



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

“From the  
General Manager’s Desk –  
12 December 2024”

**Bourke Airport**

The NSW Government has committed an initial investment of \$400 million into what is referred to as the “Regional Development Trust” to deliver “sustainable and strategic investment with a focus on priorities that make a real difference to regional communities.”

The Government’s website further states that “The Regional Development Trust will be invested in regional and rural communities through 4 Key Focus Areas:

- Sustainable regional industries
- Aboriginal economic development and enterprise
- Community connection and capacity building
- Improving regional service delivery.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring the investment of public money through the Regional Development Trust is informed by the best available evidence and guided by a clear investment strategy and governance framework.”

I was delighted last week when I was informed by an officer from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development that the airstrip at the Bourke Airport, along with airstrips at Deniliquin and White Cliffs, had been selected to be upgraded as part of \$15m in funding allocated from the Trust.

Research by the NSW Government had found that new, heavier aircraft will be increasingly used into the future for health and other emergency services to accommodate more patients, passengers and supplies. On the basis of each of the identified three (3) airstrips being able to accommodate these larger planes with bigger loads, it is understood that the upgrades will include increasing the length, width and weight capacity of the runways at the three (3) locations. In addition, lighting and line markings will also be improved to increase visibility and safety for pilots on the taxiways.

It is further understood that the three (3) locations, as announced, followed a statewide audit of regional airstrips, and consultation with local government, the Royal Australian Air Force, Royal Flying Doctor Service, NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Ambulance and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter.

The value of the Bourke Airport cannot be underestimated in terms of not only healthcare and emergency services but also in terms of economic development opportunities into the future. I take the opportunity to thank the NSW Government and particularly the Minister for Western NSW, the Hon. Tara Moriarty and our local State Member, the Member for Barwon, Roy Butler MP for their efforts in respect of this important infrastructure.

## **Draft Water Sharing Plan**

Late last month I attended a face-to-face session in Bourke with officers from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, who are undertaking consultation in respect of the draft Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated Water Source 2025.

Water sharing plans are subject to review every 10 years under the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*. The current water sharing plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated River Water Source expires on 1 July 2025.

Water sharing plans establish the rules for water management including the limit of the total volume of water that can be extracted, in this case, from the Barwon-Darling Unregulated River Water Source.

Whilst public exhibition of the draft Water Sharing Plan commenced on 11 November 2024 and was planned to close on 20 December 2024, consultation has now been extended until Friday 10 January 2025.

The draft plan is a most important document for all bulk water users in our region, and in this regard, I was surprised at how few people were in attendance at the recent face-to-face consultation session. I can only but encourage those who rely on water from the river to spend some time and review the documentation and then, as applicable, make a submission.

Further information is available at the Departments Water website with their home page address being: <https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/> Once there, search 'Barwon Darling Water Sharing Plans' .

## **Biosecurity Commissioner**

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility for all Australians. To this end, last year the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015* was amended to give effect to the appointment of an Independent Biosecurity Commissioner. The Commissioner is a statutory officer reporting directly to the Minister but is not subject to the direction or control of the Minister, except as it relates to a direction to provide advice or undertake reviews.

The Commissioner provides advice to the Minister, other Ministers and the Government about issues relating to pests and weeds, undertakes reviews and publishes reports about reviews. Under the Act, the Commissioner has powers to require certain documents and information from government agencies to help perform these functions.

In July 2024, Dr Marion Healy PSM was appointed as the NSW Independent Biosecurity Commissioner on the recommendation of the Minister. Dr Healy holds a PhD in molecular genetics and has over fifteen years of experience as a senior executive officer in the Australian Public Service. By having a Commissioner that provides independent advice as it relates to pests and weeds, the role seeks to drive accountability, clarify responsibilities and foster continuous improvement to help ensure the framework is fit for purpose and protecting our primary industries, environment, and communities.

Recently, the Independent Biosecurity Commissioner emailed councils to inform them about the commencement of a project on governance of pest and weed management in NSW. This project brings a focus on recommending options for governance structures and arrangements that enhance and optimise management of pest animals and weeds in NSW.

The Commissioner has issued a survey and is now inviting broader input through the survey from those who have a role in the management of pests and weeds in NSW. A copy of the survey, which is open till 5pm on 13 December 2024, is available at the following link:

[https://regionalnsw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3PDg3GxdYcg2Xvo](https://regionalnsw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PDg3GxdYcg2Xvo)

Further information on the Independent Biosecurity Commissioner's workplan is available at:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/bfs/independent-biosecurity-commissioner>

## **Christmas Food Safety**

Christmas is nearly upon us and as a time of celebration with family and friends, it usually involves the preparation of food at home. Christmas should be an enjoyable and memorable part of the year. The following food safety tips can help to ensure Christmas 2024, and the holiday period, are memorable for the right reasons. With Christmas coinciding with the heat of summer, the risk of food poisoning increases.

Christmas food handling tips include planning ahead, avoiding temperature 'abuse', carefully preparing and cooking food and handling leftovers safely. You can achieve food safety by following these tips:

- Remove beers, wines and soft drinks from the refrigerator and keep them in an esky with ice.
- If you are consuming seafood, pack your purchase with ice, transport it home in a cooler and then promptly place it in the coldest part of your fridge.
- Defrost all potentially hazardous foods in the fridge. Be aware that this can take time. For instance, a large turkey may take more than 48 hours to fully defrost.
- Ensure those who bring food to your house, transport cold food in an esky with ice or ice bricks and hot food in an insulated container. Keep transport times to a minimum or ask visitors to bring non-potentially hazardous food such as rum balls, gingerbread or Christmas pudding.
- If you cook large amounts of food in advance, divide it into smaller portions or put it in shallow containers, cover and place in the refrigerator or freezer, ensuring that there is good air circulation around the containers.
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately after the meal and use within 2-3 days.
- With proper handling, Christmas ham will keep safe for several weeks. It should be removed from the plastic wrap and covered with a clean cloth soaked with water and vinegar. Follow any instructions on the packaging and store under 5°C.

## **December Council Meeting**

The final meeting of Council for 2024 will be held at 10.15am next Monday, 16 December 2024 in the Council Chambers, Mitchell St, Bourke. Whilst Council meetings are livestreamed via a link on Councils website ([www.bourke.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bourke.nsw.gov.au)), members of the public are more than welcome to attend.

There will be no meeting in January 2024, with the initial meeting for 2025 to be held at 10.15am on Monday, 24 February 2025, again in the Council Chambers.

## **River Flows**

There have been some great rainfall amounts recorded across both the Bourke Shire and in our upstream catchment such that river watchers are predicting a 10 meter river at Bourke in late December. This would certainly be a fantastic Christmas/New Year present for the Shire.

**Quote: "The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain." – Dolly Parton.**