



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

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

**Border Region Councils**

The Mayor and I recently travelled to Walgett for the quarterly meeting of the Border Regional Organisation of Councils (BROC). The BROC is made up of Councils on the Queensland and New South Wales sides of the border. The member councils are Balonne, Bulloo, Goondiwindi, Paroo and Southern Downs Councils from Queensland and Bourke, Brewarrina, Gwydir, Inverell, Moree Plains, Tenterfield and Walgett Councils from NSW. The meetings are held quarterly with member Councils taking turns to host the meeting. The meetings provide a forum for member Councils to consider and discuss matters affecting the extensive region and undertaking projects involving member councils to promote regional cooperation.

At the latest meeting, the various council representatives received an update from NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development staff on the progress of the construction of the new Wild Dog Fence along the Queensland and South Australia border with NSW. 15 kms of the new fence has been completed on the NSW/SA border with a further 15 kms completed near Hungerford on the NSW/QLD Border. There is a further 400 kms of fence to be completed and DPI is working with agencies on legislative constraints including Biodiversity and cultural heritage matters. There are also topographical challenges with the installation of fencing on flood plains also to be taken into consideration. An interesting comment was also the impact of waterway barriers, the fence will need to allow fish passage, but stop the wild dogs! To say that the construction of the new fence has been considerably more difficult than originally anticipated, is certainly an understatement.

The NSW Government has for many years appointed a Cross Border Commissioner for the NSW/Queensland border. The Commissioner is an advocate for cross-border communities, businesses and organisations. When border communities need to comply with two sets of rules or policy, this can cause confusion, make day to day activities more difficult, and can restrict access to work opportunities, investment, and facilities. The Commissioner’s Office works closely with local, state and federal colleagues, in NSW and in other states and territories, to identify, analyse and resolve issues. The Commissioner certainly came to the fore during the COVID Pandemic working through the differing state rules as applicable at that difficult time. Anyway, Commission staff provided an update to the meeting on matters effecting law and order and biosecurity between NSW and Queensland. A new Cross Border Commissioner position has been identified in Queensland. Whilst this position has yet to be filled, ultimately the two commissioners will work together to improve liveability of local communities who traverse across two different states, particularly those towns that are split by the border. Border Tourism has been a long-standing agenda item on the BROC meeting agenda. The finalisation of a Border Trail Loop was agreed to with the ‘Cellar Door to Sunset Loop’ taking in all Local Government Areas along the border and identifying attractions for visitation.

## Tax Return Time

Now that the new financial year is well and truly upon us, time is ticking if you prepare and lodge your own tax return. As of late last month, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), had received over 3.5 million individual tax return lodgements for 2024. This number of lodgements is a 5% increase compared with the same time last year, and potentially reflects the current cost-of-living difficulties that many people are experiencing as they seek to obtain an early tax return. In terms of these 3.5 million returns, over 87,000 were push returns (which is essentially a pre-filled statement of tax activity for a taxpayer to approve), over 1.1 million returns were lodged by tax agents, and over 2.2 million 2023/2024 tax returns were lodged by self-preparers.

To assist those people who are self-preparers, the Bourke Public Library is part of the ATO's Tax Help program, which aids low-income earners in completing their tax returns. If you earn \$60,000 or less, you may be eligible for this free program. The program runs from July to October each year with the Tax Help volunteer able to assist you lodge your tax return online; create a myGov account; lodge an amendment to your tax return; claim a refund of franking credits; and tell the ATO if you don't need to lodge a tax return.

For more information, you can search for 'Tax Help' on the ATO website (<https://ato.gov.au>). At this website, you can check your eligibility for the program and find out what you will need to bring with you to your appointment. Phone the library on 6872 2751 if you would like to make an appointment.

## Social Media

Social media casts a very wide net these days and I was reminded of this recently when Councils Manager Economic Development, Mel Milgate, provided me with some amazing statistical insights into Councils social media activities relating to our Visit Bourke Posts on Facebook and Instagram. In providing this data, it is advised that the term Post Impressions relates to the number of times that the post was on a screen; Post Reach is the number of people who saw any of the posts at least once, noting that Reach is different from Impressions, which may include multiple views of the posts by the same people; whilst Engagement is the number of times people engaged with the post through reactions, comments, shares and clicks. Here are the numbers:

Facebook/Instagram Post	Post Impressions	Post reach	Engagement
1. Bourke to Wanaaring Road – Wanaaring Village	74,255	69,211	3,381
2. The village of Enngonia / Oasis Hotel	48,840	48,571	1,566
3. The village of Fords Bridge, located on the Warrego River.	137,390	130,483	5,221
4. The village of Byrock was once a stopping point for the Cobb & Co	90,128	87,882	2,969
5. The Darling River is one of the most iconic rivers in Australia	36,559	35,690	1,189
6. Take the SELFIE Challenge Big Signs in 24 hours	19,748	19,717	2,692

From the above six (6) examples a Visit Bourke social media post appeared on some 400,000 screens. What great exposure. Used correctly, social media is a most cost-effective way of engaging with a large number of people, effectively across the world. Social media goes bad when users are exposed to on-line bullying and the like.

## **Union Picnic Day**

The concept of a Union Picnic Day in NSW would appear to date back to 1884 when a significant number of people assembled at Parramatta Park for a picnic to celebrate the eight-hour day with unionists, their families and parliamentarians coming together. Today, the Local Government (State) Award contains a provision for a Union Picnic Day. It is advised that Bourke Shire Council staff will be holding their Union Picnic Day tomorrow, Friday, 16 August 2024. For information, the Council office, Anson St Depot and the Bourke Shire Library will be closed whilst the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre will be open and operating as normal.

## **Children's Book Week**

Children's Book Week will be celebrated by the Bourke Public Library during the week of 17 -23 August 2024 with this year's theme being 'Reading Is Magic'. To celebrate, the library will have a variety of competitions for both younger children and teenagers. Details are available at the library and have been sent out to schools with a view to a high level of participation. At the conclusion of Book Week, there will be a party at the end of the week where the winners will receive their prizes. During Children's Book Week there will also be craft and story time in the library. Celebrate the magic of reading by encouraging children to get involved in the Children's Book Week activities at the library. You can find the list of shortlisted books on the Children's Book Council of Australia website at: <https://www.cbca.org.au/shortlist-2024>

## **Olympics**

Come the publishing of this Column, the Olympics will have been 'run and won' with the Australian Team performing brilliantly across so many sports. I was particularly happy to wake up one morning last week to the news that Noemie Fox had won Gold in a kayaking event and then seeing vision of her mother, who is her coach, and her sister, Jess Fox, who had won two (2) Gold Medals in earlier kayaking events at this year's games, jumping into the water to congratulate and celebrate with her. The genuine jubilation was evident, as was the jubilation in the voice of their father who was commentating on the Race for the media.

**Quote: "She didn't just make the Olympics; she won the Olympics!"** An Australian television commentator when Noemie Fox crossed the line to win a Gold Medal.