



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

North Bourke Bridge

As I mentioned last week, tenders are currently in the marketplace seeking a contractor to undertake the deconstruction of the timber approaches to the North Bourke Bridge. In response to this piece, I was asked during the week, “do we really need to lose the approaches?” My response was, “Unfortunately yes. The approaches have deteriorated significantly and pose a major safety hazard to the public.”

Reflecting on this level of decay to the timber approaches, I took the opportunity to check Councils records to ascertain that public access to the bridge has been barricaded off since 2015 (northern end) and then 2016 (southern end) with the bridge now fully barricaded. Interestingly, when we started our discussions with NSW Public Works and their expert bridge engineers, our focus was very much restoration of the entire structure.

It wasn’t until these expert bridge engineers, who have extensive experience in all stages of the design and delivery of bridge infrastructure projects, attended an initial on-site meeting at the bridge and they quickly raised their concerns as to the stability of the timber approaches. Such concerns made it clear that Council needed to change its focus to developing the necessary documentation leading to the engagement of a contractor to undertake the deconstruction of the timber approaches to the bridge, as an initial component of the project. It was this time last year that the bridge engineers returned to Bourke this time to undertake a comprehensive review and preparation of a comprehensive condition assessment report in respect of the approaches. The inspection was completed with the resulting report confirming the initial concern as to the structural integrity of the timber approaches with the report advising that the approaches should be removed as soon as possible. For instance, it was reported that the vertical timber piles comprising the timber piers had major termite deterioration, especially at ground level, with likely very little remaining connection into the ground.

Council resolved to remove the timber approaches at its meeting held in September 2023. What was clear to me since we initially met with our expert bridge engineers was their knowledge, experience and ability to progress this important project for Bourke. The hands-on principal of the bridge engineers has over 30 years’ experience in bridges and structures and experience with state road and rail authorities, contractors and consultants along with all aspects of bridge asset management including inspections, assessments, feasibility, design, construction, demolition and cost estimates. The principal is an Engineers Australia accredited Heritage and Conservation Engineer who leads a team of engineers/project managers and technical officers with an impressive portfolio of bridge works. In major projects, such as the bridge, where Council does not have the in-house capability, it relies on consultants who are experts in their respective fields of endeavour.

In addition to resolving to deconstruct the timber approaches at its September 2023 meeting, Council also resolved a series of desired outcomes to lead the restoration project, as follows:

“a) To make the bridge an attraction of choice to visitors, tourists, the local and surrounding communities, in conjunction with the historic Jandra Paddle Steamer tourist attraction. b) To restore the bridge to allow pedestrian and cyclist access and to provide for weddings and other similar community functions. c) To restore the wrought iron lift bridge span to a safe and accessible condition, with the lift span to remain fixed in position. d) To restore the iron structure where deemed necessary. e) To make safe the bridge decking, by removing the existing timber decking and replacing with new alternative decking material, that allows visibility to the iron trusses below and reduces future deck maintenance costs. f) To demolish and replace the timber approach structures with other suitable access such as concrete or steel approaches (approx. 3-4m wide), and possibly accommodating a maximum loaded truck of 15 tonnes.”

As part of Council's pursuit of these desired outcomes, the preparation of the designs and documentation for the replacement approaches is well underway. However as mentioned in last week's column, funding for the construction of new approaches is not yet available. 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.

Olympic Games

I have found the Paris Olympic Games to be compelling viewing, whether it be live action or watching replays. After the COVID delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, where there were no spectators at any of the events, the enthusiasm of spectators from all over the world in Paris, has been fantastic. As I write this Column, it has been the performances of swimmers Mollie O'Callaghan and Ariarne Titmus, kayaker Jessica Fox and the 'never say die' attitude of the Matildas Soccer team, that have been highlights for me. Of course, I don't think I will ever forget Celine Dion signing "Hymne à l'amour" to close the Opening Ceremony at the Eiffel Tower. It was her first live performance since she was diagnosed with stiff-person syndrome in December 2022. After she announced her diagnosis, the singer postponed — and later cancelled — the remaining dates on her Courage World Tour for 2023 and 2024. What a performance.

Signage

Residents and visitors will have undoubtedly noticed some of the new signage installed across the Shire and specifically at Bourke, Wanaaring, Byrock and Fords Bridge. New history signage is now in place in Bourke providing visitors with a walk back into the past of the old buildings that once stood on our streets and also a story on the buildings that are still standing. In addition, the new block letter signs at Byrock, Wanaaring and Fords Bridge have been very well received. This work is the final part of a project funded by the NSW State Government under the Stronger Country Community Program.

Council Elections Nominations

If you're interested in contributing your skills and experience to enhance Bourke Shire by becoming a Councillor, you must nominate as a candidate for the election. To be nominated as a Bourke Shire candidate you must be enrolled to vote in the Bourke local government area by 6pm Monday, 5 August 2024, with the nomination period commencing on Monday, 5 August 2024 and ending at 12 noon on Wednesday, 14 August 2024.

Prospective candidates for the upcoming elections can complete their nomination forms on the NSW Electoral Commission's online nomination system which is available now. All the required information is available on the NSW Electoral Commission website: <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/elections/local-government-elections/2024-nsw-local-government-elections>

Once the election has been conducted and the Councillors declared, the date of the initial meeting of the new Council will be determined. Section 233A of the Local Government Act requires that a Councillor must take an oath of office or make an affirmation of office at or before the first meeting of the Council after the Councillor is elected. The wording is either that I will swear (Oath) or solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm (affirmation) "that I will undertake the duties of the office of Councillor in the best interests of the people of the Bourke Shire Council Local Government Area and the Bourke Shire Council and that I will faithfully and impartially carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in me under the Local Government Act 1993 or any other Act to the best of my ability and judgment." I consider them to be strong words.

The Act also provides that where a Councillor fails to, without a reasonable excuse, take the oath of office or make an affirmation of office in accordance with the requirements of the Act, is not entitled to attend a meeting as a Councillor until the Councillor has taken the oath or made the affirmation.

CBD Parking

I have once again received complaints from shop owners in the CBD area frustrated at the amount of private cars parking in the street. This parking by workers prevents shoppers from parking. Business owners and managers who operate in the CBD are requested to encourage their workers to park out of the street to allow locals and visitors a place to park and shop.

Quote: "You've got to accept the challenge at the end of the day. You can either run or fight. I chose to fight." Olympic Gold Medallist, Mollie O'Callaghan reflecting on her win against team mate, Ariarne Titmus.