



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the Acting General Manager’s Desk – 6 June 2024”

Louth Information Session

In my Column of 23 May 2024, I made note that the Water Group in the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, was holding another community information session in Louth on Wednesday 29 May 2024 regarding the Reconnecting the Northern Basin Project. The flyer for the meeting stated that the “session is an opportunity for the community to receive an update, to provide additional insights on wider community considerations as the project progresses, to ask questions and provide further feedback. The discussions will allow us (the Water Group) to better understand local conditions (e.g., harvest or livestock transport peak periods, accommodation, available services); construction delivery options (e.g., heavy vehicle movements); potential water impacts during delivery of the infrastructure and community input to supporting outcomes (e.g., cultural signage).”

The Water Group also advised at the time that it was “still considering the community’s feedback from the 7 May meeting on design, so there won’t be any updates on design at this upcoming 29 May 2024 meeting.” At the time of the announcement of the meeting, Council staff were surprised at the convening of the meeting given that during the 7 May meeting, the Louth community made it clear, I have been advised, that it did not wish to meet again until requested information in respect of the weir design was available and ready to be presented.

Following what I presume were reminders by members of the Louth community regarding the community sentiments that were expressed at the 7 May meeting, the Water Group advised that the information session planned for 29 May had been postponed until a later date. In this regard the Water Group advised that it had “heard clearly from the community that the next time we meet to discuss the installation of fishways on the weirs at Louth, Banarway and Calmundi they would like to see other design options.” In postponing the meeting till a later date when the Water Group is “in a better position to progress design options”, they did encourage the Louth community “to reach out to our project team with their feedback or to ask questions by emailing nbtk@dpie.nsw.gov.au.”

One issue that was raised at the meeting related to the need for water to be available for critical human needs. The postponement notice that the Water Group provided made comment “that water security will always remain front and centre when it comes to any water infrastructure projects that we are delivering across the state including installing fishways along the river” and further that they recognise they “need to balance the needs of water users and the environment carefully, but it needs to be done in a way that works for everyone.”

Road Toll

It is a sombre topic; however, Transport for NSW has a dedicated web page that provides a daily update on the road toll in NSW. The daily update provides statistics in respect of fatal crashes for drivers, passengers, pedestrians and cyclists for the Calendar Year and the rolling 12-month period. The 5-page

report also provides a series of graphs that highlight the comparative statistics relating to fatalities for various periods.

Whilst an interesting report, it is the actual current number of fatalities that continue to concern authorities, and certainly me as a driver. I am writing this Column on Tuesday 28 May 2024. From the beginning of 2024 up until 28 May 2024, 148 days of the year have elapsed. The Road Toll Update Report generated on 28 May 2024 shows that 143 people had been killed on NSW roads since the beginning of January 2024. That's close enough to one person a day. The 143-person fatality figure for the 2024 year to date period is above the 3 year average for the same period of 120 fatalities. It is when one considers the 12-month period from 27 May 2023 to 27 May 2024 that the alarm bells ring in earnest. For the current 12-month period, 370 people have been killed. For the previous 12-month period, this figure was 277 with the 3-year average being 283. That is a significant increase.

There is certainly nothing average about a fatality and any death is so sad, let alone the significant increase in numbers. These numbers are people. They are mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, work colleagues. When we get behind the wheel, we all need to be so, so careful. Whether we be a driver, a rider, a cyclist or a pedestrian, we all have an obligation to others to be safe. I certainly don't want to be a number in the daily Road Toll Update For NSW Report.

Council Meeting

Council held its May 2024 meeting recently. Due to a case of COVID, I attended the meeting via Audio Visual Link. That is, I was at my residence and attended and participated in the meeting via an electronic video link. I would hate to think how many council meetings I have attended during my local government career, but this was my first where I was away from the Chamber, but still participating. It was certainly a different experience. I suspect that without COVID, the option for councillors and required staff to attend a council meeting via audio visual link would not exist. Prior to COVID, the Local Government Act was very clear in respect of councillors attending a council meeting. They had to do so in person. If they couldn't attend in person, they didn't get to vote. Following COVID, a revised Model Code of Meeting Practice for NSW Councils was released by the NSW Office of Local Government. This Code, adopted by Bourke Shire, permits councillors to attend council meetings via audio visual link, with the approval of the applicant's fellow councillors, with the Code also allowing staff to attend via audio visual link.

The COVID Pandemic was a tough time for many, and the Nation's economy will continue to pay for the cost of relief programs for many years to come. If there was any benefit derived from the pandemic it relates to the way we can now communicate in everyday life through video links.

The ability of some people to work from home is another beneficial offshoot of the Pandemic. Whilst there are mixed feelings as to the benefit of the working from home model, those that have the opportunity to partake invariably enjoy it. Whilst the numbers of people who do work from home have been reigned of late, there are those that work remotely on a full time basis very successfully. Again, I am not certain that this new way of working would have transpired if not for the COVID Pandemic. What the evolution of audio visual links and the working from home model has made evident is how we, as humans, adapt to the issues at hand with Society in a constant state of evolution, invariably for the better.

State of Origin

Come the publishing of this Column, Game 1 of the 2024 State of Origin series will have been "run and won" with many of the questions regarding the NSW team and selections having either been answered,

or a whole series of new questions raised. Was Coach Michael Maguire the right person for the job; did Nicho Hynes play a full game at half; did the Nicho Hynes/Jarome Luai combination work; did Jake Trbojevic lead from the front as the new Captain of the side; should Latrell Mitchell have been picked in the centres rather than Joseph Suaali; should Isaah Yeo have started the game instead of coming off the bench, did the late withdrawal of Dylan Edwards prove a disruption and so on? Oh, the intrigue of rugby league!

In last week's column I mentioned that Phil Gould thought that speaking about the outcome of the State of Origin too far out was highly speculative given the injury tolls and potential for these injuries to cause disruption. The NSW side had a couple of players in doubt but they were deemed fit to play only to see Dylan Edwards suffer an injury over the weekend in training and having to withdraw. His position was taken by the highly regarded and experienced James Tedesco who it was felt was on the cusp of selection but the brilliant form shown by Edwards getting him the nod.

Quote: "I follow three rules: do the right thing, do the best you can, and always show people you care." - American College Football Coach.