



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk –
4 July 2024”

Local Government Election

It is now a little over 2 months until the Local Government Elections are held on Saturday 14 September 2024. The elections are held across local government Councils across NSW to determine those persons who will sit as councillors on Shire, City or Regional councils in NSW for the four (4) year period ending September 2028. In the lead up to the elections I considered it appropriate to distribute some information relevant to the holding of the elections.

It is compulsory by law for all eligible Australian citizens to enrol and vote in local government elections. In this regard the eligibility criteria are that you need to be an Australian citizen, or eligible British subject; be aged 18 years and over and have lived at your address for at least one month. To enrol for the first time or get back on the roll, you can enrol online with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) by visiting their website as follows: (<https://aec.gov.au/enrol/>). Whilst the AEC only runs federal elections, the action taken by completing an AEC enrolment form is applied for federal and any relevant state, territory or local government elections. You can check if you are enrolled to vote, by accessing the NSW Electoral Commission’s website at the following address:
<https://roll.elections.nsw.gov.au/NSWLookUp/>.

If you meet the eligibility criteria to vote, and you are not on the roll, I suggest that you take the necessary action to enrol as soon as possible to avoid missing the opportunity “to have your say” in not just the council elections, but also in future state and federal elections. Also, if you are on the roll and you don’t vote, you may be fined.

The Local Government Election is run by the NSW Electoral Commission. Council has previously resolved to engage the Commission to undertake the 2024 election, as have all but two (2) councils across the state. For information about how a local government election works and voting details, please visit the NSW Electoral Commission’s website at: <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/> and scroll down to the heading, 2024 NSW Local Government Elections.

If you're interested in nominating to become a candidate, there is a significant amount of information on both the NSW Electoral Commission website and the NSW Office of Local Government website at <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au> In terms of nominating to be a councillor, it is advised that the lodgment of nominations open at 8am, Monday 5 August 2024 with nominations closing at 12 noon on Wednesday 14 August 2024. Electors who wish to nominate as a candidate for Bourke Shire Council in the Local Government election, must complete a valid nomination application and present it to the Returning Officer before nominations close. This form will become available on the website during July.

As was mentioned in a recent GM’s Column, if you are interested in working at the upcoming election, simply visit the NSW Electoral Commission website and register your interest. The relevant address is: <https://eoi.elections.nsw.gov.au/eoi/eoiwelcomePage?EEID=LG2401> to submit an expression of interest)

Thomas Foods International

At one of the early meetings I attended with the new owners of the Small Stock Abattoir at North Bourke, Thomas Foods International, my ears “pricked” when one of the senior representatives of the company advised of their plans to not only buy, and importantly operate, the plant, but to also spend another \$50m making improvements and additions at the plant.

I was obviously delighted when TFI, true to their word, recently received development approval from the NSW State Government to further develop the abattoir through the construction of cold storage facilities on site. The reason the development approval was provided by the State Government, and not Council, is that the abattoir has previously been designated as a State Significant Development Proposal under criteria contained in the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. A decision as to a proposal being determined as significant is generally based on the scale, nature, location and importance of the development to the State. With new loading docks, a freezer store with a 200-pallet capacity, 4 new plate freezers (with a storage capacity of 1536 cartons each freezer), a new palletising station and associated refrigeration to keep the process running at the required temperatures, all part of the proposal, it is certainly a case of full steam ahead for the abattoir.

It is fair to say that there was conjecture and scepticism in the community when proposals for the new small stock abattoir were originally floated. This scepticism understandably only increased when the abattoir ceased operation after only operating for a short period. In Thomas Foods International, the vision of the abattoir has been achieved and I am most happy to have the Company as an important part of our community and region.

North Bourke Bridge

The North Bourke Bridge project continues to progress. Stage 1 of the project, being the proposed demolition of the eastern and western approaches of the Bridge, provides an opportunity for Council to commence the process to restore the heritage value of this significant cultural asset. Subject to the receipt of additional grant funding, Stage 2 of the project will comprise the construction of new approaches and the undertaking of restoration works, with design works for this stage currently also underway. The Bridge Project is an exciting project that has the potential to enhance opportunities for the local economy and tourism industry.

The demolition of the now unsafe timber approaches of the Bridge has required the preparation of a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) assessment as per Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). This comprehensive document is now complete and ready for consideration by Council at its July 2024 meeting. Prepared for Council by NSW Public Works, this draft REF report identifies those facets of the environment likely to be affected by the proposal during both demolition and post demolition works; identifies the sensitivity of the site; identifies and characterises the associated impacts; and identifies and evaluates feasible mitigation measures for the identified impacts.

The environmental issues of potential relevance to the proposal as addressed in the REF include land use; geology, soils and water; traffic and access; air quality; noise and vibration; waste management; biodiversity; heritage (Aboriginal and historic); bushfire; visual amenity; utilities and services and public safety/ hazards and risks. As I say, a comprehensive report.

In terms of the actual demolition, tenders from suitably qualified demolition companies should by now be in the marketplace, with tenders closing in late July 2024. As part of the tender, the successful tenderer will be required to prepare a Demolition Environmental Management Plan which incorporates those mitigation measures outlined in the draft REF and any other appropriate environmental management measures. It is expected that the demolition of the approaches will be completed in the latter part of this year.

Distance Education

I am sure that all parents agree that the education of our children is a priority. However, when you live a five (5) hour round road trip from a face-to-face school, a whole different level of complexity to the school challenge is created. For remote families in the Bourke Shire and beyond, that's where the Bourke-Walgett School of Distance Education (BWSODE) comes to the fore. Whilst students and parents involved in distance education are invariably hundreds of kilometres away from both the education centre and other parents to their credit, the BWSODE has its own Parents and Citizens (P&C) association. This year the BWSODE P&C set itself a goal to raise a minimum of \$10,000 to allow students "the opportunity to spend more time together learning and growing in a school environment and to be exposed to the opportunities life can have." There is no doubt that in a child's formative years, interaction with other children is most important.

I received information recently that a governess from an outback station, Georgina Rapley, who is also a member of the BWSODE P&C, has committed to walking the 240km from the sheep station where she works to the Bourke Campus of the BWSODE. The good news for the BWSODE is that the \$10,000 goal has been eclipsed and Georgina is currently walking to Bourke arriving at the Bourke Campus in Green St, tomorrow Friday, 5 July 2024. Georgina is to be congratulated on her initiative as she seeks to highlight the achievements of distance education. If you would like to donate and contribute to the P&C, please go to: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/bwsode2024fundraiser>

Quote: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." – John F Kennedy.