



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

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

**3G Network Shutdown**

As part of my Column of 16 May 2024, I advised that Telstra had announced that was extending the date of its closure of its 3G network by two (2) months from 30 June 2024 until 31 August 2024. At the time, the decision followed customer feedback that more time was needed to make the relevant changes.

The telecommunication giant has now announced that both it and Optus will extend the closure of their 3G networks and conduct a public safety awareness campaign, so all Australians know what action they need to take ahead of the shutdown. This will mean all 3G users need to be ready to move to 4G and 5G networks from 28 October 2024. I was somewhat surprised at the announcement as I am certain Telstra has been communicating to customers about the need to prepare for the closure for more than four (4) years. This has included multiple letters, bill messages, SMS, public awareness campaigns, advertising and offering free phones to people who need it most.

It is most important that mobile phone users check that their devices are compatible with the 4G network, particularly to ensure they are still able to call emergency services. It is also important for users of connected devices like medical monitors, IoT sensors, EFTPOS and antennas to check whether they rely on the 3G network by contacting the manufacturer or supplier. If you are unsure if your device is impacted, it is suggested that you simply text the number ‘3’ to the phone number 3498. I did it and within 5 seconds the Telstra checker responded confirming what type of phone I had and stating, “Thanks for using our Telstra 3G checker. Good news-your device will work as normal after the 3G closure from 28 October 2024, so you don’t have to do anything.” My understanding is that if the message advises that your phone won’t work after 28 October 2024, the Telstar Checker will tell you what action you need to take.

While there is obviously more time for people to make the transition, I would urge mobile phone users to not delay, but rather take the necessary action as soon as possible.

**Roads to Recovery**

Back in 2000, the state of the nation’s local roads (roads that are the financial responsibility of councils) emerged as a high-profile national issue when Australia’s rural areas acted together as the main proponent for greater road funding when the Australian Local Government Association organised its initial National Rural Roads Congress, held in Moree, in March 2000.

With basically every rural and regional Council across the Nation represented at the Moree Congress, a compelling case was made to the Australian Government regarding concerns that the construction and maintenance of local road infrastructure across the nation was near the end of its economic life. Roads certainly don’t last forever and the necessary replacement of road infrastructure was beyond the capacity of local councils. In response, and to their credit, the Government of the day in 2001 enacted

the Roads to Recovery (R2R) program through the Roads to Recovery Act 2000 (R2R Act) as an intervention to address local roads construction and maintenance issues. Whilst I don't have the figures from when R2R commenced in 2001, I am aware that the Commonwealth Government has provided \$6.2 billion in funding to local councils under R2R for the ten years between the 2013/2014 financial year to the 2023/2024 financial years. In the 2020 calendar year an additional \$138.9 million was provided to the 128 Local Government Areas eligible for the Drought Communities Programme Extension, of which Bourke was one. In November 2023 it was reported that R2R Funding for local councils would increase to \$1 Billion a year following a comprehensive nation-wide survey had found that the nations local road network is "In a dangerous state of repair."

At this week's Council meeting, Councils Roads Manager, Paul Flannagan, presented a report advising that Council was recently advised by the Australian Government that its allocation for the R2R program for the period 2024 to 2029 was some \$10.6M over the five (5) year life of the program. This funding figure is a 47% increase over the previous funding figure of near \$7.2M. In previous rounds of funding Council has undertaken projects including resealing town streets, resealing rural local roads, heavy patching Main Road 68 South (Louth), sealing part of Main Road 404 (Hungerford) and contributions towards bridge upgrades at Jandra Creek Bridge and Compadore Creek Bridge. Paul and staff are currently preparing a works program for the new round of funding with this work program expected to include reformation, resealing and gravel sheeting of rural local roads and resealing town streets.

Since the initial program of 2001, there has been differing iterations of the R2R program, however it is fair to say that the program has been a godsend for the nations rural and regional councils, and certainly for Bourke Shire Council. I take my hat off to those who took up the issue and were the drivers of the initial Roads Congress at Moree back in 2000, the undoubted catalyst to addressing the Nations failing local roads network.

## **Council Elections**

The post COVID local government elections of December 2021, saw the ten Councillors of Bourke Shire Council elected in an uncontested election. That is, there were ten nominations for the ten positions. Fast forward to the 2024 elections to be held on 14 September 2024, and Bourke will have a contested election as a result of 14 nominations for the ten councillor positions. Across the state however, there are five council areas where voters will not need to go to the poles with uncontested elections at Berrigan, Cowra, Junee, and Warrumbungle Shires along with our adjoining neighbours at Cobar Shire Council. In the case of Berrigan, Cowra and Junee Councils, they have received fewer candidate nominations than the number of councillors required which results in a by-election having to be held to fill the vacancies at a later date. For instance, at Cowra Council, only eight nominations were received for the nine council slots up for election. In addition to these five Councils, there are nine councils where a total of 16 wards will be uncontested.

In respect of the election here at Bourke, pre poll voting opens on Monday, 9 September 2024 at 8:30am at the Council Chambers in Mitchell St, Bourke. Election day is Saturday 14 September 2024 from 8.00am to 6.00pm at the Bourke Public School Hall, 19 Green Street, Bourke. Voting is compulsory for all registered voters.

## **Sydney Metro**

I was interested to see the jubilation that surrounded the recent opening of the \$21 Billion Sydney Metro rail line that provides an additional 15.5 kilometres of new rail line and five new stations for the Sydney travelling public. The Metro now extends from Tallawong (in Sydney's northwest past Rouse Hill

and Kellyville) through to Sydenham. Commuters described the Metro as “transformational” and “life changing.”

On a lesser scale of expenditure, though just as important to users, residents of Bourke Shire, and visitors, who travel to the west of Bourke along the Bourke – Wanaaring Road, have also experienced the jubilation of improved transport facilities with the major improvements made to this road over the past five years. Funding from successive State Governments has enabled Council to reconstruct and seal this dirt road, which was once near undrivable at times.

The Bourke – Wanaaring Road, was once a 190km bone jarring five (5) to six (6) hour journey for residents and tourists. These days, pending the completion of the current round of works, the road will be unsealed for all but 15 kilometres. The sealing of the Wanaaring Road has opened up areas of Far North-west NSW to a wider visitor base. In addition, and importantly, the sealing of this road has simply changed the life of many of our residents who live along or in the vicinity of this road, in a most positive way.

Council looks forward to the continuation of programs that provides funding that would allow for the final 15 kilometres of this roadway to be sealed. I trust readers see the synergies between the Metro project and our own Wanaaring Rd project.

**Quote: “You would have noticed how we have scrambled in defence the past few weeks. We don’t want that spoon. We’re not taking things easy.”** Balmain Tigers Playmaker, Lachie Galvin, focussing on finishing just one place off the bottom of the NRL ladder.