



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

Macquarie Home Stay

I assume by now that the majority of Bourke Shire residents are aware of the affordable, low-cost but not low-quality, accommodation available at the Macquarie Home Stay facility in Dubbo for patients and their partner or escort pre, during and post medical treatment. Home Stay is a registered charity which is currently in the construction phase of developing a further 26 units to house patients attending the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo due to the high level of demand for accommodation at the Facility since its opening in 2019.

Bourke Shire Council has been a long-term supporter of the facility through its assistance and contribution to the Tour de OROC cycling event which has raised over \$1m for Home Stay from across the region since the cycling event commenced in 2013. More recently, funds raised at the very successful 2024 Louth Races (as an aside, congratulations to Jim Strachan and his hard-working committee and volunteers on the delivery of another fantastic week of events at Louth) were being directed to Home Stay. A friend of mine was recently talking to the energetic and passionate President of the board of Macquarie Home Stay, Andrew Single, who in their discussions, was most appreciative of the Louth Turf Club and to so many people in the far west who have financially assisted the Facility. In discussions, Andrew advised that Home Stay had recently launched a new initiative to bring people together to support the work of Macquarie Home Stay by way of the Friends of the Home Stay.

By becoming a Friend as part of this initiative, you can choose the level of involvement you would like to pursue to progress the cause of Home Stay. For instance, you can be a community champion in your local town, helping to represent and promote Macquarie Home Stay in your community; you can help organise local fundraising events; you can volunteer at events where "people power" is needed to deliver the event; you can assist by attracting sponsors and donors or help organise a flagship fundraising event for Macquarie Home Stay or offer your professional services on a pro bono basis e.g. grant writing. Alternatively, you can share your story about when you stayed at Macquarie Homestay and encourage others to use the service.

The western area that the Macquarie Home Stay facility generally services comprise of the shire council areas of Gilgandra, Brewarrina, Cobar, Warren, Bogan, Coonamble, Warrumbungle, Walgett and Bourke and the Regional Council areas of Mid-West and Dubbo. All up a population of some 100,000 people. Based on Bourke’s population of 2,340 (ABS 2021) you would expect that Bourke residents might account for 2-3% of Home Stay visitors. My advice is that the residency figure for Bourke Shire residents at Home Stay is closer to 8%. At this level of usage, which is about 187 people from Bourke using the facility each year, there is a fair chance that if you attend the facility, there will be other people from Bourke in residence. Perhaps this high figure explains the generosity of Bourke shire residents to Home Stay.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend Of Home Stay, I would encourage you to call the Home Stay Office in Dubbo by telephoning 6885 4663 and they will no doubt be happy to provide you with further information.

Council Elections

With 14 nominations, registered voters in the Bourke Shire will be going to the polls on 14 September 2024, to elect Councillors for the four (4) year period ending September 2028. This will be the first contested election in the Shire since 2016 with the COVID delayed 2021 election being an uncontested election in Bourke given that there were 10 nominations for the 10 Councillor positions.

One name that won't be on this year's ballot paper is Councils current Mayor, Barry Hollman. Barry has advised that he is stepping down after some 20 years on Council and 8 years as Mayor, having been elected to the mayoral roll in 2016. It's easy to forget that at the time of becoming Mayor, Bourke Shire was well into devastating drought with the Bourke weir pool rapidly diminishing. Barry was at the forefront of Council obtaining State Government Funding for its new water treatment plant, drought proofing Bourke with the installation of additional bores and pumps and further convincing the then Berejiklian Government to come to Bourke in November 2019 for the purpose of a community cabinet. It was Barry that got the various Ministers to travel to Bourke via a coach to witness first-hand the impact of the drought on the landscape. This method of travel certainly opened the Ministers eyes. Regardless of the Minister, Barry would always be mentioning the need for funding to finish the sealing of the Wanaaring Road!

With Barry, you certainly have a straight shooter, who, in true Bourke form, will tell you exactly what he is thinking, and he did this recently when addressing the Public Accounts Committee in regard to the current inquiry into Rural Fire Service assets, premises and funding at a meeting in Sydney.

Whilst Barry can speak for himself, I suspect his biggest regret has been the inability to gain agreement from Government in respect of raising the height of the Bourke Weir. It certainly hasn't been through lack of effort or desire with Government preparing and adopting the Western Weirs Strategy, the Better Baaka Program and more recently the Connecting the Northern Basin Program, all to no avail in respect of raising our weir and increasing the capacity of the Bourke weir pool. It's a very difficult course of change to navigate.

I will personally miss Barry as Mayor. You certainly knew where he stood on a position, and he would stick when things got tough. I suppose that dates to his footballing days where he played at representative level. I thank Barry for his considerable efforts and wish him all the best for his life post Council and trust that he clocks up plenty of kilometres travelling Australia in his caravan.

Rugby League Competitions

The NSW Government recently announced funding of \$500,000 to help deliver Community Rugby League and League Tag competitions in the Barwon Darling and Outback Rugby League competitions. In announcing the funding, NSW Premier, Chris Minns said: "We are incredibly proud to be making this practical investment that will go straight to helping players and clubs across the Far West of NSW." He continued, "Sport, especially in our regions, is a fantastic vehicle for bringing people together and providing people with an opportunity to get out and get active."

My understanding is that the areas that will benefit from the funding include Bourke, Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Wilcannia, Menindee and Broken Hill. The funds will be used to support the Far West clubs with the costs of registration, insurance, club transport, well-

being events, referees and referee travel. It will also assist with the engagement of staff dedicated to junior and social competition support and capacity building as well as community development programs.

It is recognised that Rugby League competitions play a critical role in remote communities, providing young people with the opportunity to play competitive team sport with their peers while opening the door to future sporting opportunities. Importantly, this funding will provide targeted relief to many young people hoping to participate in Rugby League competitions at a time when cost of living is a significant concern. As our Local Member for Barwon stated in response to the announcement, "This funding will enable the Rugby League's rich history and legacy across Far West NSW to continue."

Final Meeting

The final meeting of the Council elected in December 2021 will be held at 9.15am next Monday, 26 August 2024 in the Council Chambers, Mitchell St, Bourke. Whilst Council meetings are livestreamed via a link on Councils website (www.bourke.nsw.gov.au), members of the public are more than welcome to attend.

The date of the initial meeting of the new Council to be elected on 14 September 2024, has yet to be determined. The Local Government Act requires that Council holds a mayoral election at a council meeting within three (3) weeks after the ordinary election. Councillors may also elect a Deputy Mayor.

Quote: "I have tried to think of the words to describe how I feel about this team. I am so proud, proud for them, proud of them, proud to be here with them." – Australian Olympic Team Chef de mission, Anna Meares, at her final press conference for the Paris Olympics.