



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the
General Manager’s Desk –
1 August 2024”

Clay Target Shooting

Bourke local, Kevin Hatch has long been a most accomplished clay pigeon shooter, so much so that he recently travelled to England to compete in the 15th World Championships of the International Clay Target Shooting Federation. From what I have read, it’s akin to competing in the Olympics. Kevin was selected as part of a five (5) member Australian Team competing in the “Super-Veteran” (over 65 years) category. To their credit the Australian Team came away with a Bronze Medal with England, followed by France, being both slightly ahead of the Australian Team following the competition.

Kevin has travelled all over Australia, and now the world, competing and winning many clay pigeon competitions over his long history of competitive clay pigeon shooting, which I understand stretches back to 1972. Kevin is a member of the Bourke and Cobar clay target clubs, and it is certainly great to see all of Kevin’s hard work pay off. I would imagine that attending the “Worlds” would have been a trip of a lifetime, made even better with his wife Jodi (Bourke Public Librarian), son James, and mother-in-law, Eunice Walker, travelling to England with Kevin. What a great achievement.

Murray Darling Association

During July, the Mayor and I attended the 80th National Conference of the Murray Darling Association (MDA) in Tamworth under the banner of “The future of Water Security.”. The Conference was a great opportunity for the Mayor and I, “to join the conversation, to inform future policy, and engage with the innovators, scientists, educators and leaders of our time”.

The Conference, chaired by the National President of the MDA, Mayor of Narromine Shire, Councillor Craig Davies, brought together key figures from a range of sectors to discuss the future of water security across the Basin. Speakers included the Hon Barnaby Joyce, Member for New England; NSW Minister for Water, the Hon Rose Jackson MLC; Federal Shadow Minister for Water and Emergency Management, Senator Perin Davey; CEO of the Murray Darling Basin Authority, Andrew McConville; Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Dr Simon Banks; Inspector General of Water Compliance, the Hon. Troy Grant and the Shadow Minister for Water, Ms Stephanie Cooke.

Delegates had the opportunity to engage in discussions with many of the speakers. Among questions discussed and addressed by delegates and speakers alike, was the ongoing implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, infrastructure development and financing, as well as the impacts of water buy-backs under the Plan.

In addition, guest speakers explored educational perspectives in the Basin, as well as exploring a possible solution for the Menindee Lakes, Public Safety Training and the challenges of facing exposure, risk and vulnerability in the Basin. Cotton Australia presented from the perspective of Australia’s cotton industry, as well as addressing floodplain harvesting, sustainability in the industry and the Basin Plan.

During its 2024 Annual General Meeting, MDA Members raised, and successfully carried 13 Motions addressing ongoing advocacy, representation, governance and progress reporting, clarification of water purchasing details, future water storage and usage in industry, as well as critical Murray-Darling Basin infrastructure and storage projects that support community, industry and the environment.

Delegates engaged in further discussions with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water when they provided a Government perspective on the implementation of the Basin Plan and First Nations Water, as well as the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Inspector-General of Water Compliance providing updates on governance, and the benefits water for the environment provides in support of water security.

All in all, it was a worthwhile conference to attend.

Visit by Minister

On Thursday 11 July 2024, the Minister for Regional Roads, the Hon Jenny Aitchison MP, visited Bourke intending to take a trip to Hungerford, Wanaaring and then onto Tibooburra. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, due to rain the preceding week, the various roads proposed to be travelled on were closed. The Minister had previously visited Bourke back in January this year, intending to take the same route. However, due to inclement weather at that time, the Minister was unable to travel on Council unsealed roads and had to change her plans.

Attending along with the Minister and her husband David, were local member for Barwon, Roy Butler MP and Damian Pfeiffer, Acting Director - West from the NSW Department of Transport. Council representatives were Mayor Barry Hollman and Councillor Sally Davis. The Minister again heard the importance of providing the final funding to complete the sealing of the Wanaaring Road, from Bourke to Wanaaring. On this important matter, and all going to plan and the weather remains dry, Council has prepared a further 5.3 kilometres of the road for sealing to take place during this week. As recently advised by a recent traveller on the road, once this sealing takes place, there remains all but 20 kilometres remaining to be sealed. We again raised with the Minister funding to seal the "Cutline", being the road from Wanaaring to Tibooburra along with funding to undertake the restoration of the North Bourke Bridge.

The Mayor thanked the Minister for the funding provided to install the new traffic slowing devices at Enngonia, following a commitment by the Minister regarding the installation of the signage during her January visit to Bourke.

North Bourke Bridge

On the issue of the Bridge, tenders are currently in the marketplace seeking a contractor to undertake the de-construction of the timber approaches, which have been deemed to be unsafe. In addition, Council at its July 2024 meeting, approved a comprehensive Review of Environmental Factors (REF) document which has included such matters as a review as to whether any colonies of micro-bats exist on, or in the vicinity, of the bridge. As the name suggests, an REF reviews all the environmental matters that may be affected as a result of the de-construction proposal.

Council's bridge engineers recently "crawled" all over the wrought iron structure of the bridge as part of their inspection and planning and design processes. They reported in summary, that the bridge is in "shockingly good condition." This was most pleasing, and relieving, to hear in respect of a bridge structure that dates back to 1883, when it was officially opened.

Whilst the current bridge project also includes preparing designs and documentation for the replacement approaches, funding for the construction of new approaches is not yet available. It may in fact be some years before such funding is available, however with plans and the necessary approvals in place, Council will be in a solid position to seek funding when a relevant grant funding opportunity comes available.

American Presidential Election

It's certainly been a most turbulent month for American Politics in the lead up to the 2024 Presidential elections in November. First off, we had the incumbent President, Joe Biden stumbling over his words and losing his train of thought during an audience free debate against Donald Trump. Some political observers described Mr Bidens performance as a "disaster." A few days later, it was the turn of the Presidential hopeful to be in the spotlight following an assassination attempt, with the assassin's bullet grazing Mr Trumps right ear. This was followed by the announcement that Joe Biden would not be recontesting the November election. In making this announcement, President Biden became the first sitting president to stand down from a possible re-election since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968.

The flurry of activity to find and fund a replacement Democratic Party candidate has been at a frenetic pace with current vice president, Kamala Harris, looking likely to go head-to-head with Donald Trump for the race to the White House. Then there was a Congressional Hearing as to how the Secret Service failed to stop a 20-year-old gunman from firing on Donald Trump. The Hearing culminated with the head of the US Secret Service, Kimberly Cheatle, resigning her position after some 30 years in the job. On the day of her resignation, Mr Trump was reported to have said, "The Biden/Harris Administration did not properly protect me, I was forced to take a bullet for democracy. It was my great honour to do so!" If it wasn't so serious, it would be easy to think of the whole election as a soap opera.

Quote: "There are no special qualifications to become a councillor other than a desire to serve your community." – NSW Office of Local Government with nominations to run as a Councillor opening on 5 August 2024.