



SWAN HILL
Rural City Council

Best Value Report
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

February 2003

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Executive Summary

The Economic Prosperity group services consist of nine Council programs, which together seek to facilitate the sustainable development of the community, municipality and the region.

Economic Prosperity services may be stratified into two types of services:

- (1) Those commenced by the preceding City and Shire of Swan Hill, and which have an ongoing role in enhancing the economic activity within the municipality, This includes the three caravan parks, the stock selling complex the Industrial Estate and the Pioneer Settlement Businesses, and
- (2) Those services commenced by the Swan Hill Rural City Council upon its formation in 1995. These latter services are more facilitative in nature, and are characterised by their Commercial and In-Confidence nature, where much work is undertaken behind the scenes to facilitate local businesses to grow, and encourage new investment into the region.

Annually Council commits somewhat in excess of half a million dollars to these programs that combined expend some \$1.9 Million. In doing so, the programs contribute to an ongoing economic output of the municipality of \$ 1,360 Million.

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

- Assessed, in various ways the type and level of services required to enhance the economic prosperity of the municipality and the region.
- Determined that they are responsive to economic needs of the community
- Ensured accessibility by the intended target group
- Developed standards to measure the quality and the cost of the services delivered
- Continuously improve the services being provided, and
- Regularly consult with appropriate sectors of the community in developing and delivering the range of services.

The review also identified that due to the commercial and In-Confidence nature of many of the services, the general community is uninformed of actual activity of these services, and that as a result, public opinion is based on misinformation and a lack of understanding of Council powers and role. There is a role for the provision of information to the general public on these matters to address the misinformation in the community.

This report demonstrates that the Economic Prosperity group of programs have substantially achieved the principles of Best Value.

Introduction

The Economic Prosperity Services Best Value Report has been developed in response to the Best Value requirements in the Local Government Act (1989). The Economic Prosperity Services programs, itemised below, are grouped together because they share a common service objective, that is, the provision of services that facilitate the ongoing economic prosperity of the municipality and the region.

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 that make up Economic Prosperity Services for Swan Hill Rural City Council are:

Program No	Program Name
1313	Lake Boga Caravan Park
1317	Robinvale Caravan Park
1318	Swan Hill Caravan Park
1340	Commercial and Industrial Estates
1350	Pioneer Settlement Businesses
1360	Stock Selling Complex
1370	Tower Hill Estate Development
1910	Economic Development Unit
1920	Marketing and Information Services

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 Economic Development Goal provides direction for the Economic Prosperity group of services. Specifically:

“To facilitate the sustainable development of the region by encouraging growth of existing businesses, effectively promoting the competitive advantages of the region and planning for the provision of infrastructure, capital, labour and utility services to meet the future needs of industries and communities in the region”.

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

- Identify strengths and weaknesses and economic infrastructure requirements
- Develop and implement regional marketing strategies to attract new investment. These strategies will target local, national and international investment markets.
- Develop and adopt a management and operational strategy for the Pioneer Settlement.
- Facilitate the development of business and industry
- Facilitate leadership in economic development through the fostering of partnerships with industry and community groups.

The outcomes to be achieved through these strategies are:

- An environment in which existing and potential businesses are able to operate successfully.
- Increased new economic activity and widened industrial base for the municipality.
- A tourism facility that contributes to the economic well-being of the community.
- Maximise the potential of existing and new businesses and industries to enhance wealth and employment generation capabilities.
- Maximise economic development by encouraging positive community attitudes and actions.

Within this context, the broad service objective for Economic Prosperity Services is **“to foster prosperity and economic well-being of the ratepayers through facilitating business and employment growth in the municipality and the region”**.

Community Focus

The community focus for these services is different from that of the organisation. Community focus is fragmented, with the focus of the business community being different from that of the tourism community, and the focus of the agricultural community being different from the general community etc.

Community focus is significantly impacted by the level of understanding of Council’s role in this area, and individual perception of “What needs to be done”.

However, despite the fragmentation of views, a general focus that would be agreed upon by all includes:

- Availability of jobs
- Availability of skilled employees
- Competitive businesses and industries
- Opportunities for business growth
- Economic sustainability

The methodology to achieve these outcomes is, however, subject to some debate by various sections of the community.

Services Provided

A brief description of the services currently provided under the heading of Economic Prosperity is as follows:

(1313) (1317) (1318) Caravan Parks

The Council provides three Caravan Parks across the municipality, one each at Robinvale, Lake Boga and Swan Hill. Each of the Caravan Parks is located on crown land adjoining a body of water, the Murray River in the case of Robinvale and Swan Hill and the lake at Lake Boga. As the land is Crown Land Council does not own it, rather Council is the 'Committee of Management' for the land, and must consult with the Department of Resources and Environment on any change of use of the land.

Each of the parks services a different section of the community, from itinerant labour accommodation, to short term low cost holiday accommodation (tents and caravans), and 4 star caravan park accommodation, with the variations in the services being a consequence of the economic profile of the location. In all three cases the underlying objective is to provide an appropriate standard of accommodation for visitors to the area, given the local accommodation availability and needs.

An independent lessee, determined after a public tendering process, operates each park. The lease arrangements encourage an increase in patronage and attendant income generation. In each case the fees charged by the park are based upon market rates as determined by the wider Caravan Park industry.

(1340) Commercial and Industrial Estates

Council owns land that is zoned commercial/industrial in both Swan Hill and Robinvale. The Economic Development Unit actively markets and sells this land in the public interest of furthering economic development in the region. There are parcels of land in private ownership zoned commercial/industrial, but that land is invariably not serviced.

Council's ownership of commercial/industrial land is a result of the economic development strategies of the early to late 1980's, developed by preceding Councils. As such, the current Council's ownership of land is through history rather than by design.

Until fairly recently there was limited demand for serviced industrial land in Swan Hill and Robinvale. However, recent demand is such that Council land is rapidly being exhausted, and the demand will need to be met through appropriately zoned land in private ownership.

Land sales are facilitated by the Economic Development Unit, through their role in facilitating economic growth of the region. Whether this occurs on Council land, or on land in private ownership, is immaterial. Sales are made at market prices, which vary with the demand in the market. As Council owned land is exhausted, new development will occur on privately owned land.

(1370) Tower Hill Estate – Residential Land Sales

One of the identified challenges to further development of the municipality, and of the urban areas in particular, is the availability of residential housing. Whilst a reasonable amount of residential land is available, particularly ‘infill’ land, private owners of that land have not entered the market to provide further land for housing.

Over the years Council has undertaken a range of activities to encourage the subdivision and sale of residential land. This has included facilitating meetings with real estate agents, owners and developers of land, and even the sale of Council owned land, which included requirements to develop and sell within a specified timeframe. Such initiatives have been unsuccessful in addressing the residential housing shortage.

Council owns significant parcels of land adjacent to the urban areas of Swan Hill township. In order to address the lack of residential land being made available for development, and the resulting housing shortage, Council has entered into a partnership arrangement with the Urban and Regional Land Corporation, to develop Council owned land. This development not only addresses the residential land requirement, but expanding educational land requirements (new TAFE site) are also being met.

(1350) Pioneer Settlement (Businesses)

The Pioneer Settlement Museum incorporates a number of operations that have been classified as ‘businesses’ as their main purpose is to operate at full cost recovery and contribute to the operations of the museum, both financially and as an enhancement on the museum experience of visitors. These businesses include:

Riverview Café and Tea Rooms

The Riverview Café is located in Pioneer Settlement Museum entrance building and is open the same days and times as the museum. The café provides refreshment and food and Beverage services.. The Café is also capable of catering for functions. The Tearooms are located within the museum and provides a “point of sale” outlet for food prepared at the Riverview in addition to drinks and sandwiches. The Tearooms are open daily from 10.00 to 3.30 pm.

Retail Shop and Drapery

The retail shop is located in the entrance building and mementos, souvenirs and ticketing services for the museum. The Shop is operates on the same basis as the Riverview Café. The Drapery is a retail outlet located within the museum and provides a similar range of products and demonstrations of traditional millinery skills used prior to 1930.

Lodges

The lodges consist of three “bunk style” accommodation blocks designed to accommodate students that attend the museum as part of a school excursion. The lodges are located adjacent to the museum and sleep a total of 108 people, typically 6 to a room, with semi private facilities for leaders. The lodges are occasional used by independent travellers and international volunteers.

Pyap Paddleboat

The Pyap is a paddleboat, constructed along traditional lines, that provides the opportunity for a river cruise along the Little Murray and Murray proper. It operates from the wharf within the museum grounds and normally does 2 trips of one-hour duration each day.

(1360) Stock Selling Complex

The Stock Selling Complex is a saleyard that operates in Swan Hill, and facilitates the marketing of livestock for the region; extending as far as South Australia and South Western New South Wales. The complex operates in close consultation with livestock agents who use the facility for their sales.

Council provides the complex as a venue, and charges a usage fee per head of stock sold. The agents determine sale dates, and the fee per head has been set as a result of consultation with the agents. The impact of the complex is significant, with alternatives to use of the complex being “on paddock” sales, or use of alternative saleyards, the nearest being some 65 km distant and outside of the municipality.

(1910) Economic Development Unit

The Economic Development Unit is co-located with the Visitor Information Service in the Swan Hill Development and Information Centre. The Unit provides a range of services to support local, and prospective new businesses. The main services provided are as follows:

Marketing of the region's assets to attract new investment and to present the Swan Hill region as a favourable place to live and work.

The Unit actively seeks new businesses to expand the municipality's business and employment base. A comprehensive marketing package and web site (swanhillonline.com) with targeted marketing materials is available to assist businesses with their investment choice. A 'New Residents Information Kit' is available for people contemplating moving to the region and to assist businesses to attract suitable staff.

Advice and assistance for businesses contemplating expansion or establishing new ventures.

Businesses can seek advice on how to go about a new development, what assistance is available and who to see for further advice. Business training and business development seminars are also catered for. Local businesses are encouraged through the annual Business Excellence Awards.

Business assistance information - Government and industry programs and services.

At the Swan Hill Development and Information Centre there is a comprehensive range of brochures and publications on running a business, business start-ups and a variety of government and industry assistance services. On-line access to the internet enables access to many Government Departments for up to date information and contact details.

Statistical information and profiles on the local region, industries and businesses.

To assist businesses with planning and marketing a number of statistical profiles on the region's demographics and industrial base have been developed. Specific statistical information can also be readily obtained by the Unit through its computerised statistical packages. A register of local businesses is also available.

Facilitation of the provision of Strategic Infrastructure

The unit facilitates the provision and improvement of 'hard' infrastructure such as transport, telecommunications, power, energy, water, wastewater and serviced land as these support business growth in an economy. Further, the unit is increasingly involved in facilitating the provision of quality 'soft' infrastructure relating to education, health, recreation, culture and the environment in order to attract the investment, skilled people and population that is required for sustainable growth.

Advancement of the Swan Hill municipality through representation, advocacy and lobbying.

The unit ensures Swan Hill Rural City's economic interests are promoted through active networking, media promotions, political lobbying and involvement in regional groupings. These means are engaged to address

development, infrastructure provision and marketing issues and to plan for a sustainable future.

Facilities for local business people to meet with visiting Government and industry association officials.

The unit encourages and promotes regular visitations from key Government and industry personnel and provides meeting rooms in Swan Hill and Robinvale for this purpose. The unit has regular contact with organisations such as Business Victoria, AUSTRADE, Australian Taxation Office, VECCI and other industry/employer associations and personal interviews with these representatives is arranged for interested businesses.

(1920) Marketing and Information Service

Under this program the region is promoted as a key visitor and special event destination through the production of promotional brochures, provision of public relations materials and services, and attendance at promotional events. Assistance is also provided to organisers of special events with the aim of extending visitors length of stay. A comprehensive seven-day per week Visitor Information Service is provided at Swan Hill with a service provided by a private operator at Robinvale on a 5 day per week basis.

The service also operates as a booking office for major shows, performances, accommodation, attractions and events held in Swan Hill.

Community Need For These Services

The municipality contains 2,250 businesses, of which 1,300 are classified as farm businesses and 950 are non-farm, or other, businesses. These businesses contribute to a total economic output of \$1,360 Million, dissected between the following sectors:

Industry Sector	Economic Output \$ Million	% of Municipal Economic Output
Agriculture	242.488	17.83 %
Retail	379.984	27.94 %
Manufacturing	132.600	9.75 %
Other	604.928	44.48 %

Within a total population of 20,710 (as per the 2001 census), there are 10,404 jobs (September 2002). The major employing industries of the municipality are shown on the following table. This high level of jobs contributes to the current low unemployment rate of 4.6% (September 2002), which is the lowest unemployment rate in Rural and Regional Victoria.

Industry Sector	Jobs	% of Jobs
Agriculture	2,723	26.17 %
Retail	1,517	14.58 %
Health and Community Services	902	8.67 %
Other	5,262	50.58 %

Need Recognised By Other Government Departments And Agencies

General

Local Government has always had a role in facilitating local economic growth. The Local Government Act (enacted by the Victorian State Government) states that the functions of Local Government include (schedule 1):

- Tourism
- Encouragement of employment opportunities
- Encouragement of commerce, industry and agriculture
- Municipal Enterprises (trading or entrepreneurial)

In the past the preceding municipalities facilitated economic growth through the operation of the three caravan parks, the stock selling complex and the Pioneer Settlement Museum. The City of Swan Hill had also commenced the construction of an industrial estate in Karinie Street Swan Hill to encourage further economic development.

Council amalgamation in January 1995 co-incided with a renewed focus on the facilitating role of Local Government in relation to economic development. The newly amalgamated Swan Hill Rural City Council was of a size to have the capacity to be actively involved in economic development for the sustainable development and future of their own region.

In the early 1990s Swan Hill was no better placed than any other regional area in terms of its local economy. It was caught in the grips of the rural downturn - falling commodity prices, declining terms of trade for the agricultural sector, population out migration, high unemployment, business closures, low business and community confidence and confusion of what could best be done about the situation.

Following Council amalgamations Councils were encouraged by the State Government to take a more active role in local economic development. The economic development unit was created immediately after amalgamation to co-ordinate the ongoing facilitation of economic development in not only the municipality but also the region.

Need Recognised By the Local Community

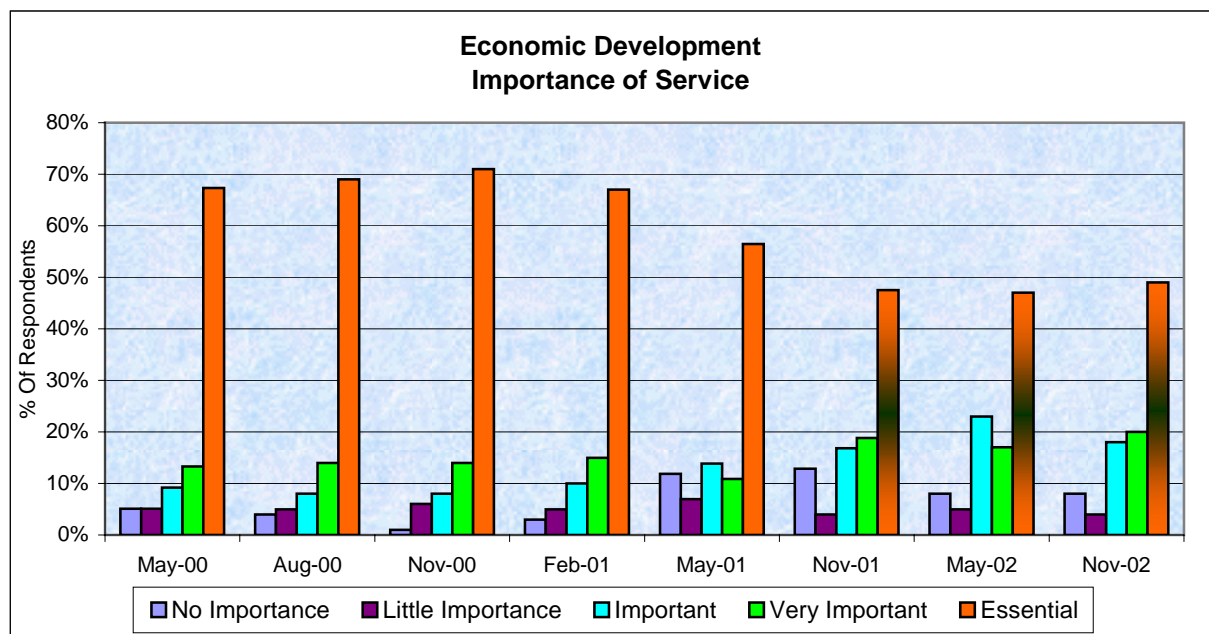
In order to identify community perception, the Swan Hill Rural City Council commenced regular surveys of the community in May 2000, covering a range of services that Council provides, including Economic Development.

The results of the surveys conducted to date, reveal that the community consistently rate the importance of the economic development services to the growth of the local economy as essential.

In November 2001, a change in the format of the questionnaire was introduced, allowing for a consistent ranking of services relative to each other, rather than the importance of any one service in isolation (please note the change in the 'essential' bar for the affected periods in the graph below).

This change means that a direct comparison of results prior to November 2001, when the services were 'rated' as opposed to 'ranked', while of interest, has restricted value. The change in position Economic Development does not mean that the service has necessarily altered in absolute importance for respondents, but has simply found its now apparently stable position relative to the other groups of services measured in the survey.

The community as indicated by Council's performance surveys further supports council's role in economic development. Economic Development has consistently rated in the top four necessary Council services.



Over recent years, the local business community has struggled to promote the local region particularly for tourism, due to difficulty in raising the necessary funding. Swan Hill Business leaders asked Council to take over these activities. This has resulted in a partnership role to the extent that the current industry initiative to raise \$150,000 per annum for regional promotion from individual businesses, in which Council levies a special rate for this purpose. Council is working closely with the business community (represented by Swan Hill Inc) in administering marketing programs to foster growth in the region.

The value of the Caravan Parks as a source of economic wealth is well recognised by the local business community. It is estimated that the average daily spend of visitors staying in a caravan park is \$50.00 per couple per day (including money spent with local businesses). Based upon current occupancy rates this directly generates in excess of \$4,500,000 to the local economy.

The local business community also recognise the benefit of the stock selling complex to generate funds into the local economy. This is most graphically demonstrated by the active involvement of stock agents in its continued operation. The stock agents association is an active participant in supporting the management of the facility and provides constant feedback to ensure the services delivered meet the agents and livestock grower expectations. In 2001/2002, the stock selling complex saw close to 300,000 head of stock sold, at a total sale price of \$28 Million.

The Pioneer Settlement Businesses evolved over time to provide services to the visitors of the Museum. The businesses commenced in response to perceived revenue generating opportunities, and to support the activities of the museum.

The broader community recognise that the supporting revenue generated by the businesses is essential for the survival of the museum.

Need Recognised by Council

Council has determined that it has a role to play in the continued economic development of the municipality and the region as evidenced by the corporate plan goal and strategies. Annually Council allocates sufficient funds to these programs to enable their continued operation. In 2001/2002 these programs expended some \$1.9 Million, of which only \$561,490 came from Council, as can be seen in the following table.

In addition to the economic prosperity value of the caravan parks and the Pioneer Settlement, Council also has a role to play as the manager of the crown land upon which these facilities are situated. In relation to the caravan parks, this has a positive impact, as the commercial leases allow these to run at a surplus and hence help finance the other economic prosperity programs.

It should be noted that the development of the Tower Hill Estate is included in Commercial and Industrial Estates in 2001/2002.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FINANCIAL OPERATIONS (Actual) 2001/2002

	E.D.U. 1910	Mktg & Inf Serv. 1920	Comm. Estates 1340	Caravan Parks 1313, 1317 1318	Stock Selling Complex 1360	Pioneer Settlement Businesses	Total
Operating Subsidies	89,534	21,400	0	0	0	2,500	113,434
Special Project Subsidies	59,107	17,000	0	0	0	0	76,107
User fees	8,770	25,822	20,940	138,566	323,006	660,367	1,177,471
Other Income	0	0	22,710	0	3,220	12,116	38,045
Total Income	157,411	64,222	43,650	138,566	326,226	674,983	1,405,057
Wages & Related	111,123	218,113	0	9,757	83,037	357,635	779,664
Repairs & Maint.	12,329	5,176	0	7,737	178,247	18,051	221,541
Premises Fees	0	0	0	0	520	0	520
Travel/Vehicle	15,830	11,839	0	0	14,356	2,372	44,398
Consumables	48,740	9,452	0	0	11,505	263,093	332,790
Other Expenditure	180,306	39,303	92,036	11,519	30,432	112,566	466,162
Capital Expenditure	0	239	87,308	8,388	23,491	2,048	121,473
Total Expenditure	368,327	284,122	179,344	37,401	341,589	755,764	1,966,547
Total Council Contribution	210,917	219,900	135,695	(101,165)	15,362	80,782	561,490

Consultation

Council works closely with a number of government, business and community bodies and are in close contact with individual businesses and the general public in relation to its economic development role. Accordingly regular feedback is received on the activities of the programs incorporated in Economic Prosperity services and the directions taken by Council in supporting the continued economic development of the municipality.

Consultation with Government departments and authorities enables Council to keep up to date with latest economic development policies and programs and to keep abreast of best practice in the profession.

The main driver of economic development is the private industry, and business people are consulted widely through industry associations, business clubs, township groups and meetings and site visits with individual businesses. These consultations ensure that all programs and initiatives are in line with industry thinking and will at the end of the day assist individual businesses to grow and maintain or expand employment.

The Community Satisfaction Survey (see Attachment), conducted since May 2000, shows that the community views economic development as essential for the Swan Hill municipality. However, comments provided as part of the survey process illustrate that there is some confusion or lack of understanding of Council's role as a facilitator in economic development. This lack of understanding stems from the "Commercial in Confidence" nature of much of the work undertaken by this group of services, which means that the wider community is often unable to reach an informed opinion on the amount of work Council undertakes.

Consultations in the main take place with:

Government Sector:

- Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Department of Primary Industry
- Department of Infrastructure
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Local members of Parliament
- Tourism Victoria
- Country Victoria Tourism Council
- Murray Tourism
- Mildura Murray Outback Tourism
- Goulburn Murray Water
- Sunraysia Rural Water Authority
- Lower Murray Water

- Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network
- Central Murray Area Consultative Committee
- Sunraysia TAFE
- La Trobe University – Centre for Regional Development

Private Sector

- Swan Hill Incorporated (Main Board and Tourism and Retail Committees)
- Robinvale Euston Action Community Team
- Township Promotional Groups eg Nyah, Lake Boga, Ultima, Manangatang
- Swan Hill Summerfruit Growers Association
- Swan Hill Region Winegrape Growers Association
- Robinvale Tablegrape Growers Association
- Powercor
- Association of Development Executives Victoria
- Rotary and Business and Professional Women Clubs
- Local Development Consultants
- Individual Businesses in the Agricultural, Horticulture, Tourism, Retail, Manufacturing and Service Sectors
- Visitors to the Region
- General Public

Caravan Parks

The wider community is not, except by access to routine budget papers, specifically canvassed for their views upon the existence and benefit of the caravan parks. However there is a generally accepted view that in all three locations the parks facilitate a positive cash contribution to the local community. In order to maintain the long-term benefit, an exit survey is conducted of patrons of the Swan Hill and Robinvale parks for issues that may threaten the occupancy rate. In addition, as the Swan Hill park belongs to a franchise group, it is also scrutinised for compliance with a star based system of independently set standards.

Stock Selling Complex

Regular consultation in relation to the operations and direction of the Stock Selling Complex occurs at monthly meetings with key stakeholders, particularly the stock agents association, trucking companies and buyers. The key stakeholders have input in both operational issues as well as capital projects.

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

The Pioneer Settlement Businesses consult on an on-going basis with the community and visitors through the application of questionnaires. A general visitor survey is applied as an on-going customer survey to provide regular feedback on the quality of the service provided and the appropriateness of the standards achieved. Specific surveys of group leaders at the lodges are also applied to obtain specific information of the standards achieved in that business.

Service Responsiveness To Community Needs

While not every respondent to the community surveys indicates satisfaction with the Economic Prosperity services provided by Council, this reflects the lack of understanding of economic development by the general community. The business community are the direct beneficiaries of Council's economic prosperity programs and the general community only participates via increased job opportunities or improvements in services and the spread of business offerings.

Further, given the region's current low unemployment, population growth, significant new investments, substantial industrial land sales, housing growth and strong level of economic activity and output it is clear that at the very least Council's economic prosperity initiatives, policies and programs are not hindering the growth of the region and may indeed be responsible for the dramatic turn around in the economic welfare of the community over the past 5-8 years.

Economic Development Unit

Since its inception in late 1995 the Economic Development Unit has provided the following services that have responded to community needs as follows:

- Operated from a modern and accessible Development and Information Centre, which operates on seven day week, 364 day year.
- Meet with a number of businesses and industry groups to understand and address their immediate needs.
- Developed information bases, government contacts and industry networks to assist in addressing local business growth needs.
- Expanded the Visitor Information Service to be a fully accredited level 1 service in Swan Hill and maintained a service in Robinvale unequal to other similar sized towns.
- Introduced business seminars, business networking breakfasts and business excellence awards to assist and encourage business recognition and growth.
- Developed a comprehensive set of targeted and general marketing materials, which has lifted the professional image of the region as a destination for investment, job and lifestyle seekers, shoppers and visitors.
- Worked closely with the Swan Hill region business community to secure a significant statutory marketing fund to better resource marketing of the region in the future.
- Highlighted the region as a place for special and major events and encouraged the growth and patronage of these events.
- Encouraged local tourism businesses to be more regional industry focussed with a broad tourism product, and networked the local industry into available State and Federal funding sources to better market the region as a visitor destination.

- Identified and addressed economic development opportunities in horticultural, manufacturing and service expansion.
- Addressing strategic infrastructure issues including the provision of natural gas, power upgrades, transport and telecommunications improvements and new housing options.
- Improved linkages between available jobs and the existing workforce by targeting skilled employees and networking with the education sector to be more responsive to industry needs.
- Ensured an adequate supply of affordable serviced land for new and expanding industrial and commercial businesses.
- Been responsive to enquiries and the needs of potential investors in the region.
- Positively 'sold' the value of the region at every opportunity – particularly to the local community and through the national media.

There is no evidence to suggest that the business community is dissatisfied with the responsiveness of the Economic Development Unit to their needs. Visitors to the Centre are also satisfied as demonstrated by their favourable comments in the visitor's book.

Caravan Parks

The caravan parks operated by Council provide a tailored service based upon the needs of the surrounding economy. In Robinvale the park provides longer term accommodation for the itinerant labour force employed principally in the local horticultural sector. In Swan Hill the demand is for tourism based accommodation and the proximity to the river and the Pioneer Settlement creates the tourist user profile.

In lake Boga there is a diminishing need for caravan and camping accommodation as the lake becomes a less attractive tourism venue as more cost effective water-based tourism destinations areas are opened up closer to Melbourne.

Stock Selling Complex

The Stock Selling Complex responds to community needs in several ways. It responds to enquiries and comments from buyers, stock sellers, agents and trucking companies via a "service request" system in place as part of the complex quality assurance system, the complex also responds to specific issues raised at monthly meetings with the key stakeholders.

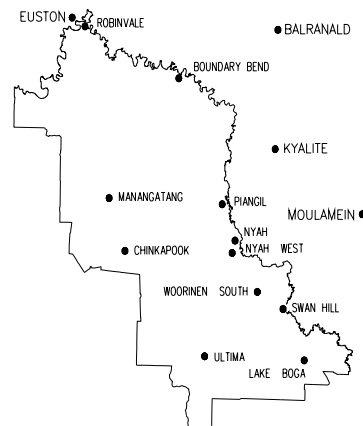
Pioneer Settlement Businesses

The Pioneer Settlement businesses respond to community needs through monitoring its sales and customer response. Response to needs include changes in products and services on offer, and pricing of products and services to optimise return to businesses. Examples of direct service responses to needs include making accommodation available for itinerant workers during the fruit

picking season, and accommodating overflow from local motels in the busy season.

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 30km of it, with a further twenty percent residing in Robinvale. The remainder of the population resides throughout the municipality.



Economic Development services are available throughout the Swan Hill Rural City municipality as follows:

- Significant staffing levels including:
 - Swan Hill - two economic development staff, one marketing and tourism officer, one major events officer, a Visitor Information Service co-ordinator, two part-time information officers plus information volunteers.
 - Robinvale – part-time general economic development and marketing officer.
- Staff travel throughout the region to meet with individual business and industry and community groups – including after normal hours meetings to facilitate networking opportunities.
- Development and Information Centre is open seven days per week to meet the needs of visitors and the local community.
- Robinvale Visitor Information Centre is open five days a week (operated on a lease arrangement)
- Council owned industrial estates exist in both Swan Hill and Robinvale.

Caravan Parks

The fee structures of the caravan parks reflect the profile of the users, and given the high occupancy rates of both Robinvale and Swan Hill, it could reasonably be presumed that they are accessible to their target groups.

Stock Selling Complex

The Stock Selling Complex is readily accessible to the target group requiring the service. Livestock growers from as far away as Frome Downs in South Australia, Hillston in Central NSW as well as growers throughout the Swan Hill municipality. A wide network of transport companies move the livestock from the paddock to the complex and from the complex to the buyer's required location supports access to the service. All facilities at the complex are designed and maintained to facilitate this access.

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

The visitors to the Museum come from a very large geographical area, including all of Victoria, southern New South Wales, and Capital cities throughout Australia. Accessibility of the Pioneer Settlement businesses to target markets is determined by actual opening times, distance from the facility, and pricing. Visitors to the Museum are the business' main target group. Key groups are school groups and independent travellers.

Closure of the businesses over February each year has little impact in overall accessibility, as the Museum is closed as well, and there is little demand for the services and products provided.

Pricing of all products and services is based on market rates. Schools are provided for in the accommodation lodges at very competitive prices. Pricing of all the services is critical for schools, as they generally operate on a tight budget.

The businesses at the Pioneer Settlement have been growing slightly, essentially in line with visitation to the Museum.

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. The status of benchmarking being undertaken by the Economic Prosperity group of services is as follows:

Economic Development Unit

The unit undertakes a wide range of services that, due to their nature, do not easily lend themselves to being benchmarked. However, the competitiveness of the services are maintained in the following ways:

- The Visitor Information Service must reach certain standards to obtain national accreditation each year. It has always met these standards and so has been benchmarked satisfactorily with other similar centres in regards to services to visitors.
- The uniqueness of the Development and Information Centre in combining business development, marketing and visitor information services in the one location, outside of a Council administrative setting, is regarded as a leading example by Government, industry and other Councils.
- Most staff at the Economic Development Unit are professionally trained and through networking, attending industry conferences and training keep abreast of best practice in economic development issues. Economic development programs and policies of other Councils are closely monitored and where found suitable for the local economy, are adopted.
- Statutory valuations are obtained for all Council owned industrial estate land prior to sale, and land prices and services of other municipalities are monitored to ensure that the local offer is the best available.

Caravan Parks

All three of the caravan parks are subject to ongoing scrutiny by promoters, franchisors and tourism industry star system administrators. These organisations rate the parks in terms of criteria that are generally applicable across the industry and in the case of the franchisors of branded parks the standards of the park are constantly monitored by those entities. Accordingly, within the bracketing established by the star rating system the parks meet the required standards. Swan Hill Caravan Park reaches four and half star standard in an industry that rarely achieves five star. Robinvale Caravan Park achieves three stars, which is appropriate to the target market, and Lake Boga Caravan Park is a two and half star facility.

Stock Selling Complex

The operation of the Stock Selling Complex was market tested under the Compulsory Competitive Tendering regime (CCT), with the contract being awarded to the in-house team in 1997. Being the 'Best on Offer' can be demonstrated through its continued success despite competing stock selling complexes being available in Mildura, Ouyen, Kerang, Wedderburn and Wycheproof. Those complexes are well within comfortable and economic distances of all stock sold at Swan Hill. No benchmarking of costs has been carried out to date.

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

All businesses operate in a competitive market with a number of organisations offering the same or similar products and services. Not one of the businesses has a "monopoly" or significant advantage that would enable it to operate without regard to the broader market. Survival in the market indicates that the businesses offer value for money and satisfy the consumer requirements. No benchmarking of the services has been carried out, as it is difficult to determine identical products and services.

The "Best on Offer" concept has been accepted by the business through participating in Industry schemes, such as satisfying the Camping Accreditation requirements and other Quality Assurance schemes in respective industries.

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. Currently, this is being achieved through:

Economic Development Unit

The following reporting to the community is undertaken:

- Reporting on activities undertaken during the year in the Council's Annual Report
- Regular meetings with the municipalities two main business community organisations – Swan Hill Incorporated and the Robinvale Euston Action Community Team.
- A newsletter is provided to Swan Hill Inc tourism and retail members on activities relating to their businesses.

While these are not formal reporting mechanisms, the Unit's programs and policies are tested with these community representatives and judgements can be made on the achievement of service standards and levels, or their responsiveness, accessibility and outcomes of regular consultations.

Caravan Parks

Although no formal report is made available to the public that specifically discusses the operation of the parks, the inherent strength of the parks is reflected in the budget each year. This document measures the extent of the Council exposure to demand driven expenditure for facilities and maintenance.

Stock Selling Complex:

Activity reports are broadcast by local ABC radio on a weekly basis to inform the marketplace of livestock prices and relative quantities. These reports are also printed in the local papers and in 'The Weekly Times' newspaper. Weekly reports are also provided to AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service).

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

Regular reporting to the community on Service Standards and Levels Achieved has not been carried out. General reports have been provided to Council, as representatives of the community. The businesses operate in an open, competitive environment, and detailed reporting may impact the businesses ability to compete fairly.

How Continuous Improvement Is Being Achieved

Economic Development Unit

In addition to the benchmarking activities covered earlier, the Economic Development Unit is achieving continuous improvement in the following ways:

- Staff are continuing with their formal and informal education and training.
- Standards for the ongoing attainment of the Visitor Information Centre accreditation are being met.
- Increased and improved liaison with industry is occurring.
- Up to date statistical software programs are being utilised.
- Internet is being fully utilised to market the region and its businesses eg swanhillonline.com and a new website for Robinvale Euston.
- Economic Development and Tourism Development Strategic Plans have been formulated on sound development principles and are being implemented.

Caravan Parks

Selected operators, that are lessees to Council, manage both Swan Hill and Robinvale on behalf of Council. At Lake Boga the park is operated on Council's behalf by a contract Manager. Where the parks are operated under lease a requirement is imposed upon the lessees to remain responsive to the changing needs of the park users. As a result, the condition of the facilities is monitored and improvements are made to the service and facility levels, where exit surveys and inspection by rating administrators and the Council indicate they are needed.

At Lake Boga principally Council monitors the park and where budget allows, and circumstances indicate a need for adjustment to the existing infrastructure or service levels, the contract manager is directed accordingly.

Stock Selling Complex

Continuous improvement is achieved through the application of a Quality Assurance program. The QA program is an integral part of the complex operations and is third party accredited. NSQA (National Saleyards Quality Assurance) accreditation was achieved in 1998. Swan Hill Saleyards was one of the first facilities in Victoria to achieve this.

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

Continuous improvement is achieved in some of the businesses through participation in Quality Assurance programs. Continuous improvement in other areas are pursued through reviews of existing services and products. Meetings and discussions with other groups such as the Heritage Parks Association enables tabling of issues and exploring options for improving services and outcomes.

Improvement in outcomes has also been achieved through streamlining the organisation and providing a clear business focus.

Local Employment Growth/Retention

The prime goal of the Economic Prosperity group of services is to retain and grow local employment. While recognising that private businesses and government services are the direct creators of employment, there is also the recognition of market failure in the following areas:

- Regional Marketing and Promotion
- Visitor and Local Information provision
- Serviced Industrial Land
- Saleyard Facilities
- Visitor Attraction through the provision of low cost accommodation and a major tourism icon.

Council provides these services to facilitate business development and therefore employment expansion and retention.

Economic Development Unit

The Economic Development Unit employs 6.5 equivalent full time staff.

Caravan Parks

The Parks employ 21 people across a range of employment categories that extends from the overall management of the park to grounds maintenance. The level of employment is balance by market forces and the requirements of the users of the parks.

Swan Hill Stock Selling Complex

The complex employs 1.8 equivalent full time staff, and generates considerable employment for associated industries such as the stock agents, transport companies and rural industries supplying those businesses.

Pioneer Settlement Businesses

The Pioneer Settlement businesses employ 6 full-time permanent staff, several permanent part-time staff, and several casual staff, engaged through a local employment agency. Employment retention is important, with growth of employment only being possible as the businesses expand. The primary goal of the businesses is to generate revenue to enable successful, ongoing operations of the Museum.

Partnerships With Third Parties To Achieve Service Objectives

The nature of the Economic Prosperity group of programs is such that not much is achievable without effective partnerships with third parties to address the overall objective of facilitating the sustainable development of the region. A detailed list of partnerships has been identified on pages 16 and 17 of this report.

Stock Selling Complex

The Swan Hill Stock Selling Complex has effective partnering arrangements with all key stakeholders. Third parties that are crucial in achieving service objectives include the Stock and Agents Association, trucking companies, and the National Saleyards Quality Assurance group.

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 Economic Prosperity 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 Economic Prosperity group of services.

The National Competition Policy Review – Economic Prosperity report identifies that a number of the Economic Prosperity services are provided free of charge to facilitate and encourage economic development of the region. Other services in this group charge a fee. In some cases the impact on the market is negligible, and in other cases Council is a major player. In all cases the services provided by Council address a specific need in the community; to overcome barriers to further economic growth. In some instances this results in a service being subsidised through its Council ownership. Where this occurs, there is a social benefit that outweighs the impact on the market.

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

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

- The construction and establishment of a new purposely built 'Development and Information Centre' which while still housing all services in the one location will separate visitor information services from business development activities to allow improved privacy. Extra space will be available to increase merchandising activities and allow like minded economic development activities to be housed in the centre.
- A structured program of business visitation that will keep the Economic Development Unit in constant contact with the needs of the local business community.
- Development of E-mail 'news drop' to key groups to better improve the transfer of information on economic development activities
- Closer links with Swan Hill Incorporated to make the best use of the marketing funds raised through the special rate.
- Review of the Economic Development Strategy for the municipality.
- Development of a tailored business, client and visitor satisfaction rating survey to assist in the measurement of performance.
- Development of a regular reporting system to the community on activities, standards and services provided by the Economic Development Unit.
- Review of the location, ownership and type of use of the Lake Boga Caravan Park, to determine the best use of land around the lake, and best manner to address accommodation shortages in the area.
- Modification to the effluent disposal system for the Stock Selling Complex, to ensure continued compliance with Environmental Protection Authority requirements
- Implementation of the National Livestock Identification System (NILS), that traces meat from the 'paddock to plate', a cattle tagging system required to satisfy the European Community (EC) market.
- Review of management options for Pioneer Settlement businesses, including the feasibility of privatisation.

Quality And Cost Standards To Measure Performance Outcomes

Best Value requires that Quality and Cost standards be developed for each of Council's operations. The Quality and Cost standards should reflect measures by which the community may measure the performance of a service. The actual standards achieved each year must be reported against its target in the Annual Report of the Swan Hill Rural City Council.

Quality Measures

It is difficult to measure the quality of such a wide range of service included in the Economic Prosperity group of programs. This difficulty is compounded by the nature of the service, which dictates that much of the work undertaken is in the nature of 'Commercial and In-Confidence', and hence publicly available measures may be inappropriate for a number of the Economic Prosperity functions.

The following table contains quality standards that go some way to measuring the quality of the services provided;

Quality Standard/s	Year 02/03	Year 03/04	Year 04/05
Key Municipal Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Population growth for the municipality • Achieve employment growth greater than the average for Rural and Regional Victoria • Achieve an unemployment rate lower than the average for Rural and Regional Victoria. 	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes
Economic Development Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve national accreditation for Visitor Information Service* # • Satisfaction rating surveys (% approval) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitors, 75% ▪ Businesses 75% • Increase in assistance provided to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitors, 5% ▪ Businesses 3% 	100% 75% 75% 5% 3%	100% 75% 75% 5% 3%	100% 75% 75% 5% 3%
Stock Selling Complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain National Saleyards Quality Assurance (NSQA) accreditation* 	100%	100%	100%

<i>Quality Standard/s (Continued)</i>	Year 02/03	Year 03/04	Year 04/05
Caravan Parks			
<i>Swan Hill</i>			
• Industry based accreditation and star rating system	100%	100%	100%
• Exit Surveys conducted by Council	90%	> 95%	> 95%
<i>Robinvale</i>			
• Industry based accreditation and star rating system	N/A	> 75%	> 80%
• Exit Surveys conducted by Council	60%	> 75%	> 80%
<i>Lake Boga</i>			
• Industry based accreditation and star rating system	N/A	N/A	N/A
• Exit Surveys conducted by Council	< 50%	50%	N/A
Pioneer Settlement Businesses			
• Camping Accreditation for Lodges*	100%	100%	100%
• Comply with Food Safety Standards*	100%	100%	100%
• Comply with Marine Safety Standards (Pyap)*	100%	100%	100%
• Visitor Satisfaction Rating	90%	95%	95%

* Achievement and maintenance of accreditation is a detailed and involved process that addresses all aspects of quality of operating the relevant service.

Administered by the Tourism accreditation Board of Victoria (a voluntary non-government committee of tourism associations). Accreditation is a set of standards established by and for the tourism industry. Meeting the accreditation standards required a methodical and transparent approach to managing safety, service, staff and finances. It is a tool for achieving higher levels of customer service and business practice in the tourism sector. Accreditation ensures that the tourism business is up-to-date with legislation and industry trends.

Cost Measures

Measuring the cost of the service identifies the efficiency of the services being delivered to the community. Again it is difficult to identify standards that do in fact measure efficiency, as there are many issues and events that impact on the cost of a service.

Cost Standard/s	Year 02/03	Year 03/04	Year 04/05
Economic Development Unit			
• Cost of providing Visitor Information Services per visitor enquiry	\$5.98	\$5.79	\$5.62
• Cost of providing Economic Development Services per enquiry.	\$21.90	\$21.24	\$20.60
Stock Selling Complex			
• Cost of operating the complex as a % of total sale value	1%	1%	1%
Caravan Parks			
All caravan parks operate at a net return to Council	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pioneer Settlement Businesses			
All businesses to operate at a net return to Council	Yes	Yes	Yes

Attachment



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 ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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 Economic Development Services.

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 for six groups of services 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".

The community is not asked to rate satisfaction levels for Economic Prosperity, given the inability of the community to reach an informed opinion, due to the 'commercial in confidence' nature of facilitating economic development.

The survey respondents are asked to rate the importance to the community of the six groups of services already surveyed, plus economic development. This is done by asking respondents:

"..to rate each of the services that Council provides, on a scale of 1 to 5, in order of their importance to you, with 1 being the least important and 5 being most important."

The groups of services are listed, including

“Economic Development (e.g. supporting businesses to grow and encouraging new businesses).”

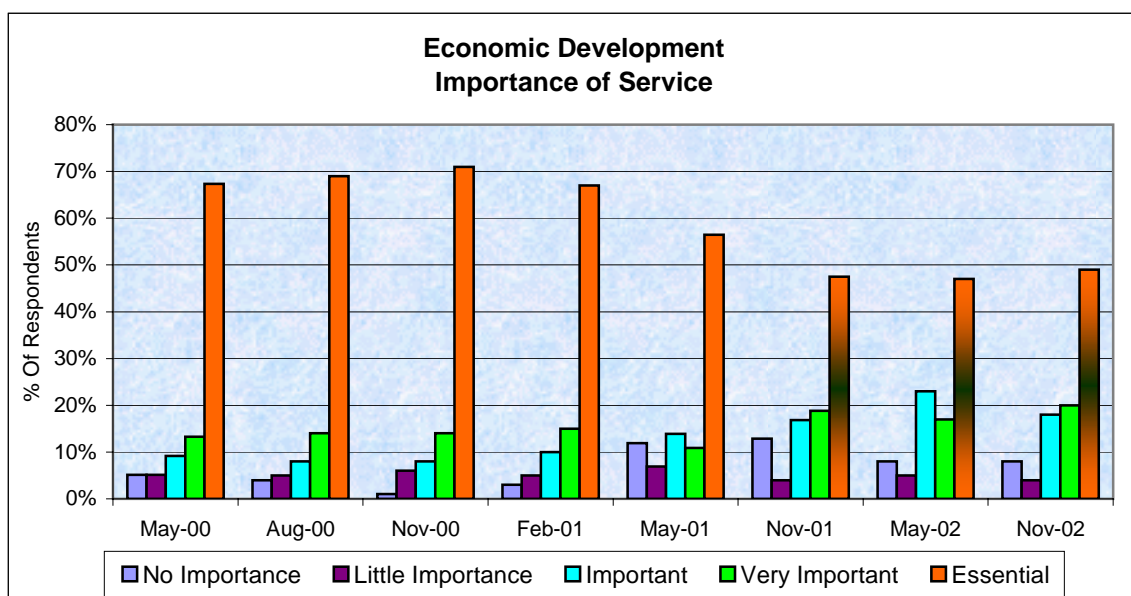
Respondents are then asked if any particular issue has influenced their view, and if they would like to comment.

Survey Results

Respondents consistently rate the Economic Development services as essential in each of the surveys conducted to date.

In November 2001, a change was made in the format of the questionnaire, allowing for a consistent ranking of services relative to each other, rather than the importance of any one service in isolation (please note the change in the ‘essential’ bar for the affected periods in the graph below).

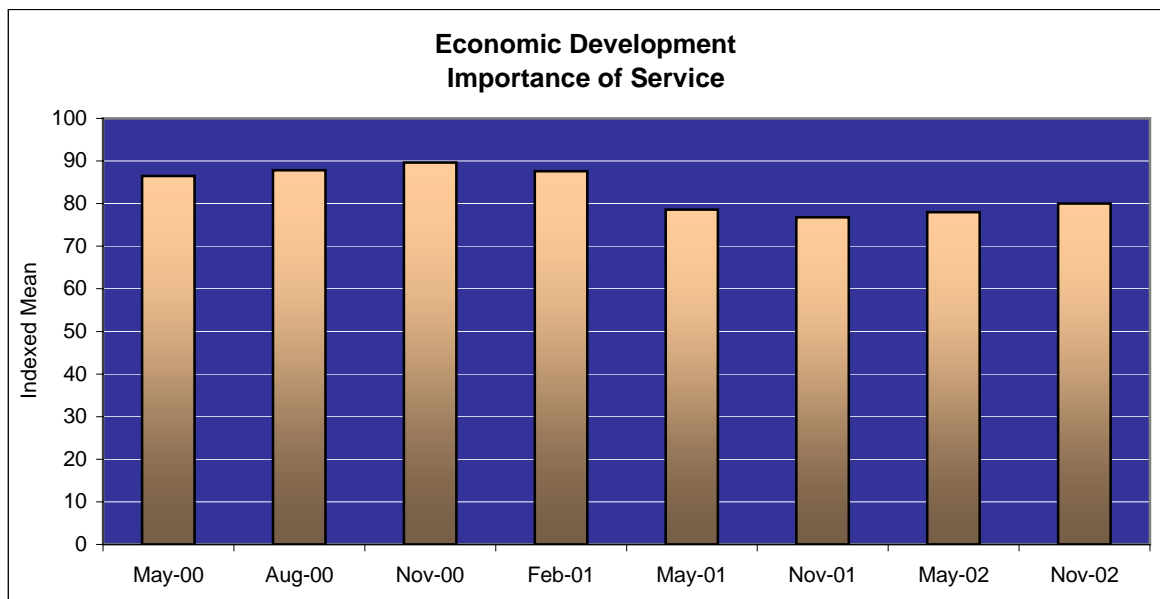
This change means that a direct comparison of results prior to November 2001, when the services were ‘rated’ as opposed to ‘ranked’, while of interest, has restricted value. The change in position since November 2001 for Economic Development does not mean that the service has necessarily altered in absolute importance for respondents, but has simply found its now apparently stable position relative to the other groups of services measured in the survey.



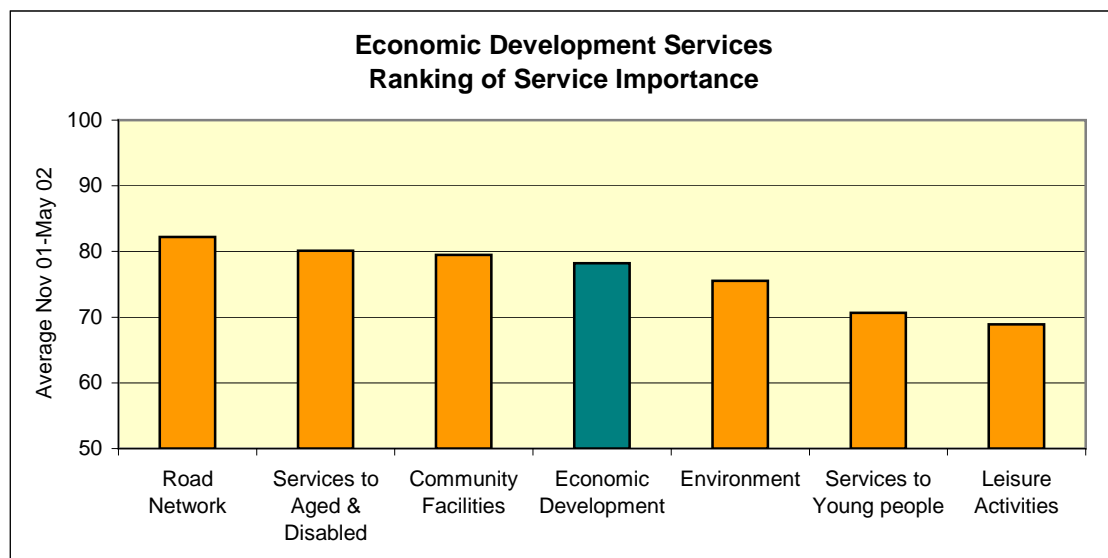
The table and graph below reveal that the importance of economic development is consistently rated between 75-90, on a scale of 100.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the “apparent” reduction in importance to the current level may in part be due to the adjustment made to the survey form.

Level of Importance	May-00	Aug-00	Nov-00	Feb-01	May-01	Nov-01	May-02	Nov-02
No Importance	5	4	1	3	12	13	8	8
Little Importance	5	5	6	5	7	4	5	4
Important	9	8	8	10	14	17	23	18
Very Important	13	14	14	15	11	19	17	20
Essential	66	69	71	67	57	48	47	49
Mean	4.33	4.39	4.48	4.38	3.93	3.84	3.9	3.99
Indexed Mean	86.5	87.8	89.6	87.6	78.6	76.8	78.0	79.8



The following graph depicts the average placement of Economic Development relative to the other services included in the Community Survey. Only the aggregated results of the last three surveys are used. Economic Development is positioned fourth in relative importance, with an average score of 78%.



Comments

Comments from the eight surveys completed to date (see pages 5 to 11) reveal the views of respondents that Council should encourage new businesses to Swan Hill. The majority of comments express dissatisfaction with Council's role in economic development. However, as noted above this has more to do with respondents being unable to make an informed opinion, due to the "commercial in confidence" nature of the support provided. Council's role is one of facilitation, rather than active participation in the development of particular businesses.

Positive comments commend Council on the development of new infrastructure, which contributes to the creation of conditions favourable for both the generation of new local businesses, or the attraction of new businesses to the area. Acknowledgement is also given to Council for assistance in supporting new business, and working to retain existing businesses, in Swan Hill.

The following is a sample of the comments, made by respondents:

- Like to see more people buy locally.
- Too much emphasis on local businesses. If they were more competitive they wouldn't have to worry about people buying out of the area.
- Council don't back locally owned business, e.g. Giving Kmart the OK. Council don't advertise empty shop leases in Age or Herald.
- Council not giving out land for property development.
- Hears that Council blocks major businesses because of local businesses complaining (objecting). A lot of people have mentioned this.
- Spud factory, tomato factory were going to come here, but haven't been able, due to access restrictions by council.

- Talks from experience as ...businessman ...- Leave business to businesses.
- I have been here for 28 years am very pleased with the council's performance.

The comments illustrate the inconsistent views of the community frequently based on an incorrect understanding of Council's role and power and on rumours in the community rather than fact. This demonstrates the need for education/information to be made available to the community on Council's role and responsibilities.

Summary

In summary, the community views economic growth and development as essential for the Swan Hill municipality. However, comments provided as part of the survey process illustrate that there is some confusion, or misunderstanding, of Council's role in attracting and holding new and existing businesses to the region. These concerns indicate that perhaps some work needs to be done to educate the community on Council's philosophy and role as facilitator.

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

Community Satisfaction Survey Comments May 2000 – November 2002 Economic Development

MAY 2000

25 Comments

- Sandwich boards on streets - \$30 too much, covered by organisation insurance, no encouragement for advertising.
- More could be done.
- Children due to enter workforce.
- Noticed a lot of empty shops down the street.
- Major stores taking over. We need more private businesses.
- Council helped with his business.
- Need to influence bus into area.
- Better signage to Lake Boga shops. Need to encourage growth to keep young here rather than the city. Get natural gas in area.
- Living at Nyah seeing the number of businesses close.
- Spud factory, tomato factory were going to come here, but haven't been able, due to access restrictions by council.
- Council not giving out land for property development.
- Husband opened new business so it is very important to encourage business to area & help them.
- Industries trying to come to Swan Hill - end up going elsewhere.
- Keep new businesses coming?
- It is important that pioneer settlement be run properly. Better management structure.
- Not enough encouragement of new businesses.
- Business area of Swan Hill needs a boost.
- Tourism in Swan Hill needs improvement.
- Small towns - support what we have. Local government to lead that support.
- As a new business - Council needs to encourage people to shop locally.
- They are all important issues.
- Council needs to address employment & business opportunities in area. Need to attract business to area (pro active).
- Encourage & promote opportunities for everyone - education etc.
- Need to have Council look at bringing small business to town. Not finance but encourage.
- Don't get any large factories for young.

August 2000

32 Comments

- Need more jobs.

- We need more population - employment is required.
- A lot of new businesses need help to start. A good start can mean employment.
- Talks from experience as a Councillor, business man and farmer - leave business to businesses.
- Very important to encourage new businesses to Swan Hill. Has not happened in the past.
- Like to see something like Cohn's factory - manufacturing of local foods.
- Need more variety stores ie KMART/Target with everything.
- Manufacturing and development lacking in recent years.
- Nothing in Robinvale supporting businesses to grow.
- Council needs to put less hurdles in front of new businesses trying to establish themselves.
- More support for new businesses - Council not very progressive when it comes to competition in town.
- Employment for our kids. Bring new businesses to Swan Hill.
- We have to progress.
- Hears that Council blocks major businesses because of local businesses complaining (objecting). A lot of people have mentioned this.
- Very interested in the development of Swan Hill in the past 30 years.
- In business on the land these programs are not so very important.
- Needs to improve encouragement to new businesses.
- Council needs to make more efforts for tourism. Does not encourage new businesses enough.
- Business needs to grow. New businesses need all the support they can get so that they stay in town and encourage new jobs.
- More promotion of area for economic development.
- Should not have to go out of town to shop. Swan Hill needs further medical services.
- Essential to attract new businesses.
- The fading of Manangatang. Personal experience of a family member closing a business.
- As the manager of a business, development is important in the area. Council initiative does not encourage businesses to the area, for example, like they do in Echuca.
- Council is doing a good job.
- More chance for jobs for children.
- Business needs to be encouraged.
- Interviewee is in business themselves.
- We need a Spotlight store.
- Business man.
- Encourage new businesses.
- Council should make more effort to encourage businesses to Swan Hill.

November 2000

33 Comments

- Extremely important to encourage new business to municipality to keep our children in the area after they have finished their schooling. Also very important to support existing business.
- Need to encourage more business to the area.
- Need for more businesses and employment.
- We do not seem to be able to keep large business in this town.
- Good to see so much new infrastructure.
- With two businesses, it is important that Council provides support for businesses to grow.
- Would like to see them encourage more industry into the town to create more employment and open Swan Hill up.
- People moved from Swan Hill because they couldn't get a go - too much red tape.
- Like the encouragement for businesses eg. Business Awards
- Not enough businesses or industry in Swan Hill. Too much time spent on tourism.
- Keep employment of younger people in the area.
- Husband is self employed. We need business for employment and growth. Swan Hill needs to grow.
- Extremely important that employment is provided. Need big business to provide more employment.
- Council support is essential in this aspect.
- Thinks too many business owners on Council for their own benefit.
- Shire rates are too high.
- Used to own small business.
- Too much red tape for new business.
- Need more industrial areas.
- Needs to encourage secondary industry - we don't at the moment eg. Big companies were knocked back from Council and went to Echuca.
- Council is the driving body in the case providing business.
- Not enough is done to encourage new businesses to area.
- Feels Swan Hill needs to grow.
- For business to grow, it needs an active Council.
- Allowing them to build over carparking spaces cheaply is not necessarily good planning.
- Swan Hill needs bigger business/stores in area.
- Council not letting bigger retailers come into town.
- Like to see more people buy locally.
- Run own business.
- They don't do enough.
- Think of places other than Swan Hill, no banks, shops closing. Once banks went, everything went.

- Need to be more encouraging and acceptable to businesses opening up in Swan Hill. A lot of new businesses have been lost to other small towns.
- Good to see Council making effort to keep Telstra.

February 2001

25 Comments

- Your in business - needs it.
- Work for Target and believes Council needs to look to future (new development).
- Important for town's growth - should improve white swan - go ahead with original plans of putting new business there. Someone seems to want to stop progress.
- Needs to keep growing a great town so we need to keep these services - tourism needs to progress - further advertising needed.
- Need to encourage more business.
- Should be encouraged for future of area.
- Involved in community for hearing of businesses that leave the area. Council needs to lift their game.
- New businesses need encouragement as long as its done in an environmentally (friendly) and sustainable way.
- More needs to be done.
- In past businesses have gone elsewhere. Council needs to provide incentives.
- I have been here for 28 years am very pleased with the council's performance.
- Town needs go ahead and progress.
- Need to encourage businesses who would employ large numbers of the community. Agriculture important in our community.
- Should provide shelter for taxi drivers.
- Need industry in the community. Incentives required.
- Lot of empty shops.
- Husband has a business.
- Not enough jobs, turned away industrial businesses e.g yoghurt factory. Should encourage more.
- Echuca & Mildura going ahead. Swan Hill could grow a lot more. Look at the people and what they can offer the community.
- Encourage business is great - go further than horticulture now.
- If Swan Hill is to survive, Council needs to be assisting businesses with information and support.
- Live here, would like the community to be a thriving community.
- Important to provide incentives to businesses.
- Encouraging businesses very important. Council hasn't always made good decisions when it comes to commercial zoning for business.

- For Swan Hill to continue to grow, it needs to encourage business and industry.

May 2001

25 Comments

- Need more factories and work opportunities.
- Too many young people without jobs.
- Have lost business - "Military Museum". Why was it let go?
- Lot of people are out of work and it would be good if we could attract new business.
- Retail consultant.
- Very important that Council supports all businesses.
- Not enough industries in Swan Hill encouraged.
- Never seem to let anything come to town.
- Target complex will be excellent.
- Involvement in EDU good.
- Comparisons with other Shires, it's a bit lacking.
- Business support employment.
- Make it easy for people to bring new business to Swan Hill. Incentive eg, cheap land.
- Too many Councillors have their own businesses and don't want anything to go ahead.
- Good to see the town growing.
- Growth of community is important.
- Keep money in area shop locally.
- Needs more business encouraged.
- Started business and having troubles with Shire. Would like to do business in Lake Boga, but Shire would like it in Swan Hill.
- Council don't back locally owned business, e.g. Giving Kmart the OK. Council don't advertise empty shop leases in Age or Herald.
- Lost opportunities - gone to other towns (business). Tourism - supplementary benefit - not prime benefit.
- Need for employment.
- Council reluctant to let new business into town.
- Businesses are required for a successful town.
- The area needs to have new businesses supported by Council to keep area growing.

November 2001

11 Comments

- They are very important factors.

- Having lived in the community for 53 years.
- All important things for a community.
- Need to encourage a lot more industry here to support growers.
- More industries in Swan Hill to create employment eg more big companies.
- We can do with all the development and growth in our own town. By shopping, medical etc in own town.
- As a business person not looking at economic views good enough.
- Heard in past that Council lost business to Echuca. We need to encourage and assist small business and lighter chains of business. Opens employment for youth and everyone.
- Economic development very important - needs to encourage businesses to provide more work - or bring new businesses into the area eg factories.
- Encourage growth to area/welfare of the aged is very important.
- Economic - strong economic growth increases economy.

May 2002

7 Comments

- He has seen community develop.
- EDU - too much red tape when trying to start a business. People need more encouragement to invest in the region.
- Want a better place to live in.
- EDU really improving.
- Too much emphasis on local businesses. If they were more competitive they wouldn't have to worry about people buying out of the area.
- EDU don't help too much. Quoted - dairy issue going on at the moment.
- Provide more activities for younger people. Town needs more businesses.

November 2002

8 Comments

- Council seems to discourage local development.
- Need more industry to keep the young people here.
- Desperately need to encourage more business.
- Need to encourage industry.
- They are all important points to me.
- It's in everyone's interests.
- The drought will affect the area intensely - need more opportunity for local input.
- New businesses keep money in town