



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

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

PFAS Parliamentary Inquiry

In September 2024, the NSW Parliament determined that a select committee be established to inquire into and report on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination in waterways and drinking water supplies throughout NSW. Whilst I won’t go into the fifteen points that make up the Terms of Reference for the inquiry, which is now underway, PFAS chemicals - or per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances - are human-made chemicals that have been widely used in everyday products since the mid-1900s. They are resistant to heat, stains, grease, and water, so they were often used in items like non-stick cookware, firefighting foams, water-repelling fabrics, cleaning products, and personal care products.

PFAS chemicals are often referred to as ‘forever chemicals’ as they are known for their stain-repellent and water-resistant properties used in hundreds of consumer products and the fact that they never break down in the environment.

Following revelations in the media that water with PFAS levels over 50 times the safe guidelines was flowing into a Blue Mountains dam, NSW Health advised that all local water utilities should screen for PFAS, and that the NSW Government would assist with test kits and arrange for accredited testing. Town water was required to be within the healthy guidelines

PFAS chemicals comprises four (4) acids being Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS); Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS); Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA); and Perfluorobutanesulfonic acid (PFBS). Recently, the National Health and Medical Research Council issued updated Australian Drinking Water Guidelines in respect of the levels of these acids permissible in drinking water.

Following the testing of drinking water in both Bourke and Enngonia, the results showed that the levels of PFAS’s in the water supply at these localities was well below not only the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines but also below the proposed draft guidelines from the National Health and Medical Research Council.

In respect of these testing results, NSW Public Health advised that “the PFAS compounds of concern were not detected above the current Australian Drinking Water Guideline levels or above the proposed, more stringent guideline levels.”

Such advice was certainly pleasing, and it will be interesting to see the outcome of the Parliamentary Inquiry, with the Select Committee required to deliver its report to Parliament by June 2025.

Council Meeting

The final Council meeting for 2024 was held on Monday this week. With the month of January being a traditionally quiet time in Bourke due to the holiday season and the resulting number of people away from the town, the next Council meeting will not be held until Monday 24 February 2025.

Shire residents are reminded of the community consultation meetings to be held across the Shire in February as follows:

Enngonia (8.30am) and Fords Bridge (11.00am) on Tuesday 18 February 2025.

Louth (8.30am) and Wanaaring (1.00pm) on Tuesday, 25 February 2025.

Byrock (12.30pm) and Bourke (5.30pm) on Thursday, 27 February 2025.

Christmas Scammers

In April 2024, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) announced that Australian consumers had lost \$2.74 billion to scams in 2023. The latest available data identified that over 601,000 scam reports had been made to Scamwatch, ReportCyber, the Australian Financial Crimes Exchange (AFCX), IDCARE and ASIC, an 18.5 per cent increase on 2022. In terms of financial losses, investment scams continued to cause the most harm (\$1.3 billion), followed by remote access scams (\$256 million) and romance scams (\$201.1 million).

If all this isn't bad enough, during holiday periods, scammers tailor their tactics to catch your attention, seeking to catch you out. They mimic the marketing, communication and online shopfronts of popular brands, including online retailers and delivery services. They do this to attract your attention and to appear legitimate.

With the internet at the fingertips of scammers, their techniques range from texting you directly to being completely contactless. This means that whether you're tracking a parcel or shopping online during the holiday season, you should take a moment before you take action and scan for signs that a scammer is trying to catch you off guard.

The ACCC has issued its top tips to avoid scams. These are:

STOP: Don't rush to act. Scammers will create a sense of urgency.

THINK: Ask yourself if you really know who you are communicating with. Scammers can impersonate others and lie about who they are — especially online.

PROTECT: Act quickly if something feels wrong. If you have shared financial information or transferred money, contact your bank immediately. Help others by reporting to Scamwatch.

If you do get scammed, and I hope no one is, you will undoubtedly want to speak with your financial institution. In doing so, remember to always use trusted and independently verified contact details. For example, there would be nothing worse than using a phone number that has been sent to you in an unsolicited text or email address and you are giving all your details to those that have already scammed you. Statistics from Scamwatch show that one in three victims of a scam have been scammed more than once. This is often because their details have been passed on to other scammers. So, should you be the victim of a scamming incident, be especially careful of offers to help you recover your funds.

Wind Storm

The storm which hit Bourke on the eve of Saturday, 7 December 2024 certainly left its mark on the landscape of town. With rainfall totals of some 25mm plus, it was the intensity of a short sharp wind storm that caused the majority of damage. Trees brought down, roofs ripped from infrastructure, shade sails shredded, the town looked the worse for wear once the violent storm had passed through.

We are certainly in the midst of the storm season, and it is appropriate that I take the time to acknowledge the work of our local State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers and Fire and Rescue NSW and Council staff all who invariably go above and beyond in assisting the community during emergency situations as the community experienced last Saturday.

Just to put the wind into perspective, I heard of a resident whose trampoline was picked up from their backyard, landing five(5) houses down the street. Luckily it didn't come into contact with a person or property on its wild trip. Hopefully, the community doesn't experience similar violent winds for a considerable time.

Council Closures over the Christmas Period

As a long-established practice in common with other council's, government departments and professional practices, Bourke Shire Council will again close its main Office and Library over the Christmas/New Year's holiday period. In this regard, the Shire Office and Library will close at 4.30pm tomorrow, Friday, 20 December 2024 and re-open at their respective regular opening times on Monday, 6 January 2025.

All other facilities (including the Swimming Pool, Waste Depot and Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre) are also closed on Christmas Day and re-open during the balance of the Christmas/New Year period but may operate with changes made to the hours and days of operation, as required.

A full listing of Council closures is available on Council's website: www.bourke.nsw.gov.au

The closures are also displayed on the front door of the respective Council offices.

Staff will be on call to respond to all emergency situations, should they arise. Community members who need to contact Council for emergency situations should call the Duty Officer on 0419722055.

Christmas Greetings

2024 has been a successful year for the Bourke Shire and I trust that 2025 continues to bring prosperity to the Shire. Continued rainfall into the New Year would be much appreciated!

Christmas is family time and for those who are travelling, please take care on the roads and ensure that you get plenty of rest prior to driving.

Unfortunately, however, the Christmas/New Year period brings with it a spike in the number of domestic and family violence (DFV) cases. Not all families necessarily get along. Coupled with the rising cost of living, stress levels amongst families can rise. Add to that warm weather, alcohol and other drugs, the potential for violence is exacerbated. Crime statistics and police data shows that there are significantly more domestic and family violence incidents across the end-of-year holidays than at other times during the year. If you, or someone you know, experiences DFV, support is available in the first instance by phoning 1800RESPECT.

On that sombre note, I take the opportunity to wish all in the Bourke Shire a very happy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Quote: "I realised that Christmas is the time to be with the people you love."—Billy Mack in the movie "Love Actually."