



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

Council Elections

Following the residents of Bourke Shire going to the polls to elect 10 councillors to Council for the period ending 8 September 2028, the NSW Electoral Commission formally declared the results of the poll on Tuesday 1 October 2024 announcing the following candidates elected as councillors:

Sarah Barton	Patricia Bates-Canty	Kylie Baty	Sally Davis	Lachlan Ford
Francis Kerr	Scott McAdam	Maxime Nina	Samuel Rice	Robert Stutsel

The result for Bourke sees five (5) new and five (5) returning councillors elected to Bourke Shire. Such a mix of new and returning councillors is not an unusual situation. At Dubbo Council for instance, the mix is five (5) new and six (6) returning councillors, at Bathurst Council the mix is six (6) new and three (3) returning councillors, Tamworth Council sees five (5) new and four (4) returning councillors elected whilst at Narromine Council, it’s a mix of (4) new and five (5) returning councillors.

Following the declaration of the poll I made contact with each councillor to welcome them to Council and organise a date and time for the initial meeting of Council. This meeting is an Extraordinary Meeting for the purpose of electing the Mayor for Bourke Shire for the two (2) year period ending September 2026 and assuming Council so determines, the election of the Deputy Mayor. Following discussions, it was agreed that the Extraordinary Meeting be held on Tuesday 8 October 2024 commencing at 5.00pm in the Council Chambers.

Other matters on the Agenda for this meeting include Councillors either taking an oath or making an affirmation of office to “faithfully and impartially carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in them as councillors” and Councils approval to hold a countback instead of conducting a by-election.

In regard to this latter matter, newly elected councils now have the option to determine at their first meeting, and only at that first meeting, that any casual vacancy that occurs within 18 months of the last ordinary election (ie from 14 September 2024) be filled by a countback of votes cast at the last election as opposed to conducting an expensive by-election.

By the time this column is published, the Extraordinary meeting of Council will have been held and the Mayoral Election completed. Whilst it is not the domain of a General Manager to engage in discussions as to who may be the Mayor, one matter that is certain is that whoever is elected Mayor of Bourke Shire, they will be the first new Mayor in eight (8) year's given the retirement of former Mayor, Barry Holman, who held the position from September 2016 until 14 September 2024.

Shops opening

It is always good to see development in the town and recently two (2) new shops have opened in Bourke. The shops are "River Dreaming," a clothing and giftware store in the old SETCH building in Oxley Street, whilst the old Dwyer's Store on the Sydney Road has reopened as a Takeaway and small grocery store. I wish both operations the very best in their endeavours.

Plant Program

On an annual basis, Council considers a Plant Replacement Schedule for both its heavy and light plant fleet categories. Once determined, the various funding allocations for Plant feeds into Councils Annual Operational Plan and once adopted and funding is available, implementation of the replacement schedule proceeds. Back in March 2023, Council adopted its 2023/2024 Plant Replacement Schedule for inclusion in Council's 2023/2024 Draft Operational Plan. Within this Plan was the replacement of a Caterpillar 12M Grader that Council had previously purchased back in December 2013.

Following the inviting of tenders, and with a lead time for delivery of some 12 months, I was pleased to learn this week that Councils replacement grader had arrived in Bourke. The replacement is a John Deere (JD) 770G Grader which sees Council's motor grader fleet comprising four (4) x JD 770G motor graders for construction and one (1) x JD 670G motor grader for maintenance activities. Staff have found the John Deere product to be very reliable, easy to operate and "fit for purpose" in terms of the challenges that the Bourke landscape presents. By having the one make across five motor graders, efficiencies in terms of the retention of parts is also enhanced.

For the three (3) year period ending 30 June 2024, Council undertook some \$38.75M in roadworks on town streets, rural local roads and on the Shires regional road network. Whilst Council engages contractors to supplement its own plant and road crews to undertake work, where necessary, it is imperative that Council maintains its own efficient and effective fleet of plant.

Parliamentary Inquiry

The NSW Parliamentary Committee on Law and Safety recently travelled to Bourke for its initial round of hearings as it makes inquiries into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities. As part of Councils written submission to the inquiry, Council both invited and encouraged the Committee to attend Bourke as part of its processes. It was certainly most pleasing that they accepted Councils invite and travelled to Bourke. With the Committee wanting to hear first-hand from regional communities and their representatives about best practice prevention initiatives – from standout community services to law enforcement initiatives and leading diversionary programs, I presented to the inquiry in the company of Lachlan Ford, and as part of my opening statement took the opportunity to highlight various issues effecting community safety in Bourke.

During its day of hearings, the Inquiry was scheduled to also meet with the General Managers of Brewarrina and Walgett Shire Councils, and representatives of the Bourke PCYC; the Nulla Nulla Aboriginal Land Council; the Bourke Community Working Party; Bourke Community Corrections Office; Bourke Youth Justice Community Office and the Maranguka Community Hub.

The Committee's round of hearings commenced in Bourke and was the subject of statewide news broadcasts on radio. With close to some 200 written submissions received, the Committee has undoubtedly developed a solid understanding of the issues facing regional and rural communities in respect of crime.

I look forward to the Committee's report and recommendations to the NSW Parliament, with the inquiry to table a first report by 30 May 2025, with a final report to be submitted by 30 November 2025. Following its hearings in Bourke, the Committee was travelling to Broken Hill for a further round of hearings.

Long Weekend

I trust residents enjoyed the recent Labour Day Public Holiday as part of the October Long Weekend. The history of the Public Holiday on the first Monday of October dates to 1885 when it was proclaimed by the NSW Parliament to celebrate the introduction of the 8-hour working day. In the early days of the holiday the people of Sydney celebrated the day with a procession of trade union floats and marchers from the Sydney Town Hall to the Royal Agricultural Grounds which were then located at Moore Park, near the Sydney Cricket Ground. The procession was accompanied by trade union brass bands and led by members of parliament. The day would continue at the Showgrounds with picnics and an organised cycling and athletics meeting, as well as an exhibition and novelty races.

Times change and for some 38 straight years from 1963 to 2000, the October Long Weekend was then known, initially, for the Hardie-Ferodo 500 and ultimately the Bathurst 1000, as held at the Mount Panorama circuit in Bathurst. Since 2001, the Bathurst car races have been run the following weekend, with the long weekend become the weekend for the NRL Grand Final. Occasionally the AFL Grand Final, traditionally played on the last Saturday of September, may be played on the long weekend if the last Saturday of the month is dated 30 September.

After the build-up to the recent Brisbane Lions/Sydney Swans AFL Grand Final, where commentators predicted an epic game, only for the game to fall disappointingly short with the game essentially over by half time, I hope the NRL Grand Final between the Penrith Panthers and the Melbourne Storm was a more exciting proposition for attendees and television viewers, alike. For a long-term Wests Tigers supporter though, the best I can hope for is next year!

Quote: "Not every call was right, not every call was wrong. There are always things we can do better to ensure we are prepared for emergencies like another pandemic." – NSW Premier, the Hon Chris Minns commenting on the State's response to the COVID pandemic.