



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

11 April 2024

Submissions Invited

As I mentioned in last week's Column, Council's 2024/2025 draft Operational Plan is currently on exhibition for public comment prior to any adoption of a final document. The draft Operational Plan includes Council's annual budget and associated documentation including its Revenue Policy and Schedule of Fees and Charges. The Revenue Policy sets out Council's annual rating structure and its approach to setting fees as listed in the Schedule of Fees and Charges. The documents are available for viewing at Council's Website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au) with a copy also available at the Council offices in Mitchell St, Bourke.

Submissions on the draft are open until 4.30pm on Friday, 26 April 2024. Submissions may be made in writing addressed to the General Manager, Bourke Shire Council, PO Box 21, Bourke NSW or by email to: bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au Council is required to consider any submissions received prior to adopting its annual Operational Plan. Such considerations will take place when a report on submissions is presented to Council's 27 May 2024 Ordinary Meeting.

Council has also gone to the Bourke community seeking submissions on a proposal to name the cricket ground at North Bourke, “The Neville Simpson Memorial Sports Ground.” Following the passing of Mr Simpson in February 2023, Council late last year received a petition signed by 118 people requesting the name change. The petition noted that the Late Mr Simpson was a highly respected Bourke resident who demonstrated a strong dedication to the Bourke community through-out his very long life.

Submissions on the naming proposal, closing at midday on Wednesday, 17 April 2024, may be made in writing addressed to the General Manager, Bourke Shire Council, PO Box 21, Bourke NSW or by email to: bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au

Member for Parkes

I was disappointed to learn that the Federal Member for Parkes, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, will not be contesting the seat at the next federal election. Since being elected to Parliament in November 2007, Mark has been re-elected on five occasions at federal elections held in 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022. During his various terms as a local member, Mark has held various Parliamentary Party Positions (including the National Party's Whip in the House of Representatives) and served on numerous Parliamentary Committees. He was the Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment (5.3.2018 to 29.5.2019); Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government (9.5.2019 to 6.2.2020); Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment (29.5.2019 to 6.2.2020) and Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government (6.2.2020 to 2.7.2021). In addition, at one point, he was the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. Despite these various roles, I have found Mark to be most receptive and attentive to issues raised by Council. He has been a regular visitor to our town.

Whilst I can understand Mark's reasoning for retirement, his efforts during his time as our local member have been considerable. Mark was to the forefront in assisting Council obtain significant funding for infrastructure works at the new Bourke Abattoir. His faith in the project, whilst undoubtedly tested at times, has certainly been repaid, with Thomas Foods International now successfully operating the facility, to the benefit of Bourke Shire and the western region. His assistance in advocating for small towns and progressing opportunities for remote shires to seek and obtain grant funding has been most appreciated.

The seat of Parkes covers a massive area of some 393,000 km². When travelling, Mark was most often accompanied by his wife Robyn, which I always thought was good to see. I am certain that neither Robyn or Mark won't miss spending another day of travelling the long and lonely roads throughout the Parkes electorate, and beyond, once the next Federal election is held at some point in the next 18 months.

Drug Use

I recently read that New South Wales residents consume almost as much cocaine as that consumed in all other states and territories in Australia, combined. This information is as per the findings from the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commissions (ACIC) National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program, which analysed sewage samples from 62 treatment plants across Australia, including plants at regional localities. Through the extrapolation of data from the wastewater results, cocaine use peaked in 2019/2020 across the nation when it was estimated that some 5.675 tonnes of the drug was consumed. It dropped to 3.385 tonnes in 2021/2022, with an estimated 4.037 tonnes consumed in 2022/2023. ACIC estimates that cocaine was part of an estimated \$12.7 billion spent by Australians on cocaine, cannabis, heroin, methamphetamine and MDMA in 2022/2023.

I suspect that cocaine usage will be reduced in the current financial year as a result of numerous media reports of cocaine 'bricks' being washed up on east coast beaches in recent months. Over the Easter weekend, it was reported in the media, that "another five 'bricks' of cocaine worth almost \$1 million have been washed up on Sydney beaches, the latest in a string of wayward drug parcels that have bobbed up in the past four months." More than 250 kilograms of cocaine has been found since the beachside cocaine discoveries began on December 22, when a package was initially found at Magenta Beach on the Central Coast. More packages were subsequently found at Manly and North Steyne, as well as Blacksmiths Beach, Pelican Beach, Pantaloon Bay around Lake Macquarie and Avoca Beach on the Central Coast. Larger packages of nearly 40 kilograms each were also found at Barrenjoey, Newcastle's Ocean Baths, Botany and North Bondi Beach. At this point Police are unsure as to whether the packages were thrown overboard or "attached to the hull of a cargo vessel." All these numbers are certainly staggering and reflect a big issue in society.

Tigers

After a most busy, and successful Bourke Easter Festival, I was happy to sit down and relax somewhat on late Easter Monday afternoon and watch the Tigers play Parramatta in the final game of the Easter Round of rugby league. As a long time Tigers supporter, I have to be honest and confess that I wasn't expecting a win over the Parramatta Eels. Such a win would mean back-to-back wins, which the Rugby League statisticians noted would mark the first time since round 3, 2020 that the Tigers would have achieved more wins than loses, by going 2-1 up for the season. At 6-6 at half time, I thought the Tigers were going okay. However, when one of the Tigers was sin-binned for 10 minutes in the second half, I thought the team's chances of a big upset win were quickly evaporating.

To their credit the Tigers defended well during the time of being a player down. When the previously sin-binned Tigers player broke through the Parramatta defence to offload to a support player to score next to the posts, and then a subsequent field goal, to take the lead, I was full of cheer. As quickly as I was up, I was brought back to reality when Parramatta was awarded a penalty within kicking distance, effectively right on full time. My mind quickly went back to past occasions where the Tigers have lost on the bell after getting to the lead. Thankfully, the Paramatta player hooked the kick with victory to the Tigers. With the Tigers getting to sing the team song for a second week in a row, it was pleasing to see that after this week's victory, the Tigers players did not need the words on a piece of paper to their new team song, which was the case last week. In the past 19 years the Tigers have made the finals on two (2) occasions, back in 2010 and 2011. I don't see the Tigers winning the competition in 2024, however they were certainly full of energy and a different team to what past seasons have shown. Go coach Benji!

Youth Crime

Bourke unfortunately made the national news over the Easter Period when it was reported that according to NSW Police Deputy Commissioner, Paul Pisanos that "In Bourke.....we had a five (5) year old child with two 12-year old children breaking into a property and stealing a car." I have lived in this region basically my whole life, and during that time I have never heard of such behaviour from such a young child. I find the report very sad and am fearful for the welfare of all these children as allegedly involved.

Quote: "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; truth isn't." – American writer, Mark Twain.