serious nature occurred. In the evening a ball took place at the Mechanics’ Institute. The hall was well filled, and the ball was most successful” (The Sydney Mail, 12 May 1883).

The first man to drive over the bridge is believed to be Mr. J. Hodge who drove over with horse and cart. In 1903 the bridge had a curve introduced into its approach to avoid a T-Junction with the Occidental Hotel. Two serious riverboat accidents occurred during the days of the frequent river traffic. In 1890, the Paddle Steamer Cato, and in 1908 a barge pulled by the PS Nile collided with a bridge pylon and sank.

The North Bourke Bridge and the two over the adjacent Polygonum swamp, were a constant source of road tragedies. In the early 1950's an ambulance was permanently parked at North Bourke so that the licensee, Mr Allam Broube, could attend any accident. Part of the cause of these accidents was that the bridge planking caused cars to bounce and so sometimes, go out of control.

With decreasing numbers of paddle steamers, the operation of the lift span became intermittent and was stopped in the 1930s. Thereafter the bridge became a routine part of the road network until the bridge was bypassed in 1997 by an adjacent new concrete bridge constructed by Public Works. At that stage the original bridge was closed to motorised traffic and ownership was vested to the Bourke Shire Council in 1998.”

Our local history is fascinating and yes, if you're wondering, NSW Public Works in 2023 had access to the design plans for the North Bourke Bridge as prepared by their predecessors in 1878 and plans for subsequent works undertaken on the bridge over the years!

Tour de OROC

The Tour de OROC cycling event will be arriving in Bourke next Friday, 22 March 2024 with Olympic gold medallists Sara Carrigan and Brad McGee being part of the 40-rider strong peloton. Interestingly, when riding as a pack in a peloton, riders save energy by riding near (particularly behind) other riders. The reduction in drag is dramatic; in the middle of a well-developed group it can be as much as 40%. Given that riders will cover 740km over the duration of the event, any like reduction in drag will be well appreciated.

Riders and support crews will arrive in Bourke around lunchtime on the Friday, as opposed to arriving on dusk, as has been the case in the past. With this revised arrival time, it is proposed to show case Bourke with a tour around town, a visit to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre, with a fund- raising function to be held at the Bourke Bowling Club commencing at 8.00pm Friday evening. A good number of auction items have already been provided to go under the hammer to raise funds for the next stage of the Macquarie Homestay facility in Dubbo. The Bourke community has been amongst the highest, if not the highest, fund raisers following past Tour de OROC events. This is indicative of the generosity of the Bourke community, and I suspect, reflects the significant benefit that community members from Bourke have derived from being able to attend Macquarie Home Stay whilst in Dubbo for medical treatment.

2024 Local Government Elections

The 2024 Local Government Elections, also known as the Council elections, will be held on Saturday, 14 September 2024. To assist potential candidates, the NSW Electoral Commission is conducting a series of information webinars for candidates and political participants in the lead up to the 2024 elections. The webinars will commence in March 2024 and will run through to October 2024 and will cover a range of topics including an election overview; election funding and disclosure; registration of candidates, groups and third-party campaigners; electoral material (also known as how-to-vote material); the nomination process; pre poll and election day voting; candidate workers and scrutineers and counting and results.

Registrations to attend the upcoming webinars will be available on the Electoral Commission website shortly. If you're interested in being a Councillor on Bourke Shire Council, go to: <https://elections.nsw.gov.au> and scroll down the home page to "2024 NSW Local Government elections". Prospective candidates are also able to contact the candidate helpdesk at the Commission on 1300 022 011 or email candidates@elections.nsw.gov.au if they require further information.

NRL

Well, the NRL footy season is well and truly underway with Round 1 now completed. The Las Vegas experiment has come and gone and has been hailed by most fans and the media as a tremendous success. It was certainly a high-profile way to launch a sporting code season and the small section of the two (2) Vegas games that I saw, were certainly very entertaining. I know a few Roosters supporters 'crowing' about 2024 being their year already. I think it's fair to say that the well-known saying that "Premierships aren't won in March," or the like, is most applicable at this time of the year for winning teams. There is certainly a long way to go. There was a fair amount of speculation as to how the Las Vegas experiment would pan out and now that it's been acknowledged as a success, teams are apparently lining up to be part of the next round of games to be held in 2025. Such was the success, I heard a caller into a radio sports program advocating that Magic Round, which currently brings all 17 NRL teams together in Brisbane on the one weekend, should be transferred to Las Vegas. Imagine the logistic

Quote: **"As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas, and colours enough to paint the beautiful things I see."** – Artist Vincent Van Gogh commenting on the season of Autumn.