



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

“From the General Manager’s Desk”

30 January 2025

Happy New Year

With this being my first Column for 2025, I extend my best wishes to all residents and readers for the New Year. Whilst Christmas 2024 seems but a distant memory, I trust all had an enjoyable festive season.

The Summer break has seen traditional hot weather return to Bourke with intermittent rain and storm activity across the Shire. The river reached a high of 7.95 metres and it was certainly nice to see a flush of water come through. The river took a while to reach that peak, but once it had done so, it dropped away very quickly thereafter.

The New Year has brought with it some excellent summer sporting activity. I certainly enjoyed the Test Cricket, with Australia playing India. The Boxing Day Test was as good as it gets with “the lead” ebbing and flowing for the five (5) days. Similarly, the Sydney Test was a fantastic result for Australia in wrapping up a series win against India to reclaim the “Border-Gavaskar Trophy” for the first time since 2015. The Big Bash Cricket has seen some big hitting. It is disappointing though that those players selected for Australia, such as Steve Smith and Sam Konstas, are unavailable for the finals of this form of domestic cricket, having played a series of games after their representative roles were completed in January.

Village Meetings

As has been the case for numerous years, Councillors and staff will again be “on the road” in coming week's meeting and consulting with both Bourke and Village residents as Council commences a review of its 2022-2032 Community Strategic Plan and the preparation of its 2025/2026 Operational Plan (Budget).

The timetable for the meetings follow:

Tuesday 18 February 2025: 8.30am - Enngonia (CWA Rooms) and 11.00am - Fords Bridge (Warrego Hotel).

Tuesday 25 February 2025: 8.30am – Louth (Louth Tennis Club Rooms) and 1.00pm – Wanaaring (Wanaaring Memorial Hall).

Thursday 27 February 2025: 12.30am – Byrock (Mulga Creek Hotel) and 5.30pm – Bourke (Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre-Conference Centre).

All members of the public are very much invited to attend and contribute as Council seeks to draw from the community their strategic objectives and requests for works and services in respect of our Shire wide community and any other current concerns in regard to their respective locality. It is important to note that Councils Community Strategic Plan is not limited to the services provided by Council, but rather also include services provided by State and Federal Government Agencies and other providers.

Council can act as an advocate for the community in relation to these issues, so the issues that are able to be discussed at the meetings can be very broad.

Australia Day

Last Sunday our community came together at Darling Park in Bourke to “Reflect, Respect and Celebrate” Australia Day. People in Bourke took the time to celebrate everything that is good about our country, particularly our people and our resilience. It was also an opportunity to reflect on Australia’s rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture and celebrate the contribution that every Australian makes to our great nation.

Bourke was fortunate to have as its Australia Day Ambassador, Mr Khushaal Vyas. A Solicitor at the Western Sydney University (WSU) Justice Clinic, Chief Operating Officer of the Australia India Film Council and National Co-Chair of the Australia India Business Council’s Young Business Leader’s Chapter, Khushaal presented his Ambassador’s Address and joined with the Shire’s Mayor, Lachlan Ford, in presenting the 2025 Australia Day Awards for Bourke.

Khushaal’s biography shows that from a young age he has been both passionate and active in the social justice and community advocacy space. As the Fairfield Councils Youth Advisory Committee’s youngest ever member, he was a key advocate for the Fairfield City Youth and Community Centre subsequently built in 2015 and has helped to organise large youth consultations, events and conferences such as the annual *Bring it On!* Youth Festival which is attended by over 10,000 people.

He was the President of the University of NSW Law Society. Prior to this, he was Vice-President (Social Justice) where he co-founded a regional volunteer program to work with community centres and schools in the Dubbo-Trangie area and Wiradjuri Community and mentored disadvantaged Indigenous children. He subsequently directed an award-winning film documentary. Since starting work professionally, Khushaal has been responsible for organising the delivery of pro bono legal support to several community organisations in Dubbo. He currently sits on the NSW Office of Sport’s Multicultural Advisory Committee and is a freelance journalist where he regularly writes about issues pertaining to discrimination, representation, multiculturalism and politics.

For his work on the Fairfield City Youth and Community Centre and Dubbo Volunteer program, Khushaal was awarded the NSW Premier’s Multicultural Youth Medal and Australian Student Leader of the Year.

As previously mentioned, Bourke’s Australia Day Awards were also announced on the day. Congratulations are extended to Bourke’s Citizen of the Year, Lisa Rankmore; Young Citizen of the Year, Dane Edwards; Sportsperson of the Year, Kevin Hatch; and Junior Sportsperson of the Year, Elise Smith. In addition, Max and Janet Jones of Louth were awarded the Village Service Award whilst the Community Event of the Year Award went to the Back O’ Bourke Picnic Race Committee for their 9th Annual Picnic Race Day meeting held on Easter Sunday, 31 March 2024.

Listening to the citations as read out on the day in respect of each award recipient, it never ceases to amaze me the commitment of our winners, whether that be as a volunteer assisting the community, leading and encouraging fellow young people, or in pursuit of their chosen sport. Regardless of why the recipients were winners, each of them contributes to the growth and development of the Bourke community.

Vale Yvonne Howarth

At the December 2024 Council meeting, Council paused for a minute of silence to honour Yvonne Howarth, who passed away in December 2024. In pausing, Mayor Lachlan noted that Yvonne was the first Aboriginal woman to be a Councillor on Bourke Shire Council, serving from 1987 to 1995. In 1999, she was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday 1999 Honours List for her "Service to the community, particularly as an advocate for the provision of better housing and health services to the Aboriginal community in Bourke, and through the Women's Advisory Council of New South Wales." Council's sympathies are extended to the family and friends of Yvonne.

Water for firefighting

The Water Group of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, have advised that Landholders can now take water from a water source on, under or abutting their landholding for firefighting and fire preparedness. Landholders do not need to hold a water access licence for the water taken or a water supply work approval for any mobile pumps and tanks used. The exemptions also cover water used for firefighting training and controlled burning, if carried out by or under the authority of a firefighting agency, and for the testing and maintenance of firefighting equipment.

The volume of water used must be reasonably proportionate to the fire threat. A maximum volume limit of 100,000 litres per fiscal year also applies if water is taken and stored in a tank or dam in preparation for a potential future fire. More information is available at the Water Groups website at: <https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/allocations-availability/drought-and-floods/water-for-fire-preparedness-and-firefighting>

It is certainly pleasing to see that the necessary legislative amendments have been made to the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018 as we progress through the summer bush fire period.

TrainLink

I note that TrainLink are seeking community feedback on "improvements to routes and timetables to better connect you to where you need to go, when you need to go" proposed to come into effect in 2026. As residents would be aware, TrainLink bus services operate across western NSW, including between Bourke and Dubbo, to link passengers to further bus and train services which depart from the Dubbo Railway Station and terminating at Central Station in Sydney.

From my reading of the various proposals, the status quo is maintained in respect of services between Bourke and Dubbo. The only difference is that Dubbo Airport will be serviced on routes to and from Bourke and other localities. To view the proposed changes across the western area and provide your feedback visit the TrainLink website at: www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/trainlink-coach-network-review

Quote

"The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you're not going to stay where you are." - American Financier and Investment Banker, J P Morgan.