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Major drug bust

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Kim Woods

NARRANDERA voters have been urged to get behind a push by a Riverina wool broker to create a new Riverina State triple the size of the United Kingdom.

The new state would encompass the land mass west of the Great Dividing Range from the Victorian to the Queensland borders, and contain the major inland cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga, Griffith and Dubbo.

Riverina State Group president David Landini told the *Argus* the new super state would control the vast inland system of water infrastructure including the Blowering, Burrinjuck, Wyangla and Burrendong dams, the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee rivers.

It would potentially have a population of 573,000 and an annual economic output of \$83.874 billion.

Mr Landini, of Wakool, is canvassing support throughout southern NSW for the formation of the Riverina State, followed by a petition to the NSW Parliament to sanction a referendum on the issue.

A public meeting to garner interest was held at Hay on December 22.

He said candidates would be endorsed to stand in state and federal elections, with a constitution to be written and approved by the majority of people in the Riverina.

“Decisions have been made by the NSW Government detrimental to the irrigation areas and no matter what politicians say, water is continually being eroded from this area,” Mr Landini said.

“This has been going on for over 20 years but the most obvious disaster is the Murray Darling Basin Plan – it was the most blatant grab of water and water is important to these areas.

“Take water out of these towns and they go back to dust.”

Narrandera, Hay and Deniliquin were wealthy towns built on water. All of the natural

resources in NSW are under the same pressure.”

Although the new state would be left without a sea port, it would inherit all the powers and protection of an Australian state, including the ability to freely participate in trade and commerce among the states.

Mr Landini said NSW was dominated by the Greens vote in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong, opposing irrigation, timber and other natural resource based industries.

“Since 1904, on average, one country

electorate has transferred to the Newcastle, Sydney or Wollongong areas every five years,” he said.

“The seat of Barwon comprised six and a half electorates in 1904 and now there is one comprising 47 per cent of the state, while Cootamundra used to be five and is now one.”

“The country areas of NSW are continually declining in the quantity of representation in the NSW parliament.”

“If the long-term trend continues, in 40 years there will only be one electorate west of the Great Dividing Range resulting in practically no effective representation in parliament.”

A former National Party member, Landini stood in Murray as an independent in the 2018 state election polling 1.5 per cent of the total vote.

The move is not new as the first attempt was made in 1863 when the NSW Legislative Assembly was petitioned to create the Riverine District.

In 1931, 5000 people rallied at Narrandera, carrying a resolution to hold a referendum on whether the Riverina should secede from NSW.

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Rodeo casualty

Kim Woods

THE plug has been pulled on an event which has contributed \$500,000 to the local community over 64 years, the 2021 Narrandera Rodeo.

Due to be held on February 20, the Narrandera Rodeo is the first casualty of COVID-19 in the shire for 2021 and follows Tumbarumba and Myrtleford rodeos in making the decision to cancel.

Hay rodeo remains scheduled for March 6 and Griffith Pro Rodeo on March 27.

Narrandera president Ron "Blue" Absolom said the committee decided the COVID crowd restrictions and logistics made it too difficult to stage the event.

"We had to look at the long picture of the cost – if we didn't get the crowd we would have run at a loss," he said.

"In the last two to three years we have had a good increase in crowd numbers enabling us to donate \$11,000 to local charities in 2020."

"Over the last few years, we have donated \$40,000 to charity and we estimated over the 64 years the rodeo has raised \$500,000 for the community including ambulance, police, Kurrajong and Can Assist."

Mr Absolom said it was the first

time in the rodeo's history it had been cancelled with the exception of one wash-out which saw events held on the Sunday morning.

He said border closures prevented competitors coming from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory, along with the bucking stock from Victoria.

With the oldest committee member aged 92, the welfare of volunteers was a consideration, he said.

"We also rely on local sporting and community clubs to volunteer on the day."

"A lot of people are disappointed as they regard it as the best rodeo around the area with visitors attending from Dubbo and onwards."

Mr Absolom said maintenance work on the back gates and canteen had been completed and the grounds looked a picture after rain.

He said the committee had examined the option of running the event in March/April but a clash with the football and netball season would mean a lack of volunteers.

The committee's Christmas raffle raised \$1600 with the table won by Dudley Ashcroft, Christmas tree by Ken Murphy, and stool by Graham Donaldson.



The Narrandera Rodeo raised \$11,000 for local charities in 2020 but has been cancelled this year. Photo: Kim Woods.

Push to form new state

from front page

Member for Murray Helen Dalton can understand why people would want their own state.

"The Riverina region has been neglected by both political parties for so long. We are losing population and services," Mrs Dalton said.

"However, I just don't see this as something likely to happen."

"A more realistic solution is for people to stop voting for major parties."

"We are seeing some successful independent and minor party MPs in recent times, and slowly we are seeing change."

"If we got rid of all the major party MPs in our region, we would see billions flow to our towns as governments fight to win them back."

Mr Landini said of the state electorates in NSW, 71 were located in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong and 15 coastal with 22 in the remainder of the state.

"That concentration is immediately concerning – politics is all about who has the numbers and the Riverina hasn't got the numbers," he said.

"Once there is the political domination NSW has got, they start to suck all the public money into their centre."

"The Riverina State would have control of the water, the biggest bargaining chip and the decisions around water would be made a lot more differently."



David Landini is pushing to form a Riverina State, separate from NSW. Photo: Kim Woods.



The cabin of the prime mover is wedged in the front room of the Whitton Street home after crossing the Newell Highway. Photo supplied.

Truck causes havoc

A RUNAWAY grain truck rolled across the Newell Highway from Manildra Group's mill smashing into the front of a Whitton Street home in December.

The cabin of the prime mover, owned by Paterson's Transport, became wedged in the front room of the weatherboard home.

No one was home at the time of the accident and there were no injuries reported.

Emergency services including the Narrandera Volunteer Rescue Squad, Fire and Rescue, ambulance, and police were called to the accident on December 22 after the truck and dog had rolled down an exit ramp from the mill.

The highway was closed with traffic diverted as emergency services used acro props to shore up the front of the home and battery Halmatrol cutters to help cut away debris from under the prime mover.

Traffic was diverted into Elwin and East streets.

The truck was believed to be unloading wheat at the time of the accident.

Narrandera Rescue Squad captain Wayne Heidtmann said the prime mover crashed into the front porch and bedroom of the home.

Mr Heidtmann said the truck was pulled out of the house by Royans heavy haulage and Fire and Rescue deemed the scene was safe before the VRA could go in.

"We shored the house up with acro props – there was a lot of damage to the house with the truck going through the front porch and into the main bedroom."

"It was very luck no one was home."

"It took around four hours (to shore the house up)."

Group offended by conduct

RENEW Narrandera has warned the shire council a Code of Conduct complaint will be made around alleged threats to local residents.

Renew Narrandera spokesman Stuart Davies said the group felt it was time to rectify some misconceptions in the local community.

"Firstly, the Narrandera Shire Council is now only seven strong, two Councillors resigning for reasons that only they should share with us, and last time I checked, a group of seven is a small group representing our Shire," Mr Davies said.

"Renew Narrandera is made up of over 700 people that support our request for an independent enquiry – plus those that count themselves as victims of Council's administrative failures."

"Many in our large group are disgusted by the shenanigans of

our Council at its November 2020 meeting, with yet again misinformation being supplied to councillors by the General Manager and Co."

Mr Davies said the Mayor Neville Kschchenka, the General Manager and Cr Jenny Clarke were all aware of the Code of Conduct complaints yet to be finalised in accordance with the law, and they chose to remain silent as the meeting was publicly aired.

"This again brought our Council into disrepute and held it up for ridicule," he said.

"Some of our more active members perceived the statement, 'bury them' as a death threat and remain duly concerned. Consequently, our legal team is preparing 'Code of Conduct' complaints against those that made the threats and against those that allowed the fiasco to further bring our

town, Shire and Council into disrepute."

Mr Davies said the group's aims and objectives were supported by many of the Council's own workers despite threats of being 'sacked for speaking' to us', or to the Councillors themselves, along with incitement by senior administrative staff at meetings with workers to "give them a hard time whenever you see them?"

Renew Narrandera wants only what the Office of Local Government claims, honest, open and accountable Local Government."

A Narrandera Shire Council spokesperson said Council was yet to receive any written notification from Renew Narrandera or Stuart Davies in 2021.

Further to this, General Manager George Cowan, has advised of no further comment at this time.

Town sizzles in heat wave

NARRANDERA shire residents sweltered through a heat wave this week as temperatures hit a sizzling 41 degrees on Wednesday.

This had been preceded by a run of hot weather beginning on Sunday at 36.4 degrees, Monday on 37.6 degrees and Tuesday on 40.2 degrees.

The highest January temperature recorded at Narrandera was 45.4 degrees in 2016.

The average temperature for January has been 30.8 degrees – below the long-term average of 33.3 degrees.

So far this month,

Narrandera has recorded a total of 22mm of rain, compared to just 0.2mm this time last year and under the long-term average of 34.9mm.

A total of 18.6mm fell in December, 2020.

The Bureau of Meteorology recorded 590.6mm of rain at Narrandera airport in 2020 – two and a half times that of the drought year of 2019 on 239.6mm.

Murrumbidgee regulated river water source allocation to general security licences was increased by one per cent on December 15 to bring the total allocation to 77 percent entitlement.