



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk – 3 October 2024”

Prepare, Act, Survive

Recent night-time television footage of a bush fire front at Cromer Heights on Sydney’s northern beaches was a timely reminder that the Spring/Summer bush fire season is well and truly here. The NSW Rural Fire Service promotes a three (3) step planning process in respect of bush fires, being “Prepare, Act, Survive.”

Now that we are in Spring, the time is perfect to prepare your home to get ready for the bushfire season by undertaking five (5) simple actions: 1. Trim overhanging trees and shrubs. This can stop the fire spreading to your home. 2. Mow grass and remove the cuttings. Have a cleared area around your home. 3. Remove material that can burn around your home (e.g. Door mats, wood piles, mulch, leaves, paint, outdoor furniture). 4. Clear and remove all the debris and leaves from the gutters surrounding your home. Embers can set your home on fire. 5. Prepare a sturdy hose or hoses that will reach all around your home. Make sure you’ve got a reliable source of water.

Given the level of grass coverage across the Shire, there is an increased risk of grass fires this summer. Grass fires can start easily and spread quickly, not only destroying feed, but potentially infrastructure. Grass fires are very hot and can produce huge amounts of heat which can kill anyone out in the open. As grass dries out or cures, it can catch fire more easily. Fires in tall grass will have tall flames that may burn across trails, roads or fire breaks, moving much faster than a bush fire, thus catching people off guard.

One of the biggest issues from both bush or grass fires are ember attacks. Embers are small, hot, smouldering fragments of solid fuel that can travel long distances with the wind and ignite other fuel sources, such as dry grass, leaves, wooden structures and other flammable objects. For instance, if the gutters at your home are full of dry leaves, embers from a grass fire could travel from the fire to your gutters and potentially start a fire in the house gutters leading to a larger, and devastating, house fire. Embers from bushfires can travel through the air or along the ground, making them almost impossible to stop and highly unpredictable. With strong winds generally associated with bush or grass fires, there are reports of embers travelling up to 20 kilometres ahead of a fire front and igniting spot fires. Embers are the most common cause of house fires during bushfires.

Enngonia Races

When it comes to horse racing events, it is considered that the Bourke Shire goes above and beyond with the annual Back O’ Bourke Picnic Race Club meeting held each Easter, the historic and high-profile Louth Races held in August annually and the Enngonia Races held in September annually. In respect of the most recently held Enngonia Races, congratulations go to the Enngonia Race Club President, Callum Robinson, Club Secretary, Will Ridge, their fellow Committee members and other volunteers on delivering another very successful Enngonia Race Meeting recently. The 2024 event was the 76th race meeting of the Enngonia Club with a 6-race program conducted and \$77,000 in prize money awarded.

With a good crowd on hand to witness the day of racing, the planning efforts of the Committee were very evident ranging from the availability of a bus to and from Bourke to the racecourse, a most comprehensive Fashions on the Field program, great food and drinks, on-field book makers, a live band on hand and to top it all off, perfect weather.

Great Aussie Road Trip

Councils Manager Economic Development, Melanie Milgate, recently worked with a production crew from Channel 7 television who were in Bourke to shoot footage for an upcoming television series titled The Great Aussie Road Trip. With the proposed episode focusing on a road trip from one end of the Kamilaroi Highway to its end, (that is, the 605km journey from Willow Tree, just south of Tamworth, through to Bourke), Mel and the crew explored the attractions of Bourke, starting with an early morning cruise on the PV Jandra followed by a visit to the Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre to uncover the area's rich history. Later in the day, the production crew documented the stunning landscapes and vibrant spring blooms at Gundabooka National Park, showcasing its impressive rock art and breathtaking outback scenery. It will be exciting to watch the program as the Bourke Shire's unique tourist attractions are again promoted, this time in an episode of The Great Aussie Road Trip!

Bourke Shire Council works in partnership with six (6) other local government areas as a member of The Kamilaroi Highway Promotions Committee. The Committee is instrumental in connecting travellers from Willow Tree to Bourke, promoting a true bush experience. Together, these local government areas work to promote travellers exploring and appreciating the rich stories and attractions that this remarkable Highway route has to offer.

Gamble Aware

There is an old saying that "Australians will bet on two flies crawling up a wall." The saying has been around a long time; however, it's never been truer with the Grattan Institute, a "Public Policy Think-Tank" reporting that Australians lost a staggering \$24 billion on gambling in 2021/2022. From this, the average gambling loss for each Australian adult was close to \$1,600 in 2021/2022, with the losses being the highest in the world. The Grattan Institute has reported that Australia's gambling losses at \$1,635 per adult, is more than twice the US average (\$809) and substantially more than the New Zealand experience (\$584).

Most of these losses stem from poker machines (\$12.2B), followed by sports and race betting (\$5.8B), lotteries (\$2.8B), casinos (\$2.7B) and Keno betting (\$0.42B). In NSW there are some 88,000 poker machines, which equates to one machine for every 75 adults. In 12 year's, sports and race betting losses increased by \$2.2 billion. Amongst the Australian states and territories, the Northern Territory had the highest average gambling loss at a level of \$2,169 per person, followed by NSW (\$1,722 pp) and then Queensland (\$1,325). The state with the lowest gambling losses per person was Victoria with losses of \$669.60 per person.

The level of these losses has a significant impact on society and in this regard, I note that from 21-27 October 2024, Gamble Aware Week, will take place.

Gamble Aware Week is an annual initiative to increase awareness of gambling and gambling harm in the NSW community. The campaign is led by the Office of Responsible Gambling. It is an opportunity to increase the community's understanding of risky gambling behavior, encourage gamblers to recognise when their gambling may place them at risk of harm, and provide information on practical ways to keep gambling under control.

This year's campaign will focus on raising awareness of safer gambling practices and will encourage people to reflect on their gambling and the gambling of those around them. The campaign will show strategies people can use to reduce their risk of experiencing gambling harm, such as setting limits, not gambling while under the influence of alcohol, and balancing gambling with other activities.

The Gamble Aware website (<https://www.gambleaware.nsw.gov.au/>) provides strategies that can be used to help gamblers remain in control and reduce their risk of gambling harm. The first step advised to lower your risk of gambling harm is to put in place safeguards around how much you spend, how often you gamble and how many products you gamble on. For instance, Gamblers Aware recommends that you spend no more than 2% of your take home pay to avoid the risk of harm.

From the data above relating to loses, it is fair to say that gambling is a significant issue in society in general. Proposals to ban betting advertising really can't come quick enough.

Quote: "If you don't have ambition, you shouldn't be there. Our ambition is to make the competition as fair as possible." ARL Commission Chairman, Peter V'landys talking about expanding the NRL competition to 20 teams.