



Best Value Report

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

June 2003

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	2
Corporate Plan Direction	3
Community Focus	3
Services Provided	4
Community Need For These Services	12
Need Recognised by Other Government Departments and Agencies.....	15
Need Recognised by Council.....	17
Need Recognised by the Local Community	20
Consultation	21
Service Responsiveness To Community Needs	23
Accessibility Of Services To Target Groups.....	25
Best On Offer (Benchmarking).....	27
Regular Reporting To Community On Service Standards And Levels Achieved .	29
How Continuous Improvement Is Being Achieved.....	31
Local Employment Growth/Retention	33
Partnerships With Third Parties To Achieve Service Objectives.....	34
Competitive Neutrality	37
Future Improvement Options.....	38
Quality And Cost Standards	40
Attachment 1 Reference Documents	
Attachment 2 Analysis of Community Satisfaction With Waste Management services	

Executive Summary

The Community Wellbeing group of services consists of six Council programs, which principally focus on the enforcement of legislation, and in so doing contribute to a safe and pleasant environment. The services included in this group cover the areas of public health, management of emergency situations, regulatory functions such as domestic animal control, and enforcement of building and planning requirements.

Each of these services is undertaken pursuant to legislation set primarily by the State Government, the enforcement of which is delegated to Local Government. As such, the community is usually quite polarised in its perception of some of these services, depending on whether they are on the receiving end (enforcement of legislation) or the beneficiaries of the service.

Because other tiers of government develop the underpinning legislation, Council is generally unable to influence the requirements, and the levels of the services to be undertaken. The ability to ensure that the services are responsive to local needs are similarly constrained. The influence of the Council is limited to how the legislation is enforced, and the level of resources to be placed to the services to ensure the ongoing wellbeing of the community.

The Best Value review has identified that the services have achieved the requirements of 'Best Value'. Specifically the services have:

- Ensured accessibility by the intended target groups.
- Developed standards to measure the quality and cost of the services delivered.
- Continuously improve the services provided, and
- Regularly consult with appropriate members of the community in the development and delivery of the services.

The services are subject to constant review, both by government departments and program staff, who actively seek innovation in the way the services are delivered, and the standards achieved. Benchmarking of aspects of the services are being actively pursued, with two of the services participating in benchmarking projects that are nearing completion.

Limited formal reporting to the community on the standards and service level achieved is currently being undertaken, but this will be addressed in the forthcoming year, to ensure that this principle of Best Value is also achieved.

This report demonstrates that the Community Wellbeing group of services have substantially achieved the principles of Best Value.

Introduction

The Community Wellbeing Best Value Report has been developed in response to the Best Value requirements in the Local Government Act (1989). The Community Wellbeing programs, itemised below, are grouped together because they share a common service objective, that is, the provision of services that support and promote a healthy, independent community.

It is the view of Council that Best Value relates to good management practice. Accordingly, grouping these services together is an appropriate way to review how they meet the greater objectives of Council, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Completing individual service reviews may not necessarily achieve this greater goal.

The programs included that make up Community Wellbeing services for Swan Hill Rural City Council are:

Program No	Program Name
2110	Development Group
5310	Arbovirus Disease Control Program
5447	Emergency Management Services
5460	Regulatory Services
5465	Parking Control & School Crossings
5470	Public Health

Elements of the Community Wellbeing group of services are underpinned by statutory requirements of local government under the Local Government Act (1989), and set out in Schedule 1 as follows:

Item 1 General Services:

- (1) Fire prevention and protection
- (2) Local emergency and safety services
- (3) Animal control, protection and conservation
- (4) Animal impounding

Item 2 Health, education, welfare and other community services:

- (2) Health inspection services
- (4) Prevention and abatement of nuisances

Item 3 Planning and land use control:

- (1) Building control

Item 4 Property services:

- (2) Land development schemes

Corporate Plan Direction

The corporate plan has been developed by Council to provide direction and guidance to the organisation in developing and providing services to the community.

The Community Wellbeing goal provides direction for this group of services. Specifically:

“To enhance community well-being by facilitating community participation, and the provision of support networks and services that maintain the dignity, health, safety and well-being of our diverse community.”

The corporate plan goals are supported by strategies to achieve the desired outcomes. The Community Wellbeing group of services specifically address the following strategies:

- Develop and implement a Community Safety Policy.
- Develop and implement a Community Emergency Risk Management Strategy.
- Facilitate or provide appropriate services necessary to support the wellbeing of the community.

The outcomes to be achieved through these strategies are:

- A safer community.
- Healthy and independent community.

Within this context, the broad service objective for Community Wellbeing is to:

“Provide and, where appropriate, enforce, a range of services, primarily underpinned by statute, which regulate and protect the community, resulting in a safe and pleasant environment that promotes physical, mental and social wellbeing.”

Community Focus

Community Wellbeing services are unique in Council as they principally focus on the enforcement of legislation. As such the community is usually quite polarised in its perceptions of some of the programs within this group of services, dependant on whether they are on the receiving end of the services (enforcement of legislation) or the beneficiaries of the services (having a stable and safe environment within which they live).

As a general statement, these services deliver a community benefit, which in its implementation causes some members of the community to rail against the restrictions of the regulations.

Services Provided

A brief description of the services currently provided under the heading of Community Wellbeing is as follows:

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

The Statutory Planning function of Council provides services across the whole of the municipality, and is funded by fees paid by applicants for permits, and planning information certificates. The municipality is covered by the Swan Hill Planning Scheme, which divides the municipality into zones. The Scheme sets out for each zone the type of land use, or development, that may be carried out without specific approval, those for which a permit is required, and those for which permission is denied.

The Council's statutory planning service has the following key features:

- Public advice regarding the requirements for permits.
- Permit assessment and issuing.
- Issuing certificates.
- Planning inspection and enforcement for compliance with permits, the Planning Scheme, Acts and Regulations.
- Mediation meetings with stakeholders.
- Preparation of reports and appeal documentation.
- Attendance at planning appeal hearings.
- Maintenance of planning permit register, and statutory document files.
- Maintenance of Planning Scheme, Acts and Regulations.

Building Control

The Building Control function of Council provides services across the whole municipality, and is funded by building permit and inspection fees paid by applicants.

Council is charged with the responsibility of administering the Building Act (1993), Building Regulations (1994), and the Building Code of Australia (1990). Collectively, these forms of legislation set the standards for construction of buildings across the State, and require permits to be obtained before commencing most building works.

Council's Building Control service has the following key features:

- Issuing building permits.
- Coordination and conduct of building inspections.
- Issuing property/building permit information certificates.
- Preparation of modifications and appeals.
- Enforcement/Emergency Order/Building Notice procedures.
- Maintenance building permit document files.

- Preparation of building figures/statistical information.
- Maintain building reference library, e.g. current codes, trade literature.
- Advisory service to ratepayers/builders/consultants/general public in relation to regulatory changes and requirements.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control Program

The Arbovirus Vector Disease Program is a joint program between Council and the Department of Human Services under which Council provides a 'Monitor' to carry out the arbovirus control program as determined by the department, and for which the department reimburses Council fifty percent of the total costs.

The program is conducted from November to April each year and consists of:

- Identifying and monitoring of mosquito breeding sites, and the implementation of appropriate control measures.
- Trapping of adult mosquitoes and forwarding to the Department of Human Services for identification, counting and virus tests.
- Elimination of breeding sites.
- Promotion of mosquito awareness, and control measures, within the community, targeting schools.
- Preparation and submitting of reports and claims as required within the program.

The 'Monitor' is a full-time staff member who is taken from his/her normal duties for the Mosquito program. The staff member is required to have successfully attended a "Vector Disease Control and Mosquito Identification" course, conducted by the Department of Human Services.

Four traps are set weekly at identified locations, and the mosquitos caught are sent to the Department of Human Services to be identified and tested for anti-bodies to Australian Encephalitis (formerly known as Murray Valley Encephalitis (MVE), Ross River Fever etc.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Swan Hill Rural City Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan is produced pursuant to Section 20(1) of the Emergency Management Act (1986). The plan addresses the prevention of, response to, and recovery from, emergencies within the municipality, and is the result of co-operative efforts of the Emergency Management Planning Committee and assistance from Victorian State Emergency Service (North West Regional Headquarters).

The functions of Municipal Emergency Management are:

- The provision of emergency relief to persons affected by or responding to an emergency.
- The municipal assistance to agencies during the response to and recovery from emergencies.
- The assessment of the impact of the emergency, and
- The recovery activities within the municipality, (in consultation with Department of Health and Community Services).

The Council has a key role in prevention and mitigation to reduce the risk, or minimise the effects, of emergencies that may occur in the area by:

- Enforcement and continued review of existing policies in land use,
- Building codes and regulations, and
- Urban planning

along with the various agencies responsible for prevention activities throughout the community.

The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) has undertaken a risk assessment of all perceived emergency hazards within the municipality. The MEMPC has utilised the Emergency Risk Management model, which is based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard for Risk Management (AS/NZ 4360), to analyse the identified hazards.

Council has a legislated role in the Management of Emergencies, and certain staff are nominated to undertake specific functions in the case of an emergency. These include:

Municipal Recovery Manager

The Senior Environmental Health Officer is designated as the Municipal Recovery Manager. The role is to contribute to, and participate in, the Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan, which details the arrangements for prevention, response to, and the recovery from, emergencies.

The Municipal Recovery Manager sits on the Municipal Emergency Planning Committee, assists with development and review of Emergency Management Plan, develops and reviews Public Health sub-plans and, in an emergency, convenes and chairs the Community Recovery Committee.

Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO)

The Municipal Emergency Resource Officer is responsible for the coordination of municipal resources in responding to emergencies, and has full delegated powers to deploy and manage Council's resources during an emergency. Specific responsibilities are:

- To be responsible for the coordination of municipal resources in responding to emergencies.
- To establish and maintain an effective liaison with agencies within or servicing the municipal district, and the Municipal Recovery Manager.
- To maintain the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre(s) at a level of preparedness to ensure prompt activation when necessary.
- To facilitate the arrangement of a post emergency debrief as requested by the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator.
- To ensure procedures and systems are in place to monitor and record all expenditure by the municipality in relation to emergencies.

Municipal Fire Prevention Officer

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer is an Officer of the Council, Manager Engineering Services, appointed by Council to enforce the provisions of the Country Fire Authority Act (1958) as they apply to Local Government.

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer acts as Chairperson and Executive Officer of the Municipal Fire Prevention Committee, and is responsible for the administrative functions of the committee, and decides when the committee meets.

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer must convey to the respective 'appropriate authorities' the advice and recommendations of the committee on the removal of fire hazards, and must ensure the overall plan of firebreaks and protections are presented to Council and other 'appropriate authorities' for adoption.

Other Emergency Management Functions

Also included as part of Council's Emergency Management role are the following:

- Financial support provided to the Swan Hill and Robinvale State Emergency Services units.
- Eradication of Fire Hazards
- Maintenance and replacement of Fire Plugs in urban areas
- Maintenance of Fire Access Roads
- Operation of the Municipal Emergency Communication Centre (MECC)

(5460) Regulatory Services

The Regulatory Services program is the supervision and enforcement of the statutory requirements of a number of Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice, and Local Laws.

The program has two full-time 'Authorised Officers' at Swan Hill, and one part-time (20 hours per week) Authorised Officer at Robinvale. One of the Swan Hill Officers

becomes the Mosquito Monitor for the Arbovirus Disease Control program, discussed above. The mosquito program runs from November to April each year, however the Officer working as the Mosquito Monitor is available to assist with regulatory services, if required.

Statutory requirements include:

- Country Fire Authority Act (1958) & Regulations (1992).
- Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act (1994) and Regulations (1996).
- Environment Protection Act (1970) & Regulations – various.
- Fences Act (1968).
- Impounding of Livestock Act (1994).
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986).
- Local Laws 2, 5 and 6.
- Codes of Practice.

The duties of the “Authorised Officers” include:

- Ensuring that all cats and dogs within the municipality are registered.
- Maintaining records relating to animal registrations.
- Impounding stray cats, dogs, and other livestock.
- Ensuring impounded animals receive a high level of care whilst in the ‘pound’, and are reunited with their owner, or humanely disposed of if unclaimed.
- Respond to complaints relating to all facets of their responsibilities, e.g. complaints regarding barking dogs, concerns about fire hazards etc, and provide suitable advice to bring about a solution to the complaint.
- Liaise with drovers, or persons moving livestock, entering or passing through the municipality to ensure there is minimum disruption.
- Provide support to the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer.
- Reduce the possibility of wildfires within the municipality, by issuing notices to remove fire hazards.
- Provide the community with advice and education relevant to the program.
- Ensure compliance with Council’s Local Laws. This could involve issuing a permit to consume alcohol in a ‘declared area’, which is an area where normally consumption, or possession of alcohol in an open container, is prohibited, keeping birds in a residential zone, or any other action required under Local Laws.
- Issue Infringement Notices when required.
- Maintain signage and buoys at Lake Boga.

A good deal of the Authorised Officers’ time is spent responding to calls from members of the community, or dealing with matters detected whilst on general patrols. Officer’s are also required, at times, to humanely destroy animals, which could include injured animals, unclaimed cats and dogs from the Pound, or dogs that have been attacking sheep.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Parking Control

Parking Control is the application and enforcement of the Road Safety Act (1986) and various Regulations, and Road Rules Victoria. The aim of the program is to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived by the community from the free flow of traffic in the controlled parking areas, in the commercial areas of Swan Hill and Robinvale.

Duties include:

- Repair and maintenance of parking meters.
- Issuing Infringement Notices where necessary.
- Issuing Disabled Parking Permits.
- Maintaining records of unpaid Infringement Notices and follow up through the PERIN (Penalty Enforcement by Registration if Infringement Notice) Court.

School Crossings

School Crossings are a VicRoads/Council program. There are currently seven supervised crossings in the municipality that receive funding. VicRoads allocate a grant to all Councils in Victoria, based on the State budget allowance, and divided by the number of crossings that require supervision throughout the State. Council is then allocated a sum of money for each supervised crossing in the municipality. The VicRoads grant equates to about sixty-five percent of the cost of operating school crossings in the municipality during the school year.

Supervised crossings are situated at:

- Swan Hill Primary School (2), in Gray Street and in Yana Street.
- Swan Hill North Primary School (2), in Chapman Street and in Murlong Street.
- St Mary's Primary School, Murlong Street, Swan Hill.
- Manangatang P12 College, Mallee Highway, Manangatang.
- Robinvale Consolidated, George Street, Robinvale.

Council's role is to ascertain that the crossing meets the VicRoads guidelines, employ and train the crossing supervisors, and provide the uniforms. Council also provides ongoing supervision and support to the supervisors, who control the crossings for one hour a day (on school days), split between half an hour before, and half an hour after, school hours.

(5470) Public Health

The public health program incorporates a number of services to provide public health programs appropriate to community needs.

Food Safety

The Federal Government has taken national approach to food, and food safety, with the introduction of the Food Safety Standards (2001). All food premises must be registered with Council under the Food Act and must observe strict hygiene and food handling requirements. Food premises must also comply with prescribed structural requirements.

All registered food premises, other than premises selling packaged food with a stable shelf life, must have a Food Safety Program, which describes how they will conduct their business safely.

Environmental Health Officers carry out an annual inspection of food premises, and conduct 'food safety program' audits. Food samples are also routinely purchased and submitted for analysis to ensure compliance with the Food Standards Code.

Consumer complaints and food recalls are also addressed by the Environmental Health Officers.

Septic Tanks

All premises not connected to a sewerage system are required to have an on-site sewage and liquid waste disposal system. Council's role is to approve the liquid waste disposal system, provide advise on installation and maintenance, and investigate and seek modification of, system that fail.

Accommodation Standards

Council is responsible for annually inspecting prescribed accommodation premises to ensure standards are maintained in accordance with the Health Act (1958). Prescribed accommodation premises are 'residential accommodation, hotels and motels, hostels, student dormitories and holiday camps'. In addition, caravan parks and moveable dwellings are registered and inspected for compliance under the Residential Tenancies Act (1997). Complaints for inadequate housing standards are investigated, and proceedings instigated for offences if required.

Municipal Public Health Plan

The Council has a Municipal Public Health Plan on issues affecting the municipal district pursuant to the Health Act (1958). The plan identifies actual and potential public health issues in the municipality, and outlines programs and strategies to enable people living in the municipal district to achieve maximum wellbeing.

The plan is reviewed annually, and completely rewritten every three years, to ensure its relevance.

Communicable Disease Control

Communicable disease in the community is controlled by Environmental Health Officers through conducting regular community immunisation sessions, monitoring of skin penetration establishments such as tattooists, body piercing etc, and hair dressing premises, investigating reports of communicable disease, and regular inspections of public swimming pools for operation in accordance with the Health Regulations.

Environmental and Nuisance Control

All reported incidents of pollution to the environment, and nuisances, that is, incidents of annoyance to neighbouring properties e.g. excessive noise, odours, sanitary conditions, or burning of rubbish are investigated, and if appropriate prosecuted.

Community Need For These Services

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

Under the Planning and Environment Act (1987) every municipality is to implement a planning scheme, which sets down certain controls and guidelines in relation to development and land use issues.

Any person wishing to use, or develop, land in a specific way must first enquire with Council as to whether a planning permit is required for the development. The community require access to Council's planning service in order to determine whether their proposal is consistent with planning scheme requirements, and State, regional and local planning policies.

Building Control

Under the Building Regulations (1994) most building works require a person to obtain a building permit prior to the commencement of any works.

Members of the community who are proposing to undertake building works must first enquire with Council as to whether they are required to take out a building permit. A person has the option of obtaining a building permit through Council's building permit service, or use a private consulting building surveyor.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

The municipality has a population of 20,710 (2001 Census), which swells considerably with the inclusion of visitors to the area. The majority of these people live or visit the river/irrigation areas. Mosquitoes also enjoy these areas and thrive in the conditions for which the municipality is known – water and hot weather.

The Department of Human Services is responsible for the control of mosquito borne viruses within the community. The Council participates in a joint exercise with the Department of Human Services and provides a Monitor to check larval breeding sites during the mosquito season, to identify the mosquitoes. The mosquito cycle is annual and extends from November to April.

In addition to monitoring larval breeding sites, there are four traps set on a weekly basis at permanently logged locations. Mosquitoes trapped are forwarded to the Department for testing for anti-bodies.

A sentinel chicken program operates whereby virus free chickens are provided by the Department. These chickens are bled weekly and the blood forwarded to the Department for testing for anti-bodies.

The most common arbovirus infection detected is Ross River Fever. However, the major concern is Australian Encephalitis (formerly known as Murray Valley Encephalitis), which can be fatal.

An important facet of the Monitor's duties is education. This is mainly aimed at primary school pupils, with each receiving an educational visit on a three year rotational basis. However a stall is also set up each year at the Swan Hill Agricultural Show, and at the Swan Hill Murray Downs Field Days.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The importance of emergency services to the local community is in the coordinated response to the safety of individuals and property, and assistance in the recovery process by the provision of information, guidance, and practical support. At least five incidents occur per year, usually involving residential fires.

(5460) Regulatory Services

The Regulatory Services Program covers the following areas:

- Animal control (cats and dogs)
- Stock control (horses, cattle, sheep etc)
- Environmental control (litter)
- Local Laws

The duties are covered under the provisions of a number of Acts of Parliament, including:

- Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act (1994)
- Impounding of Livestock Act (1994)
- Prevention of Cruelty To Animals Act (1986)
- Environmental Protection Act (1970)
- Local Government Act (1989)

The program is fully funded with the major share of the income received from the registration of cats and dogs. Infringement Notices also contribute financially towards the program. In 2001-2002 there were 3,002 dogs and 703 cats registered with Council.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Parking Control

Parking control is the application and enforcement of the provisions of the Road Safety Act (1986) and associated Regulations. The aim is to maximise the benefits derived by

the community for the free flow of traffic in the 'controlled parking' areas within the municipality.

'Controlled parking' is enforced by Council in the central business districts of Swan Hill and Robinvale. Swan Hill has 294 meters, both 1-hour and 2-hour parking, and other on-street restricted parking for 5 minutes, 1 hour and 2 hours. There are also 3 shopping-complex car parks: Bi Lo, Safeway, and Go Lo that are gazetted highways under the provisions of the Road Safety Act. Council enforces a 2-hour limit in these car parks. Robinvale has 1 and 2-hour parking restrictions.

School Crossings

School Crossings are defined in Road Rules – Victoria. The Crossing Supervisors are employed according to the guidelines provided by VicRoads. VicRoads provide a grant for each supervised crossing within the municipality, which currently numbers seven. The VicRoads grant is based on the number of supervised crossings throughout the State equally divided into the allocation provided by the State Government. Council claims this grant from VicRoads twice a year (December and June). Council contributes a similar amount of money to the program.

This program is funded by revenue from parking meters, parking Infringement Notices, and the VicRoads grant. GST is payable on the meter money, but not on the parking Infringement Notices.

(5470) Public Health

The Federal and State Government provide legislation to control issues relating to public health to improve the safety and welfare of the community. The areas of infectious diseases, food safety, environmental protection and general unsatisfactory public health conditions are controlled by the legislation.

Food Safety

Council's Health Department inspects 206 food premises each year, pursuant to the Food Act (1984). There are 66 food samples required to be taken from food premises each year for analysis by a National accredited laboratory. There is a national approach to food and food safety and the Australian and New Zealand Food Authority have provided guiding principles for State Government.

The fees for these services are partly recovered by fees raised from annual registration of premises. The costs to businesses are reduced to a level consistent with Council's objective of providing good services at a low cost.

Due to budgeting constraints, staff numbers are limited to two Environmental Health Officers for 20,000 residents. This impacts on service levels that can be achieved.

Timelines for inspections are set by legislation in the Food Act (1984) to at least once per year and other inspections are inspected on a similar basis but may be deferred depending on work loads. Complaints are investigated within 48 hours locally but may be longer for complaints within the wider district. Emergencies are acted on as soon as practicable.

Household Waste Water

Local Government is authorised under the Environmental Protection Act (1970) to permit the installation of waste water systems for the disposal of effluent. Between 40 and 50 systems are installed each year. The State Government recognises the need to protect the environment by proper control of waste water systems and has devolved this responsibility for small household and businesses treatment systems to Local Government.

Accommodation Standards

Between 30 and 35 accommodation premises are inspected each year for compliance with the Health Act (1989). Twelve Caravan Parks are visited each year for compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act (Caravan Parks and movable dwellings) (1999).

Municipal Public Health Plan

The State Government sees a need for Councils to have a Public Health Plan to improve the general health and wellbeing of the community, and is a Legal requirement under Health Act (1958). Council has received a grant from the State Government for a project to implement a good practice program, in addition to the development of the local public health plan. The project is being carried out in association with our two neighbouring Councils, the Shires of Gannawarra and Buloke.

Communicable Disease Control

Approximately 4,200 vaccinations are given each year through 24 clinics and 10 school visits, pursuant to the Health Act (1958), to protect the public from unnecessary diseases. To minimise the risk to health in public swimming pools and spa's, the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations (2001) require the operator to ensure water quality meets the required standards. Approximately 50 pools, spa's and wading pools operate within the district and are visited, and tested, each year.

Need Recognised by Other Government Departments and Agencies

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

The State Government recognises the need to implement a set of controls for the use, development and protection of land. Under the Planning & Environment Act (1987)

every municipal Council is required to adopt a planning scheme. The planning scheme sets out policies and controls for the use, development and protection of land.

Building Control

The State Government recognised the need to implement a set of standards for the construction of buildings across the state to ensure the safety, health and amenity of building occupants. The building control process requires a person to obtain a building permit prior to the commencement of most building works so that it can be assessed against the set of standards.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

Of all the insects that are involved with the transmission of human diseases the mosquito potentially poses the most significant threat. The State Government, through the resources of the Department Of Human Services, has implemented a mosquito disease control program under which the Department provides the guidelines and training, and Council provides the 'on-ground' services.

The aim of the program is to monitor breeding sites, identify the species, and implement appropriate control measures.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Federal, State and local governments recognise a need for communities and persons to be assisted when tragedy occurs on an individual basis, or disaster strikes a community. Depending on the incident, there is a need for many agencies to be involved to assist in bringing normality back to the community or individual.

(5460) Regulatory Services

The Government has legislated uniform requirements throughout the State, which the Authorised Officer of Council is required to enforce. In addition, Council may create 'Local Laws' pursuant to the Local Government Act (1989), the enforcement of which also falls to the Authorised Officer.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

The State Government recognises a need for orderly parking within the community and has provided legislation to control these issues. The Road Safety Act, 1986, and associated Regulations provide the basis to ensure the Governments needs are substantially achieved.

The safety of children around School precincts is a major concern. The Government, through VicRoads have established a Code to provide a better and safer system under the guidance of School Crossing Supervisors at eligible crossings.

(5470) Public Health

The Federal and State Government provide legislation to control issues relating to public health to improve the safety and welfare of the community. The areas of infectious diseases, food safety, environmental protection and general unsatisfactory public health conditions are controlled by the legislation.

Need Recognised by Council

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

Planning Control is a statutory function set down by State Government legislation. The Planning & Environment Act (1987) requires that the municipal Council be the relevant authority for administering and enforcing the planning scheme, or provisions of a planning scheme under the Act.

Council has recognised its responsibility in administering its planning scheme, and has therefore established a planning department in order to assist people wishing to use and develop land. Council currently employs two planning officers. They provide planning permit and advisory services across the entire municipality.

On average, Council issues some 200 planning permits annually at an estimated value of \$26 million per annum. Unlike building permits, planning permits cannot be issued by private consultants. All planning permits must be considered, and issued, by Council.

Planning permits are issued for developments that include:

- Commercial and industrial developments
- Multi - unit developments
- Public buildings
- Subdivision of land

Building Control

Building Control is a statutory function set down by State Government legislation. Council is charged with the responsibility of administering the Building Act (1993), the Building Regulations (1994), and the Building code of Australia (1990). Under the Local Government Act (1989), Council is required to employ a Building Surveyor. It is the Municipal Building Surveyor's responsibility to administer and enforce the legislation in the municipal district.

Council has recognised its responsibility in administering the building control function and employs a Building Surveyor and Building Inspector. They provide building permit and inspection services across the entire municipal area.

On average, Council issues some 400 building permits annually at an estimated value of \$25 million per annum. It should be noted that building permits are also capable of being issued by private building surveyors. Approximately 70 buildings permits are issued annually in this municipality by private building surveyors, at an estimated value of \$4.5 million.

Building works include:

- New dwellings
- Commercial and industrial buildings
- Villa unit developments
- Additions to dwellings
- Public buildings
- Swimming pools
- Outbuildings

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

Council acknowledge that mosquitoes have the capability to become a serious health risk to the community. They provide a 'monitor' who is responsible for the conduct of the program as per the guidelines from the Department of Human Services.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Council, under the Emergency Management Act (1986), must appoint a person or persons to be the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer/s. A Municipal Emergency Resource Officer is responsible to the Council for ensuring the coordination of municipal resources to be used in emergency response and recovery. The Council is required to appoint a Municipal Emergency Planning Committee constituted by employees of the Council, response and recovery agencies, and local community groups involved in emergency management issues. In the event of a disaster Council recognises its role to assist its community members.

(5460) Regulatory Services

Local Laws are made under the provisions of the Local Government Act (1989), and cannot over-ride State or Federal Government legislation. Council has introduced a number of Local Laws, which provide for the community to have quiet enjoyment of public places, without interference.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Council recognises the need for an orderly free flow of traffic in 'controlled parking' areas within the municipality, and has implemented parking restrictions in Swan Hill and Robinvale to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

The safety of children around schools is also of major concern to Council. To assist the children to safely cross roads adjacent to a number of schools in the municipality, and where the crossings meet the VicRoads criteria, Council has employed School Crossing Supervisors at seven locations.

(5470) Public Health

Council recognises the need to protect its community by enforcing legislation and providing trained staff to administer the public health statutory requirements.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING FINANCIAL OPERATIONS (Actual) 2001/2002

	Development Group 2110	Arbovirus Vector Disease 5310	Emergency Management 5447	Regulatory Services 5460	Parking Control & School Crossings 5465	Public Health 5470	Total
Operating Subsidies	7,500	18,095	9,000		18,900	44,193	97,688
User Fees & Charges			90	113,123	76,769	70927	260,909
Planning Fees & Certificates	65,351						65,351
Building Fees & Certificates	74,140						74,140
User Contributions	27,250					819	28,069
Other Income					431		431
Total Income	174,241	18,095	9,090	113,123	96,100	115,939	526,588
Wage & Related (Note 1)	100,561	27,170	15,646	69,605	70,402	152,655	436,039
Repairs & Maintenance	3,764	375		3,064	436	323	7,962
Premises Fees				2,500		1,160	3,660
Travel/Vehicle	28,675	181		23,700		24,992	77,548
Contractors	74,223		20,540	0	3,038	2,917	100,718
Consumables/Utilities	22,516	126	967	7,005	2,454	19,620	52,688
Other Expenses	7,122	251	33,559	3,969	-16,036	10,291	39,156
Capital Expenses					37,821		37,821
Total Expenditure	236,861	28,103	70,712	109,843	98,115	211,958	755,592
Total Council Contribution	62,620	10,008	61,622	-3,280	2,015	96,019	229,004

Note: Wages & Related component for Development Group 2110 denotes costs associated with Statutory Building, Planning and Control only.

Annually, Council expends in excess of \$750,000 on Community Wellbeing Services. Of this amount, over \$500,000 is recovered, either in user fees levied on target groups in the community, or through grants from other levels of government (usually State Government). Council contributes over \$229,000 annually to the operation of these 'services' to ensure the continued wellbeing of the community.

Need Recognised by the Local Community

In order to identify community perception, the Swan Hill Rural City Council commenced regular surveys of the community in May 2000, covering a range of services that Council provides, including Community Wellbeing.

Given the regulatory nature of the Community Wellbeing group of services, the questions on the survey are directed at how effective the community believes Council is at monitoring some of these services, such as car parking, making sure domestic animals are properly controlled, and providing public immunisation services for children.

The results of the surveys conducted to date (see attachment) reveal that for the Community Wellbeing services that are surveyed, and for which the community is able to provide an informed opinion, the community is pleased, and considers the services to be of high importance. This indicates that the community's needs in relation to this group of services are being addressed.

Consultation

Council conducts a Community Satisfaction Survey in May and November each year, in which the community is asked to rate services provided by Council, and to comment on these services, see attachment. Consultation with the community, as it applies to the group of services provided under Community Wellbeing, is as follows:

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

Consultation is carried out annually by the State Government by way of a community satisfaction survey. The survey is normally carried out in February/March each year and is done in two parts. The first part covers nine specific areas of Council responsibility such as Town Planning Policy and Approvals. The second part asks overarching questions in relation to overall performance of the Council: its advocacy, customer contact and community engagement.

Council also works closely with a number of government bodies, and receives regular feedback on the delivery of statutory planning services.

Building Control

The Building Act (1993) and Building Regulations (1994) are State Government legislation, developed co-operatively at a Federal level (all states), and adopted by each state on an individual basis. Consultation, in terms of the development of the regulations, is therefore carried out by the State Government. The delivery of building control services is subject to competition from private building surveyors and therefore a measure of Council's success in the market place. Council currently issues approximately 80% of the building permits issued for the municipality.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

This program is part of a Statewide program coordinated by the Department of Human Services, and operates under their guidelines. Representatives from Council attend two meetings a year, one preceding the mosquito season in November, and the other after the season is completed in April. There is no community consultation relating to the service provided, or to the benefits derived from the program.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The community expects these services to be available in times of crisis. Organisations within the community, such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, Rotary etc, along with State Services prepare for any emergency in a coordinated effort to return conditions to normal as soon as possible. As this 'service' is provided pursuant to legislation, no community consultation is undertaken.

(5460 Regulatory Services

As with the Arbovirus program, this program does not consult with the community. Regulatory services are controlled by State Legislation, Codes of Practice and Local Laws. The only time at which the community can have input is when the State Government invites public comment as part of its process in introducing new Legislation, amending existing Acts, or Codes of Practice. Community Surveys conducted by Council gauge only the quality of service delivered.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Although State Government legislation, Acts, Codes of Practice, and Local Laws control parking, Council, via the community survey, gauges the community's perception of how well parking control is monitored (see attachment).

Supervised School Crossings are established within the VicRoads guidelines. A supervised school crossing is set up at the request from a school. Initially, there is consultation with the school, followed by a pedestrian/vehicle traffic count conducted by a Local Laws Officer of Council. If the count meets the established criteria a supervisor is appointed.

(5470) Public Health

The community are not consulted on the need for control of public health issues, as State legislation provides mandatory requirements, and the community acknowledges that these services are established for the benefit of the whole community.

Service Responsiveness To Community Needs

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

Timelines for the delivery of services in the statutory planning area are specified in the Planning and Environment Act (1987). If timelines are not complied with, applicants have the right of appeal to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. In cases where applications are advertised or referred to other authorities, applications cannot be determined by Council until the expiry of a certain response time, usually 14 or 28 days depending on the type of application.

Fee structures for statutory planning services are set by State Government legislation and therefore have no effect on service responsiveness.

Service responsiveness is related to the resources provided to supply the service. Currently two officers provide statutory planning services and while this is normally adequate, it can create delays where staff replacements are difficult to attract (as is the current situation) or during periods of annual leave, etc.

Building Control

While some in the community may not understand the necessity for building control, the need for regulations to protect the safety and health of people who use buildings would generally be acknowledged. In providing a building permit and inspection service, Council aims to provide a fast, efficient and accurate service to assist in the overall construction program for those wishing to build. Inspections are carried out within 24 hours of notification, and building applications checked within 14 days of lodgement with Council, therefore minimising any delays in the construction program.

Fee structures for building permits acknowledge the work required to provide the service, while aiming to keep the service affordable, and therefore encourage those wishing to build to apply for the appropriate permit. Higher fee levels may well result in an increase in illegal and potentially dangerous building work.

Service responsiveness is also related directly to the resources provided to supply the service. Currently two officers provide building control services and while this is normally adequate, it can create delays during periods of annual leave, etc.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

Council has developed an Municipal Emergency Management Plan, audited every three years, which implements measures to prevent or reduce the causes and effects of emergencies. The Plan coordinates the management, utilisation and implementation of municipal resources, and assists the affected community to recover following an

emergency. The Council works together with other Local, Regional and State services to reach the desired outcome.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control
(5460) Regulatory Services
(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Because of the nature of these programs responses from the community are generally of an adverse nature, as Local Laws Officers are often called upon to issue fines, impound the family pet, ensure dogs and cats are registered or umpire neighbourhood disputes.

Council has three full-time Local Laws Officers at Swan Hill and one part-time (20 hours per week) at Robinvale. With the exception of the Parking Officer, all are provided with a vehicle, two-way radio and mobile telephones. The Parking Officer has a vehicle and mobile telephone. All Officers are in a position to receive enquiries/complaints direct from members of the community. Any enquiry/complaint is dealt with in a timely manner depending on the location and nature of the call. It cannot be said that all matters will be attended to within a set time frame, however every effort is made to deal with it within seventy-two hours.

It is estimated there are approximately ten to twelve complaints lodged weekly. These complaints can be in relation to any facet of the service provided, from dogs barking, faulty meters, rubbish dumped and noise levels to mosquitoes causing concern in a specific area.

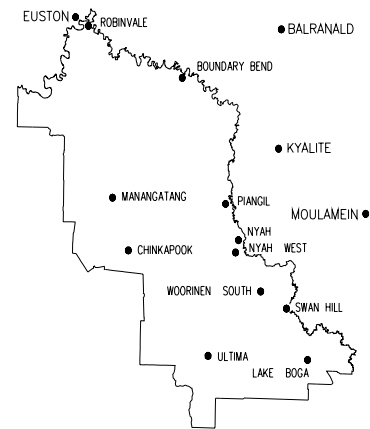
(5470) Public Health

All registered premises are inspected at least once per year. Council employs two Officers, and support staff, to carry out the tasks of public health. Complaints are received from the public and investigated as soon as practicable, depending on the urgency of the complaint. Due to the potential seriousness of food poisonings, investigations are conducted without delay.

Accessibility Of Services To Target Groups

The Swan Hill municipality covers an area of 6,132 square kilometres. Approximately 70% of the municipal population resides in Swan Hill, or within 30 km of it, with a further 20% residing in Robinvale. The remainder of the population resides throughout the municipality.

The Community Wellbeing group of services are available within the Swan Hill Rural City municipality as follows:



(2110) Development Group

Development group services (Building and Planning) are available throughout the Swan Hill Rural City municipality as follows:

- Staffing levels include four technical officers and one administrative officer who are available at the Swan Hill office from 8.30 am – 5.00 pm 5 days a week.
- Staff travel throughout the region to meet with and discuss development proposals with clients and to carry out site inspections.
- The Robinvale branch office is attended each Thursday by an officer from the Development Group.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

This program covers the warmer months of the year from November to April. One Local Laws Officer becomes the 'Mosquito Monitor', devoting ninety per cent of his time during the season towards this program. The balance of his time is available for Regulatory Services duties. Mosquito sites are checked on a two-week cycle for breeding and identification of larvae. The Officer is provided with a vehicle fitted with a two-way radio, and a mobile telephone.

The costs for providing this program are on a share basis with the Department Of Human Services and Council.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Emergency Services of Swan Hill respond to emergencies within the Municipality, and also to neighbouring areas in Victoria and New South Wales, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Over the years the Municipality has experienced a relatively low number of emergencies of consequence. Those with the most widespread impact have been either wind/hail storms, or flood and have primarily involved property damage, rather

than loss of life. Individuals and groups can access emergency services by dialling 000, or the police, at all hours.

(5460 Regulatory Services

Local Laws Officers operate from Swan Hill and Robinvale. Swan Hill has two Officers, one of which becomes the Mosquito monitor for the period November to April each year. Robinvale has one part-time Officer who works twenty hours per week. All three are provided with mobile phones and with a vehicle fitted with a two-way radio. They respond to calls as well as regular patrolling of the municipality.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Restricted parking has only been implemented in Swan Hill and Robinvale. Parking meters have been installed within the Central Business District in Swan Hill, with time restricted parking bordering the metered areas. There are also time restrictions imposed at three shopping centre complexes in Swan Hill, Bi-Lo, Safeway and Go Lo. One Parking Officer is employed at Swan Hill and is provided with a vehicle and mobile telephone.

Robinvale does not have parking meters, only time restricted parking in the Central Business District. The Robinvale Officer shares his time with Regulatory Services, and is provided with a vehicle, two-way radio and mobile phone.

There are seven supervised School Crossings within the Municipality. There are five in Swan Hill, one in Robinvale, and one in Manangatang. These crossings are manned for one hour per school day, split between half an hour before school and half an hour after school hours.

(5470) Public Health

The community has access to health services during normal working hours, through school programs, and after hours activities, i.e. immunisations. In Robinvale the Robinvale and District Health Services conduct immunisation services for Council. Regular visits are made to towns in the municipality by Health Officers for all other health related services such as septic tanks, inspection of food premises and investigation of complaints. Health Officers can be contacted after hours on urgent matters.

Best On Offer (Benchmarking)

Best Value legislation suggests that Council may wish to compare a service to the best on offer both in the public and private sectors. Such a comparison is usually undertaken in the form of benchmarking.

As part of monitoring "best on offer", Swan Hill Rural City Council is a member of the "Super 11" group of Councils, which undertake benchmarking projects to compare their performance in specific areas. The eleven member Councils have common characteristics (large rural municipalities with a number of urban centres and diverse industries).

The status of benchmarking being undertaken by the Community Wellbeing group of services is as follows:

(2110) Development Group

Statutory Planning

Planning Control is a statutory function set down by State Government legislation, where permits can only be obtained from Council at a fee level determined by the State Government. Timelines for the execution of the duties imposed by the State Government are also regulated; therefore suggesting the service should be consistent across the State. Faster than maximum time service is pursued by most Councils, including the Swan Hill Rural City Council, however lack of qualified Planning officers across the state currently hinders progress in this regard. The statutory planning function is currently engaged in a benchmarking project with the 'Super 11' group, and results are expected to be available in 2003/2004.

Building Control

The Building Control services of Council operate in a competitive market with Private Building Surveyors offering the same or similar services to Council. Currently Council issues approximately 80% of all permits issued across the municipality. Survival in the market indicates that Council's Building Control service offers value for money and satisfies the consumer requirements.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

This program is not party to any benchmarking at this stage. Due to the nature of the program it is not anticipated it will be benchmarked.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Federal and State Governments, together with Council and community Service organisations, undertake regular reviews of emergency plans. After a major event,

procedures are publicly reviewed, and comparisons and improvements made where appropriate.

(5460) Regulatory Services

A number of the services provided under this program are included in the benchmarking projects being undertaken by the 'Super 11' group of Councils. Comparisons are made of the fees set by Councils, the costs to administer programs and also the processes involved.

The benchmarking project is nearing completion and the results should be available sometime during the next few months.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Parking control is not party to any benchmarking at this stage.

(5470) Public Health

There are no formal bench marking activities undertaken. Regional Health meetings and Australian Institute of Environmental Health conferences allow participating Councils to compare activities in Public Health, and identify improvement opportunities. In addition, documents are forwarded to Council from Government organisations, and the information therein is considered for improvement opportunities to existing services.

Regular Reporting To Community On Service Standards And Levels Achieved

The Best Value legislation requires that Council regularly report to the community on the achievement of best value principles.

(2110) Development Group

Regular reporting is provided to the community via the Council meeting process. Monthly statistical reports detailing the number, type and cost of building permits, comparisons with previous years and year to date figures are presented to Council on a monthly basis. These figures are often reported by the local press and are available to the public. Details of all planning permits issued are also listed in Council reports and become public information. In addition to the above reporting, all building permit information is provided to the Building Commission, who produces comprehensive information on a monthly basis including comparisons by year, ownership, region, and by individual Councils for various classifications of building.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

A number of reporting mechanisms are used to report to the community, particularly in times of an emergency, but general information is provided by:

- Church and religious groups
- Community news letter
- Community organisations
- Ethnic groups, radio stations, newspapers
- Information centres
- Local telephone information lines
- Newspapers
- Police advice line
- Radio
- Television

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

(5460) Regulatory Services

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Currently the above programs do not report to the Community, on the achievements of service standards and levels, or their responsiveness, accessibility and outcomes of regular consultation.

(5470) Public Health

There is currently no formal reporting mechanism in place to report to the community. Advertising program activities, articles in the local paper on health activities, changes to food legislation, and speaking at public group meetings carry out informal reporting to the community.

How Continuous Improvement Is Being Achieved

(2110) Development Group

The Development Group is achieving continuous improvement in the following ways:

- Attendance at seminars and conferences.
- Regular meetings with industry groups including the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group Inc, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Regional Planners meetings, Heritage Victoria, Relevant Catchment Management Authorities and the Department of Primary Industries.
- Staff are continuing with their formal and informal education and training.
- Utilisation of up to date computer software through 'Intellisoft' providing programs for Building and Planning permit processing, provision of reporting functions including statistical information, and direct reporting to State Government authorities.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control

The Arbovirus Disease Control program achieves the requirements set out by the Department of Human Services. Continuous improvement is being achieved by:

- Annual training courses conducted by the Department.
- Two meetings per year where ideas and practices are discussed and dissected.
- Use of Meridian G.P.S and software to pinpoint breeding sites.
- Quality checks whereby the Department provide sample mosquitoes to be identified by Monitors.
- Use of statistical software programs being introduced.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The Municipal Emergency Management Plan is reviewed each year, and audited every three years, for changes and improvements. Regular meetings are held with Local and State services for discussion and improvement to services.

(5460) Regulatory Services

In addition to the benchmarking activities covered earlier, Regulatory Services are achieving continuous improvement by:

- Newsletters/circulars from M.A.V, Department of Primary Industry and R.S.P.C.A.
- Staff attending conferences, seminars and workshops to keep up with new or amended legislation.

- Up to date statistical software programs, e.g. MapInfo, where properties that have a dog or cat registered are highlighted.

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Continuous improvement is being achieved by the following:

- Attendance at training courses.
- Conducting training courses for School Crossing Supervisors.
- Newsletters and M.A.V Information sheets.
- P.E.R.I.N Court (Penalty Enforcement by Registration of Infringement Notice) matters being processed by the Melbourne City Council.
- Replacement of the 'old' mechanical parking meters with new electronic, multi-bay meters.
- Swan Hill Township Traffic Study (1998)

(5470) Public Health

Improvements to the service are continually being adopted by the following:

- Computer program to register all known septic tank systems within the Council
- Computer program to track food samples taken in the Council
- Emergency management Plans for Caravan Parks
- Implementation of Municipal Public Health Program
- Listening to people concerns and changing procedures where practicable
- Overall computer program to modernize health recording.
- Progressive computerisation of manual activities
- Provision of fax stream to advise on food recalls,
- Time management procedures

Local Employment Growth/Retention

The services grouped under Community Wellbeing have not been outsourced as part of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering undertaken by Victorian Councils 1995 – 1999. All these services are performed by staff of the Swan Hill Rural City Council, with the exception of some statutory planning duties that are undertaken by a consultant from Echuca. All other staff live within the region.

It is considered that given the nature of the on-site tasks associated with the Community Wellbeing services, even if outsourcing was pursued in the future, staff providing the services would still need to reside within the municipality, at least during the working week.

The provision of Community Wellbeing services therefore promotes employment within the region.

Partnerships With Third Parties To Achieve Service Objectives

(2110) Development Group

The following people and organisations work in partnership within the Development Group to provide the service to the community.

- Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
- Building and Planning Industry Consultants
- Building and Planning Industry Contractors
- Building Commission
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Department of Primary Industries
- Goulburn Murray Water
- Heritage Victoria
- Housing Industry Association
- Lower Murray Water
- Master Builders Association
- Other Municipal Councils
- Regional Planners Group
- Relevant Catchment Management Authorities
- Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group Inc.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control Program

The Arbovirus Disease Control Program is a joint program between Council and the Department Of Human Services. Council carry out the program activities as set out by the Department. The only 'partnerships' with a third party are with the property owners where the four traps are set each week during the period of the program.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

The following people and organisations work in partnership with the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee to provide the service to the community.

- Ambulance service, Victoria
- Australian Red Cross
- Centre Link
- Country Fire Authority
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Environment Protection Authority
- Goulburn Murray Water
- Kleenheat Gas
- Lower Murray Water
- Powercor

- Salvation Army
- Swan Hill District Hospital
- Swan Hill Fraternal
- Telstra
- VICSES
- VicRoads
- Victorian Education Department
- Victoria Police

(5460) Regulatory Services

The Regulatory Services program, generally, is the supervision and enforcement of statutory requirements. A number of outside bodies are utilised to effectively provide the services of the program. Some of the third parties that work with Council are:

- Balranald Shire Council
- Department of Justice /Sheriff's Office
- Goulburn Murray Water and Lower Murray Water
- Local Veterinary Services
- Marine Board Victoria
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- P.E.R.I.N Court.
- R.S.P.C.A
- The Country Fire Authority, and Local Fire Brigades
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment, and The Department of Primary Industry
- The Environment Protection Authority
- VicRoads
- Victorian Canine Association ("Responsible Pet Ownership")
- Victoria Police

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

As with the Regulatory Services program the majority of activity within this program is in relation to statutory requirements. A small number of outside bodies are utilised to effectively provide the services of the program. Those third parties that work with Council are:

- Department of Justice/Sheriff's Office
- Local Schools
- Melbourne City Council
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- P.E.R.I.N Court
- Reset (Australia) Pty Ltd
- VicRoads

- Victorian Law Foundation
- Victoria Police

(5470) Public Health

The following people and organisations work in partnership within the Environmental Health Services Group to provide the service to the community

- Australian Institute of Environmental Health
- Builders/Plumbers/Contractors/Consultants
- Community
- Department of Agriculture
- Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A)
- Government departments
- Legal firms
- Liquor Licensing Commission
- Manangatang & District Hospital
- Police
- Regional municipalities
- Robinvale District Health Services
- R.S.P C.A.
- Schools/Principals
- State Emergency Service
- Swan Hill District Hospital
- Veterinary Surgeons

Competitive Neutrality

The National Competition Policy (NCP) was first applied to Local Government by the Victorian State Government in 1996/1997. The application of the policy was reviewed by the State Government in 2000, and further refined in 2001.

The Swan Hill Rural City Council first reviewed the application of NCP on Community Wellbeing services as part of the implementation of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). With the demise of CCT, and the implementation of Best Value, as well as the amended application of NCP to Local Government, it was determined to review the National Competition Policy implications on Council's Community Wellbeing group of services.

This report identifies that all the services included in the Community Wellbeing group represent regulatory functions of Council, and therefore are not business activities as determined by the Victorian State Government in the document 'National Competition Policy and Local Government'. Most fees raised are set pursuant to legislation and are regulated. The only service that operates in a market is the issuing of building permits, also undertaken by private building surveyors. Council's fee structure, however, has been set to achieve a community benefit.

The National Competition Policy issues, as they apply to these services, have been reviewed in detail in the report, and conclude that the services comply with the spirit of the policy.

Future Improvement Options

(2110) Development Group

A number of opportunities exist to enhance the community well-being group of services and the overall benefit delivered to the community. The following options are being investigated:

- Continual review of staff resources to match development trends.
- Developing regional co-operation of Planners and Building Surveyors to solve common problems and develop common policies and solutions.
- Encouraging government departments to visit the municipality more frequently.
- Improving access to various government departments.
- The use of consultants to assist with peaks in workload and major projects and reviews.

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control Program

Options to further improve the services in the future would most likely be instigated by the Department of Human Services. Any improvements would be the result of ideas put forward by Council staff at group meetings, or gleaned from interstate or overseas Mosquito control programs, or improvement in the commercial areas with equipment or chemicals etc.

(5447) Emergency Management Services

Future Improvements to Municipal Emergency Management can be carried out locally through training exercises and discussion groups. However, emergency relief is on a worldwide scale, and improvements can be made from experiences in other locations, usually instigated by experiences of other agencies.

Options to further improve the service in the future include:

- Continue to undertake staff training in appropriate areas of emergency management as it becomes available.
- Continue to work with local agencies and government to develop and implement strategies towards Quality and Best Practice.

(5460) Regulatory Services

Options to further improve the service in the future include:

- Continue to undertake staff training in all areas as it becomes available.
- Continue to work with other tiers of government to develop and implement strategies towards Quality and Best Practice.
- Consider ways to increase the benefits from software programs.

- Implement any options derived from the 'Super 11' Benchmarking exercise, which is nearing completion (referred to in Best On Offer section of this report).
- Investigate setting up a Local Laws Group from Councils within the region and have regular meetings to discuss issues pertaining to this program.
- Support community education programs such as "Responsible Pet Ownership".

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

Options to further improve the service in the future include:

- Continue to replace the old mechanical meters with new electronic, multi-bay meters.
- Continue to undertake staff training courses relevant to the program.
- Continue to work with Schools to encourage students to use the crossings correctly.
- Liaise with the Justice Department to devise a better system to collect unpaid fines.

(5470) Public Health

Opportunities exist to enhance the community well-being group of services and the overall benefits delivered to the community by:

- Continue the regional co-operation of Councils to resolve common problems and develop common policies.
- Continue to undertake staff training in all areas as it becomes available.
- Further consider ways to increase the benefits from software programs.
- Reviewing staff resources periodically to ensure proper service delivery.

Quality And Cost Standards

Quality and Cost Standards are required under Best Value for all Council operations. The Quality and Cost Standards should reflect measures by which the community may measure the performance of a service. The actual standards achieved must be reported in Council's Annual Report.

(2110) Development Group

<i>Quality Standards</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Average number of days* required to issue Planning Permits.	46	43	40
• Number of appeals lodged where VCAT overturns Council's decision.	2	2	2
• Average number of days* required to issue Building Permits.	16	16	16
• Number of appeals lodged with the Building Appeals Board	0	0	0

*Days include: weekends, Public Holidays, and all 'clock stopped' periods e.g. awaiting further information, notifications etc.

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Cost to Council per Planning Permit	\$489	\$503	\$518
• Net Cost to Council per Planning Permit.	\$192	\$197	\$202
• Cost to Council per Building Permit	\$218	\$225	\$232
• Net Cost to Council per Building Permit.	\$30	\$31	\$32

(5310) Arbovirus Disease Control Program

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Meets the outcomes of the funding and service agreement with the Department of Human Services.	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Cost per annum to Council to conduct the program.	\$22,538	\$23,214	\$23,910

(5447) Emergency Management Services

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Respond to emergencies as required	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
• Total Cost to Council for emergency management*	\$136,535	\$104,135	\$107,255
• Net Cost to Council for emergency management	\$89,100	\$91,775	\$94,525

* This includes funding and expenditure for drought relief program in 2003/2004.

(5460) Regulatory Services

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community satisfaction rating per Council's regular community surveys. • Dogs and cats registered the previous year and not renewed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dogs o Cats 	78%	78%	78%
	14%	12%	10%
	7.5%	7%	6%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average cost to enforce Local Laws per registered animal. 	\$31.25	\$32.20	\$33.15

(5465) Parking Control & School Crossings

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community satisfaction rating per Council's regular community surveys. • School days the crossing is supervised. 	83%	83%	83%
	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to Council per 'restricted' car park per annum. • Net Cost to Council per 'restricted' car park per annum • Cost to Council per school crossing per annum. 	\$70.15	\$72.30	\$74.45
	\$12.90	\$13.30	\$13.70
	\$980	\$1,010	\$1,040

(5470) Public Health

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the legislative and inspection requirements for registrable premises. • Compliance by food premises with their food safety program. • Average response time to action complaints. • Better than the national average of vaccinations given per population for age groups. 	95%	95%	95%
	75%	80%	85%
	within 3 days	within 3 days	within 3 days
	Yes	Yes	Yes

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 03/04	Year 04/05	Year 05/06
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunisation as a cost per vaccine administered.* • Average food safety cost per registered premises. 	\$7.26	\$11.64	\$11.99
	\$450	\$465	\$482

*In 2003/2004 the national meningococcal immunisation program will result in higher than usual numbers of vaccinations, reducing the average cost. This is not expected to be repeated in the following years.

Attachment 1

Reference Documents

The following documents have been referred to in the compilation of the Best Value Report for Community Wellbeing:

- **Living And Working Together: Municipal Public Health Plan for Swan Hill Rural City Council**, (2001), Swan Hill Rural City Council, Buloke Shire Council, Gannawarra Shire Council. Records File No: 482000.
- **Local Law No2 Consumption of Liquor in Public Places (Amendment 1)**, (1999), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 140524.
- **Local Law No 5 Keeping of Animals, Birds and Poultry (Amendment 2)**, (2001), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 140527.
- **Local Law No 6 Streets and Roads (Amendment 2)**, (1999) Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 140522.
- **Municipal Emergency Management Plan (Amended)**, (2002), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 360201.
- **Municipal Fire Prevention Plan**, (2003), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 440504.
- **Swan Hill Planning Scheme**, (1997), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 730210.
- **Swan Hill Township Traffic Study**, (1998), Turnbull Fenner, Camberwell. Records File No: 845202.

Attachment 2

Analysis of Community Satisfaction With Community Wellbeing Services



SWAN HILL
Rural City Council

**EXTRACTS FROM REGULAR COMMUNITY SURVEYS
CONDUCTED BY
SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL
FOR THE PURPOSES OF INCLUSION IN THE
BEST VALUE REPORT FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Community Survey

The Swan Hill Rural City Council commenced quarterly surveys of the community in May 2000, covering a range of services that Council provides, including those under the group of Community Wellbeing.

In May 2001 an analysis of the five surveys conducted to that date, revealed that the data remained consistent, other than items affected by seasonal changes, for example, the condition of unsealed roads. Therefore, Council determined to reduce the number of surveys conducted to twice yearly.

Surveys of the community have been conducted in May 2000, August 2000, November 2000, February 2001, May 2001, November 2001, May 2002 and November 2002.

Methodology

The survey is conducted by telephone with 100 respondents, using telephone numbers randomly selected from a database. Respondents are asked to rate Council's performance on a scale of 1 to 5, as follows:

1. Needs a lot of improvement
 2. Needs some improvement
 3. Satisfactory
 4. Very good
 5. Excellent
- Or alternatively, "Can't say".

Three questions are asked about the standard of the services provided under Community Wellbeing:

1. "How well does Council monitor timing controls on car parking, such as parking meters?"
2. "How well does Council provide public immunisation services to children?"
3. "How well does Council make sure that domestic animals are kept properly controlled?"

Respondents are then asked if any particular issue has influenced their view, and if they would like to comment. Respondents are also asked to rate the importance of the seven groups of services Council provides.

The Community Satisfaction Survey does not ask questions about several of the services grouped under Community Wellbeing, such as, planning and building, the arbovirus disease control program, registered premises, and emergency management services, as these are regulatory functions where the user of the service is usually adversely affected by the regulatory nature of the service, and the benefit is not readily identifiable by the broader community.

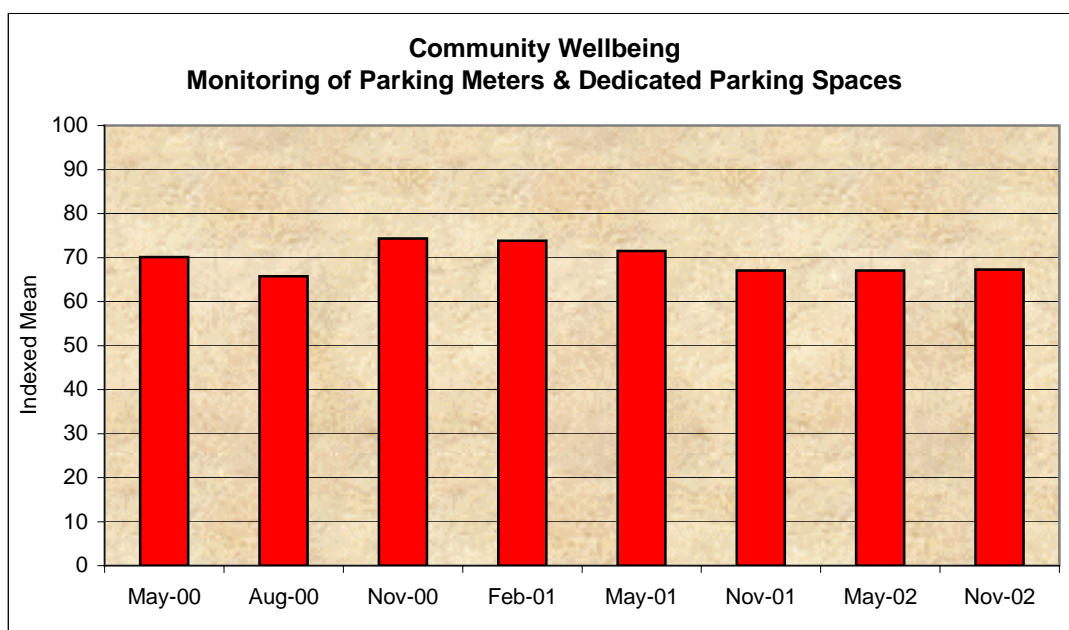
Survey Results

In each of the surveys conducted to date, the community's ability to give an informed opinion ranged between 7% and 47%, depending on the question being asked. As such, the results in the graphs below represent the views of those who **are** able to form an opinion on services provided.

Car Parking - Monitoring of Timing Controls

The aggregation of results for the monitoring of timing controls on car parking, such as parking meters, reveals that the majority of responses, 83%, are in the "Satisfactory" or better categories, with 38% of responses in the "Very Good" category, and the "Excellent" and "Satisfactory" categories receiving 26% and 19% respectively.

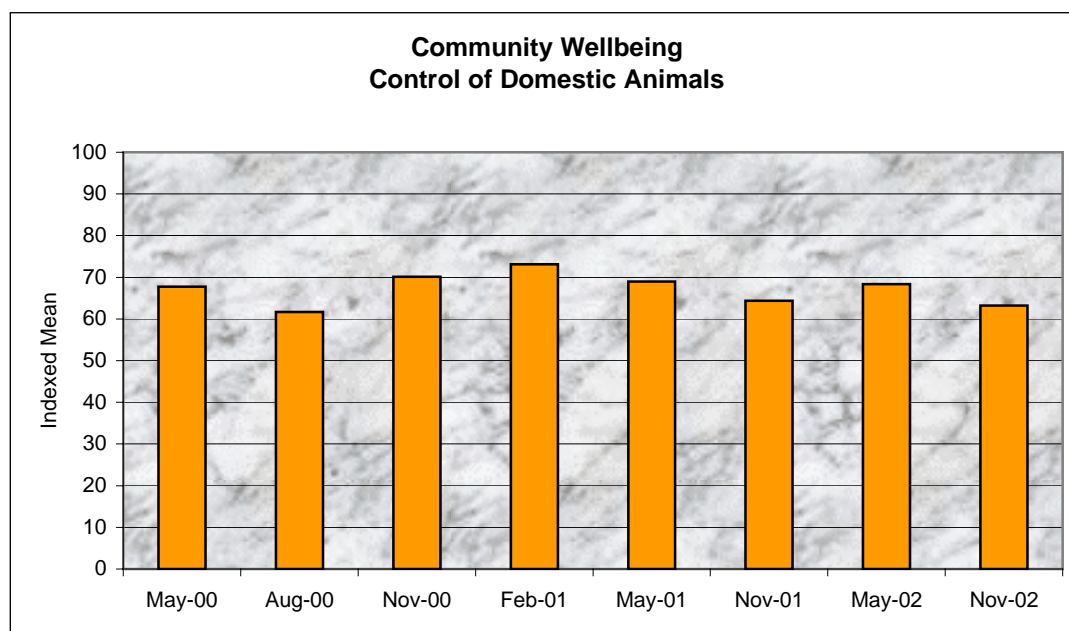
Very few respondents have chosen to comment on the monitoring of car parking. Those who did provide comments would like to see more frequent monitoring of parking spaces allocated to those with disabilities, and to the limited time parking at the Post Office.



Control of Domestic Animals

The aggregated results for the control of domestic animals, see graph below, reveals that the majority of responses, 78%, are in the “Satisfactory” or better categories, with 34% of responses in the “Very Good” category, and the “Excellent” and “Satisfactory” categories receiving 17% and 28% respectively.

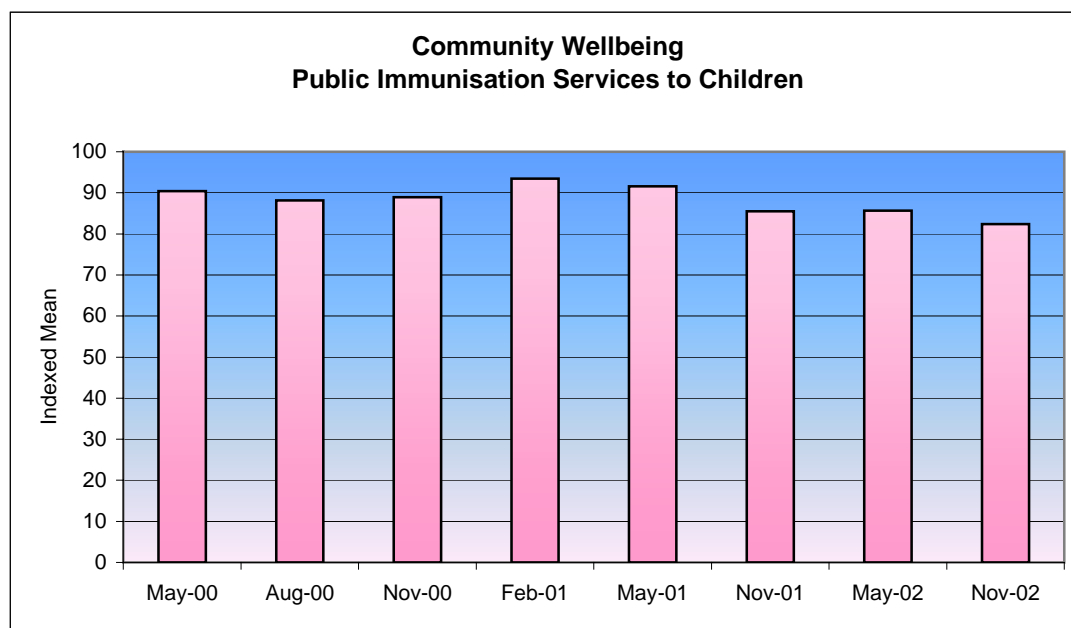
Comments provided reveal that generally, respondents are pleased with the prompt response by the animal ranger to their requests. However, there is a perception by some respondents that a number of dogs and cats are frequently let roam the streets by their owners.



Public Immunisation Services to Children

The aggregated results for public immunisation services to children, reveals that the overwhelming majority of responses, 97%, are in the “Satisfactory” or better categories, with 54% of responses in the “Excellent” category, and 38% in “Very Good” category.

Of the eight community surveys conducted to date, only one (November 2000) received comments specific to immunisation. The comments did not criticise the service, but rather the cessation of the service at Nyah West, and the lack of room to line up in Swan Hill.



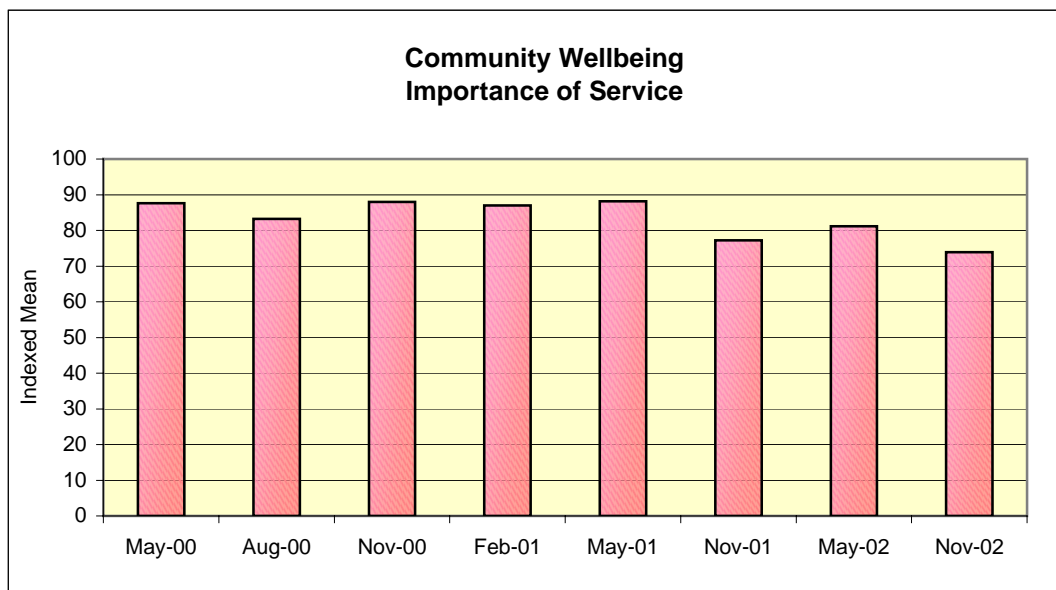
Importance of the Community Wellbeing Group of Services

As part of the community survey, all respondents are asked to rank the importance of the seven groups of services that Council provides.

Adjustment to the survey form, effective from November 2001, may have impacted on the results of the importance of the services provided under Community Wellbeing, in that respondents are now asked to rank the seven groups of services relative to each other. Prior to November 2001, respondents were only asked to rate the importance of particular services.

However, as can be seen in the table and graph below, the services grouped under Community Wellbeing are considered to be of high importance to the community, receiving a consist rating between 77-88, on a scale of 100.

Level of Importance	May 2000	Aug 2000	Nov 2000	Feb 2001	May 2001	Nov 2001	May 2002	Nov 2002
No Importance	4	2	2	2	1	4	3	5
Little Importance	0	0	1	1	1	10	5	11
Important	5	21	10	13	13	19	19	25
Very Important	36	34	29	29	27	31	29	26
Essential	56	43	58	54	59	37	44	32
Mean	4.38	4.16	4.40	4.35	4.41	3.86	4.06	3.70
Indexed Mean	88	83	88	87	88	77	81	74



Summary

In summary, it can be seen that, overall, for the services provided under community wellbeing, and for which the community is able to provide an informed opinion, the community is pleased, and considers the service of high importance.

The services cover a broad range of topics from monitoring of car parking, to control of domestic animals and immunisation services to children.

Whilst the community views this group of services as important, there is one issue over which they voice concern; the control of domestic animals.

Control of Domestic Animals reveals that the community is pleased with the response of the animal ranger to requests, but the perception persists that large numbers of dogs and cats roam free.

Satisfaction with public immunisation services to children consistently rates very highly, although, with the exception of the November 2000 survey, respondents don't choose to comment on the service. The comments made in the November 2000 survey were venue, rather than service, related.

Comments made by survey respondents on these services are reproduced in the following pages.

Community Survey Comments May 2000–November 2002

May 2000

2 Comments

- We shouldn't have parking meters.
- Shopkeeper shouldn't feed the meter.

Domestic Animals

6 Comments

- Personal experience with Ranger and have no complaints.
- Uncanny amount of dogs at Tyntynder.
- Wandering dogs. Nuisance in street.
- Charge for cats is high for honest people who register, it's an unfair charge.
- Dog man very helpful - prompt attention.
- Animals walking around streets in Robinvale e.g. dogs into bins early morning.

August 2000

2 Comments

- Being a businessman in town (Robinvale), parking is essential and there is not enough monitoring of parking, or parking available.
- Need more car parking officers - too big a job for one person.

Domestic Animals

8 Comments

- Too many roaming dogs/cats loose around Thurla Street.
- Dog control very poor.
- Need tougher dog laws. Dogs should not be allowed out at night. Curfew would be a good idea.
- Stray dogs - rang Council and problem was promptly fixed.
- Animals get out of hand in Woorinen, people don't get any satisfaction from Dog Ranger.
- Too many roaming animals.
- Ringing Ranger to collect dogs, and they are back on the street in two hours. Not happy about dogs - does not drive around streets any more.
- Stray cats in backyard at night.

November 2000

Immunisation

3 Comments

- My Children - M & C Health Centre not adequate due to lack of facilities - only one in Swan Hill.
- Nyah West immunisation closed down - very upsetting have to travel into Swan Hill.
- M&CH (Swan Hill) is excellent, but hrs worked are minimal, more time where you don't have to make an appointment. Immunisation - no room to line up need bigger area.

Domestic Animals

6 Comments

- I think that cats should be regulated.
- A lot of stray dogs in Harrison/Yana St area.
- Room for improvement on the animal side.
- Not enough control over animals. When you call not very friendly. Noisy dogs/deers.
- They don't do enough.
- Ranger responds immediately.

February 2001

4 Comments

- Should monitor car parking in supermarkets - not very good at this stage.
- Parking - booking people don't know why.
- More parking needed around post office - need a roundabout at clock.
- Disabled parking is bad - others park in disabled parking such as police and general public.

Domestic Animals

4 Comments

- Domestic animals should be on a leash when walking with owners and dangerous dogs should be muzzled. Law should be changed to protect the animals, especially those that are neglected. Animal laws should be revamped.
- Dogs should be on a leash when on a walk. Should have a "pooper scooper" when out on walks. Some dogs just wandering around town.
- Lots of stray dogs about.
- Dogs in street, not happy about them running loose.

May 2001

Domestic Animals

10 Comments

- Cats locked in at night.
- Animals - unfairness in charging of fines to people the dogcatcher knows or doesn't know.
- Still see dogs without leads.
- Loose dog problem in Robinvale at night.
- Many feral cats around Woorinen.
- A lot of houses have more than the permitted number of dogs (2).
- Ranger needs to get out a bit more.
- Few too many dogs making barking noises and roaming in the town area.
- Registration fees are too high for responsible pet owners, therefore penalising these owners while others get off scot-free.
- Dog droppings are becoming a problem - mostly from dog walkers.

November 2001

5 Comments

- Parking spaces at post office should be more closely monitored.
- Cars parked at the same meter all day.
- Parking problems - BiLo car park.
- People parking in bus parking areas, could they be painted a different colour?
- Shop owners parking in front of their businesses.

Domestic Animals

9 Comments

- Noisy dogs in area - no follow up.
- A lot of strays in Ultima.
- Has problem with dogs in their chooks, need more control.
- Too many roaming animals.
- Always seen dogs on leads.
- Need more animal control.
- Bitten by dogs roaming the street - dogs not on leashes.
- Lots of cats still out at night in Swan Hill.
- Too much dog crap on the footpath - sticks to gopher wheels and smells.

May 2002

9 Comments

- Need more parking in Swan Hill centre. Be tough on businesses using parking spaces.
- A lot of workers using car parks.
- Disagree with parking meters, not necessary.
- People who work in the shops are taking all the parking spaces.
- 2-Hr parking causes problems. Workers take all parking, especially near Beveridge Street Dome, and the antique shop in Beveridge Street.
- Monitoring needs to be increased (sick of people parking all day). Security needs to be upgraded so less damage occurs.
- Don't like new parking metres.
- Can't get a park due to workers using the spaces. Taxis should be moved. Parking man should be on motorbike to see all parks. John does a good job, but can't be everywhere. Wednesday to Friday is impossible to get a park due to workers using parks, especially Beveridge Street near Drummond House and around Bi-Lo.
- Too many workers park in Beveridge Street, losing parks for shoppers.

Domestic Animals

11 Comments

- Officer works part-time in animal control.
- Piangil town wild cats.
- Dogs attacking people near the Nyah post office. Dogcatcher never out there.
- Still stray dogs in main street.
- Stray dogs and cats.
- Lot of cats, no dogs.
- Doesn't want fences up, and doesn't think he needs to put them up to keep other peoples dogs out.
- Ranger does not live in Robinvale.
- A fair few animals wondering at night - dogs and cats.
- Barking dogs.
- Stray dogs causing troubles.

November 2002

4 Comments

- More monitoring in the disabled car parking areas - for people without appropriate stickers. New footpaths are good, old ones are bad.
- Difficult to understand new parking meters in Swan Hill.
- Difficulties using new parking meters.
- Not enough parking. Don't like parking meters.

Domestic Animals

11 Comments

- Walk with dog and does not have any problems.
- Dogs need to be better controlled.
- Dogs not being registered.
- A lot of stray dogs around Nyah West. They have owners but they just wander around.
- Dogs are not controlled well. Cleaning dog poo off nature strips.
- Feral cats a problem.
- Some animals are not looked after.
- Dogs running wild in Woorinen South. People having more than one dog.
- Dogs are always roaming loose in Swan Hill North and in park. Owners don't collect droppings.
- Dog ranger doesn't live in Robinvale.
- Dogs running around town. Dogcatcher couldn't catch one if he tried.