

Best Value Report RECREATION, CULTURE & LEISURE

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Executive Summary

The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services consists of fourteen Council programs, which principally focus on providing the community with opportunities for a diverse range of recreational, cultural and leisure pursuits. These programs range from passive leisure activities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds, to more active pursuits such as sports. The services also encompass cultural opportunities, such as the performing and visual arts, and purpose built facilities that enable the community to participate in its own leisure pursuits – Public Halls and community centres.

The community has a high awareness of these services, and has definite views on their value, and the standard to be achieved, although these views are far from uniform across the community. The diversity of the services provided means that the recreational, cultural and leisure requirements of most sections of the community are met.

Each year Council expends approximately \$7 million on delivering the opportunity to participate in a wide range of recreational, cultural and leisure activities to the community. Of this amount, over 2.3 million is funded by user fees and government grants. Over the years the community has invested over \$72.8 million in infrastructure and other assets to enable a wide range of leisure time activities.

Government commitment tends to be limited to providing some funding to develop or refurbish essential infrastructure, such as swimming pools and high ball courts. The exception is in the area of cultural services, where some operational funding is provided. However, the majority of funding continues to be provided by the local community.

The Best Value review has identified that the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services achieve many of the requirements of 'Best Value' as specified in the Local Government Act 1989. Specifically, the services have:

- Assessed, in various ways with the community, the level of services to be provided.
- Determined that the services are responsive to community needs.
- Ensured accessibility by the intended target group.
- Continuously improve the services provided.
- Regularly consult with appropriate sections of the community in the development and delivery of the services.

This report demonstrates that the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services achieve best value for the community. Each of these services constantly strives to ensure their relevance to the local and broader community, and to ensure that the Swan Hill Rural City Council is indeed a wonderful place to live.

Introduction

The Recreation, Culture & Leisure Best Value Report has been developed in response to the Best Value requirements in the Local Government Act (1989). The Recreation, Culture & Leisure services, itemised below, are grouped together because they share a common service objective, that is, the provision of services that support and promote a range of opportunities that encourage recreational leisure and cultural activities by, and for, the 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 that make up Recreation, Culture & Leisure services for Swan Hill Rural City Council are:

Program No	Service Name
Pt 2318	Parks and Gardens
2569	Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities
2574-8	Aquatic Facilities
2581	Indoor Sports Facilities
2610	Art Gallery
2621	Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion
2650	Regional Library
3236	Pioneer Settlement Museum
5113	Lake Boga Community Centre
5114	Manangatang Community Centre
5115	Nyah Community Centre
5117	Robinvale Community Centre
5178	Swan Hill Town Hall
5179	Halls and Other Public Facilities

Corporate Plan Direction

The corporate plan has been developed by Council to provide direction and guidance to the organisation in the development and provision of services to the community. The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services address two corporate plan objectives, that of open space and recreation, and providing for community development and wellbeing.

The Open Space and Recreation goal provides direction for this group of services, as follows:

“To provide a level of open space sufficient to enable residents and visitors to enjoy a diverse range of cultural and recreational activities in accordance with established environmental and cultural values.”

The Community Development and Wellbeing goal also 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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services specifically address the following strategies:

- Provide a wide range of cultural opportunities to the community.
- Develop an open space and recreational strategy.
- Complete and implement the recreational review.

The outcomes to be achieved through these strategies are:

- Community access to a broad range of cultural activities.
- Appropriate open space for recreational, environmental and other community purposes.
- Maximum use of existing recreational facilities on an equitable basis by the community.

The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services also indirectly address Council's goals in the area of Physical Infrastructure (provide and maintain an appropriate level of infrastructure necessary for community development and wellbeing), and Economic Development, as the services also support the attraction of visitors to the region.

Within this context, the broad service objective for Recreation, Culture & Leisure is to:

“Foster and provide a range of opportunities for the community that encourages participation in, and enhances the enjoyment of, recreational, leisure and cultural activities.”

Community Perception

Community perception of these services is generally aligned with that of the organisation. Differences that do exist arise from the cultural and recreational diversity within the community and differing levels of participation.

Community expectations and a lack of operational understanding of the services also contribute to the broad range of perceptions and opinions held by the community. The community generally take these services for granted and comment is only received when expectations are not met.

Services Provided

A brief description of the services currently provided under the heading of Recreation & Leisure is as follows:

Parks and Gardens & Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

The Swan Hill Rural City has over seventy reserves, sporting grounds, parks and gardens distributed throughout the municipality. Their location engenders a wide range of recreational opportunities including competitive sports, individual pursuits such as walking and cycling, family facilities such as playgrounds, BBQ's and picnic facilities and water-based activities. There are also natural environments that can be used for bird watching and other nature oriented pursuits.

These facilities are provided to enhance the recreation and leisure opportunities for our community. Activities that maintain an appropriate standard of facility includes:

- Ongoing maintenance of all areas classified by Council as 'grassed areas' associated with parkland, recreation reserves and sports fields. This contributes to a functional and visually pleasing urban and rural landscape that satisfies the recreational needs of the community, and includes:
 - Grass mowing of medians, parkland and recreational reserve areas, including sports fields, to control grass growth and provide an appropriate quality surface for the intended use of the area.
 - Edge trimming of overhanging grass along footpath edges and around trees, street and park furniture.
 - Surface finish involving soil conditioning and top dressing to maintain level and safe surfaces.
 - Turf management to maintain health and physical appearance of turf, establishment of turf on sown and re-sown areas, irrigating to maintain optimum soil moisture levels, fertiliser applications to maintain appropriate nutrient levels in soil and weed control.
- Ongoing maintenance including inspection and operation of all fixed and manual irrigation equipment including pumps required to water lawn, grass and trees areas.
- Maintenance of signs on all parks and reserves including inspection, cleaning and painting, straightening of poles and signs, minor repairs to signs and poles and replacement of missing or damaged signs and poles.
- Maintenance of water features and surrounds to ensure they are kept free of weeds and litter and are in an operational condition.

- Inspection and maintenance of playground equipment and surrounds in parks and recreation reserves. Maintain edging, 'softfall' (preparation laid to prevent injury) to Australian Standard, and keep playground equipment in good repair, and in a clean condition.
- Inspection of river and lake structures at six monthly intervals, and after flooding, and undertake ongoing maintenance, which includes cleaning, minor repairs and reporting on the condition of all structures.

Aquatic Facilities

Council provides outdoor aquatic facilities to the communities of Manangatang, Nyah, Robinvale and Swan Hill. The facilities at each pool generally consist of swimming pools (of various sizes) for both recreational and sporting activities, changing rooms, kiosk, and public open space for users and spectators.

The pools are operated in accordance with industry guidelines (Royal Life Saving Society "Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation"), and legislation (Health and Infectious Diseases Regulations (2001)).

The operation of the pools is undertaken by either a contractor (Swan Hill and Robinvale), or by a community committee (Manangatang and Nyah). The operator is responsible for ensuring that the pool is staffed with appropriately qualified personnel, that the water is treated to provide the required level of cleanliness and user comfort, and that the facilities are kept in a clean and tidy condition.

Ongoing maintenance of the pool facility is undertaken on a scheduled basis to ensure the continued efficient and safe operation of the four facilities.

Indoor Sports Facilities

The Swan Hill Rural City Council has two indoor sports facilities, both located in the Swan Hill urban area. They are the Swan Hill Indoor Sport and Recreation Centre, and the Swan Hill Leisure Centre.

Swan Hill Indoor Sport and Recreation Centre (The Stadium)

The Swan Hill Indoor Sport and Recreation Centre (The Stadium) provides facilities for a range of indoor sporting activities, including basketball (four courts), badminton, futsal (indoor soccer), netball, squash (2 courts) and tennis.

The Stadium is operated by a Committee of Management, comprised of representatives of all user groups of the Centre. The Committee of Management is responsible for the general management of the centre and raises the bulk of its income from user fees and,

to a lesser extent, sponsorship. A Centre Manager is employed to provide day-to-day management, bookings and co-ordination of activities at the Centre.

The Centre operations are largely self-funded, with Council's only operational budgeted support being for pest inspection and control. Council undertakes significant maintenance and capital projects on the Centre.

The Centre has recently been upgraded at a cost of over \$1.2 million. Improvements include the relocation of Court One, new tiered seating, new café, manager's office, meeting room, air-conditioning, toilets, stadium entry and car park.

Swan Hill Leisure Centre

The Swan Hill Leisure Centre is a new facility, constructed in 2002-2003, providing a range of recreational facilities, services and programs for the benefit of the community. The Centre was constructed to provide not only leisure facilities to the wider community, but also to meet the needs of Swan Hill College and MacKillop College. The two colleges are equity partners in the Centre, and as a result community access is limited during school hours when the colleges have priority access to the facility.

The Leisure Centre's facilities include a 25 metre x 6 lane indoor heated pool, childcare facilities, health club, toddlers' pool, multi-use high ball court, disabled/family change rooms, staff amenities and café. The Centre offers a range of programs including:

- Learn to swim
- Swimming and lifeguard program
- Land aqua aerobics
- Community health and fitness
- CPR courses
- Swimming carnivals
- School swimming programs
- Fitness circuits
- Basketball/netball
- School holiday program
- Gymnasium
- Pilates

A Committee of Management made up of the Swan Hill Rural City Council, Swan Hill College, MacKillop College and community representatives manages the Leisure Centre, which is operated under contract by Belgravia Leisure.

Art Gallery

The Swan Hill Art Gallery is located in a purpose built facility, directly opposite the Pioneer Settlement Museum. The gallery has a long history of community commitment and involvement, with contributions to its operation, from an Advisory Committee, Art Associates, Friends of the Gallery, Gallery Guides and volunteers. Approximately 2,000 hours are contributed annually by a range of volunteers.

The mission of the gallery is:

“To be a centre of excellence for the visual arts that is relevant and accessible to the Swan Hill regional community, the catchment area and visitors to the area.”*

* Catchment area includes the neighbouring shires of Buloke, Gannawarra, Wakool and Wycheproof.

The Gallery provides a range of services and opportunities for the community including:

- **A changing exhibition program** - an average of 26 exhibitions are presented each year, curated either internally from the permanent collection, or toured from other organisations. Artists from the region also exhibit their work in the Access Gallery.
- **A permanent collection** managed by Gallery staff. The collection includes nearly 300 works of art, and is valued at approximately \$700,000.
- **An education program** delivered to school students and community groups.
- **Work experience opportunities**, internships and placements for school children and TAFE students.
- **A public program** run for members of the public including artist talks, workshops, lectures, special events, concerts and school holiday programs.
- **The Gallery shop**, selling arts related merchandise relating to the Gallery and to the Swan Hill region.
- **Research** - the Gallery answers research requests about works in the permanent collection and related enquiries.
- **Facility hire** service for outside functions/community groups.

In conjunction with other Council programs the following cultural development initiatives are also undertaken:

- Support for community arts organisations through a Regional Arts Officer.
- The development of a Swan Hill Rural City Council Cultural Policy.
- Support for the Sister City relationships with Villers-Brettoneux (France), Yamagata (Japan), and Ji Lin (China).

The Gallery receives strong external funding support, mainly through Arts Victoria, and some funding received through sponsorship and other commercial activities. Major projects are achieved through external grant funding and sponsorship activities. As a result, the ratepayer funds two thirds of the cost of operating the Gallery.

The Gallery is open to the public on Tuesday to Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, and on Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, with hours extended for specific functions including concerts and after hours exhibition openings.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

The Performing Arts program offers the community the opportunity to attend a range of quality productions. The program delivers high standard productions that would not otherwise be available to the local and the wider community.

The productions are staged in the fully equipped theatres in Swan Hill (Swan Hill Town Hall & Harrison Hall) and Robinvale (Robinvale Community Arts Centre). Productions are also provided to support various Festival events in the community.

The Performing Arts program includes the following:

- Approximately 14 performing arts events each year, including the George Fairfax Memorial Schools Drama Festival involving over 250 students.
- Support and assistance for local artists by way of publicity, bookings or contacts.
- Facilitation of festivals and performing arts events for the community.
- Promotion of the integration of the creative process into the lifestyle of the community.
- Encouragement and support of youth in pursuit of performing arts.
- Development of the George Fairfax Memorial schools drama festival, as part of the youth support for the Arts throughout the community and the Region.
- Creation of awareness of Council's performing arts centres.
- Establish, develop and train technicians in theatre operations employed in Council's theatres.

Whilst the program is supported by grants from Arts Victoria, and ticket sales, it is primarily funded by rates.

Regional Library

The Swan Hill Regional Library provides a range of public library services to the region via a static library in Swan Hill, and a mobile library that services ten townships within the municipality. Through service agreements, the Regional Library also provides

administrative support to three Wakool Shire library branches, and the mobile library visits five Buloke Shire townships and one Wakool Shire township.

The Library has approximately 75,000 items available to the community through the main branch and mobile Library. Items are available in various categories and formats, including printed, CD, video, audiocassette and magazine. The Library also provides free meeting facilities, an extensive local history collection, archive and research centre, six public access Internet units, photocopiers, scanners, catalogue access, children's reading and activity areas, and display areas.

Services offered include: lending of items, interlibrary loans, reference assistance, home library service, bulk loans to remote groups, children's story time sessions, and tours. The Library is heavily used, with 100,000 visits, over 220,000 items loaned, and thousands of hours of Internet bookings per year.

The service is primarily funded by rates, with one third of income being Government grants, user charges, and contributions from other municipalities.

(2326) Pioneer Settlement Museum

The Pioneer Settlement Museum was established by the community of Swan Hill and surrounds to maintain its history for future generations. The Pioneer Settlement has a long history of community involvement and there is a strong sense of ownership by those involved in it. Community groups currently involved with the Pioneer Settlement include:

- The Friends of the Pioneer Settlement Museum Volunteers – 14,000 hours per year.
- Swan Hill Urban Fire Brigade.
- Mallee Steam, Oil & Machinery Club.
- Swan Hill Car Club.
- Swan Hill Lions Club.

Pioneer Settlement Museum Mission

- To conserve and develop a heritage collection for the Murray-Mallee.
- To provide quality educational and entertaining visitor experience based on innovative interpretation of Murray-Mallee history from 1830 – 1930.
- To make a major contribution to the economic, tourism and cultural wellbeing of the Swan Hill region.

What service is provided by the Museum to the community?

- **Hours of service** – 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Tuesday to Sunday outside school & Public holidays (not open Christmas & Boxing Day).

- **Attractions** - Pioneers in Sound & Light Show, and P.S. Pyap cruises run each day/night the Museum is Open.
- **Conservation**, documentation and research of the region's moveable cultural heritage.
- **Interpretation** of the region's cultural heritage through an interactive and 'experience' based annual public program – festivals, highlighting historic events, activation etc.
- **Cultural tourism** attraction – promote and integrate cultural assets within the region.
- **Engage the community** in discourse about local and other issues relevant to the community.
- **Education** program – the museum provides quality educational programs and activities to 8,000 local, inter & intra state students annually.
- **Low cost accommodation** – for the benefit of the visiting students and public.
- **Unique function venue hire** – Church, Dumosa Hall, Lower Murray Inn, Riverview Café, Wharf, P.S. Pyap, P.S. Gem and grounds.
- **Museum "Hub"** – in providing advice and resources to heritage collections in the region.
- **Aboriginal Keeping Place** – used for display and education programs.
- **Access to the collection** – making the collection and research material available to other institutions and individual researchers/academics.

Resources employed

- 8 Full time and 19 part time staff.
- .6 Aboriginal Education Officer and .4 Cleaner of displays – both casual.
- A collection of 20 thousand items insured at \$6 Million. These include highly significant items from a local and international perspective, such as the P.S. Gem paddleboat, the Kaiser Stereoscopic theatre, and the Saunderson Tractor.
- Accommodation venue with 126 beds, the administration, café and admission buildings and equipment.
- Approximately 70% of the Pioneer Settlement operations are funded through user charges (entrance fees) with the remainder funded by rates. This is in contrast to museums generally, which are only 40% self funded.

Lake Boga Community Centre

The Lake Boga Community Centre, valued at \$1.8 million, provides a focus for community life in the Lake Boga district. The facility provides a venue for community functions such as meetings, balls, weddings, sporting events, and also limited

performing arts. The Centre has a caretaker/cleaner who is responsible for overseeing the Centre's maintenance, security and day-to-day management, while Council maintains the bookings for the Centre. Council, in its 2003/04 budget, has made a net allocation of \$17,340 for the operation and maintenance of the Centre.

Specific facilities in the centre include:

- The auditorium, seating approximately 250 people.
- Small stage area with limited facilities, such as sound (but no stage lighting).
- Fully equipped kitchen with cutlery and crockery.
- Meeting room catering for senior citizens and other organisations.
- Stadium that caters for basketball, tennis, badminton, indoor soccer, and indoor hockey.
- Dressing rooms and toilet facilities, including disabled facilities.
- Heating and cooling.

Manangatang Community Centre

The Manangatang Community Centre, valued at \$558,800, provides a facility for the community to enjoy small functions such as birthday parties, meetings and community gatherings. The Centre has a net budget allocation of approximately \$1,700 in 2003/04 to finance its operations and maintenance, and includes the following:

- Two medium sized rooms with a small kitchen facility.
- Senior Citizens meeting facility.
- Air-conditioned.
- Toilet facilities.
- Pre School facility, with appropriate toilet and storage attached.

Nyah Community Centre

The Nyah Community Centre, valued at \$2 million, provides a facility to cater for weddings, balls, community functions, sporting club amenities and meetings. In addition to being utilised by many organisations, groups and individuals in the Nyah community, the Centre is the base for the Nyah/Nyah West United Football Club, the Nyah Cricket Club and The Nyah Harness Racing Club. A caretaker/cleaner is employed to oversee maintenance, security and day-to-day management of the facility. Council provided \$11,600 for the operation and maintenance of the centre in 2003/04. The Centre is under the direct management of Council.

The Nyah Community Centre contains:

- A large function room that can be divided into three separate areas. Total seating capacity for approximately 300 people.
- Bar facilities to cater for sporting club and other events.
- A fully equipped kitchen and serving area.
- A large balcony overlooking the sporting ground.
- Disabled access and toilet facilities.
- Downstairs dressing rooms, toilets and meeting/social rooms.
- TAB and covered areas.

Robinvale Community Centre and Performing Arts Venue

The Robinvale Community Centre, valued at \$4.18 million, provides a facility to cater for a range of cultural activities, stage productions and community functions, such as weddings, balls, conferences, receptions, dance, training and meetings. Council allocated \$65,770 to support the operation and maintenance of the centre in 2003/04. The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by staff at the Robinvale Resource Centre. The Community Centre contains the following facilities:

- An auditorium seating approximately 550 people in cabaret style, or larger capacity for meetings and conference style events.
- Fully equipped kitchen with cutlery and crockery.
- Small stage area to cater for bands and presentations.
- Large Foyer with bar facilities, toilets and disabled facilities.
- Fully equipped kitchen with crockery and cutlery.
- Theatre with large stage, professionally equipped with lighting and sound.
- Dressing room facility.
- The facility is located in parkland adjacent to the Murray River.

Public Halls and Other Facilities

There are nineteen Public Halls and other facilities located within the municipality. All are operated by their local community. Council provides little direct support to the operation and maintenance for these facilities, other than to assist with specific fund raising requests. Facilities are as follows:

- Annuello Public Hall
- Boundary Bend Public Hall

- Chinkapook Public Hall
- Goschen Public Hall
- Kooloonong Public Hall
- Lake Boga Flying Boat Museum
- Manangatang Public Hall
- Meatian Public Hall
- Natya public Hall
- Nyah Public Hall
- Piangil Public Hall
- Robinswood Homestead Robinvale
- Speewa Public Hall
- Tyntynder South Public Hall
- Ultima Public Hall
- Waitchie Public Hall
- Wemen Public Hall
- Woorinen Soldiers Hall
- Woorinen South Community Centre

Robinswood

Robinswood is slightly different from the Public Halls listed above, as it is the historic home of the Cuttle family, founders of Robinvale. Robinswood was built in 1926, two years after the founding of Robinvale, and is built on the site of Bumbang Homestead, the first dwelling in Robinvale. Robinswood was architect designed, and built on a very modern concrete raft, with double brick cavity walls. The house was very modern for its time and is a significant link to Robinvale's past. It was acquired by the Shire of Swan Hill and was fully refurbished in 1980, with a further refurbishment taking place in 2001.

Robinswood is available for use by the community of Robinvale and is managed by the Robinswood Management Committee. The house is mainly used by craft groups, with displays arranged for art, photography, ceramics, patchwork and needlework groups. Other small groups, such as the Ballet Committee and Ladies Probus, use the building from time to time or on a regular roster.

Robinswood is listed with Museums Victoria as an historic house and is classified as a minor museum. Memorabilia of the Cuttle family, especially Robin Cuttle, after whom the town is named, are on display, as are the documents and photographs of the town twinning with Villers Bretonneux, France.

Lake Boga Flying Boat Museum

The Lake Boga Flying Boat Museum is one of the key tourism attractions in the Swan Hill area. The museum, located on the shore of Lake Boga, is based on the strategically important role performed in World War II by the No. 1 Flying Boat Repair Depot, which was located on the western edge of Lake Boga.

Through the committed efforts of the Lake Boga Lions Club the museum, which is housed in the former communications bunker, was opened in November 1977, with a rebuilt Catalina as the principal drawcard.

Council does not directly contribute to the operation or maintenance of the Museum, which is operated by a Committee of Management that consists principally of members of the Lake Boga Lions Club. Rather, Council's role is limited to facilitating projects such as a recently completed feasibility for the expansion and upgrade of the attraction.

Community Need For These Services

Parks and Gardens & Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The primary need for parks, gardens, recreation reserves and sporting facilities, as perceived by other levels of government, is for the initial establishment and, if required to meet changing community needs, the upgrading of facilities. This is evidenced by the extensive provision of Crown Land parcels in all localities within the municipality to provide sporting and other leisure opportunities for the community.

The Victorian Government, through Sports Recreation Victoria, recognises the need for appropriate services through the provision of grants to develop reserves for existing and emerging community use. The requirement for parks and open space in urban areas is recognised through the statutory planning process, whereby developers are required to provide a minimum of 5% of the developed area to be set aside for Recreation and Leisure activities.

The ongoing maintenance of these facilities is deemed to be a local government responsibility, as local government can best ensure parks and sporting reserves meet the needs of the local community.

Need recognised by the local community

Community need for Parks, Gardens and Sporting Reserves is constantly expressed by the extensive use made of these facilities. Individuals and whole families use Parks, Gardens, Playgrounds, BBQ and Picnic Facilities and other services on a daily basis. Sporting facilities provide a central venue for social activities within the municipality and frequently are a key element that maintains community cohesion in rural towns. The community also recognises the need for this service through the supporting networks such as sporting clubs and service organisations that assist the management and use of facilities. Use by the community also includes cultural events, such as concerts and festivals, as well as special events such as Carols by Candlelight and Australia Day Breakfast, held in the major parks in urban areas.

Need recognised by Council

Council is committed to providing and maintaining parks, gardens and sporting reserves and facilities for the community. This is recognised in the corporate plan, and through significant annual budget allocation. Council's commitment is also supported through the development of strategic plans and policies to guide the development, maintenance and management of assets that are the core of the service, and of the opportunities provided.

Aquatic Facilities

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

Like parks, gardens and sporting reserves, the primary need perceived by other levels of government is for the initial establishment and (if required to meet changing community needs) upgrade of aquatic facilities. The State Government provided major support for the construction of public swimming pools in the “honeymoon period” following the 1956/1960 Olympic games. Since that time, funding support has been sporadic and limited to capital projects. Recently, the State government perceived a need to ensure water quality in public swimming pools and introduced legally enforceable standards for water quality and monitoring. The government has not enacted legislation regarding the staffing levels or lifeguard requirements for public swimming pools.

The government perceives that the operation and management of aquatic facilities is primarily a local government responsibility. However, the value of the facilities in hosting such programs as ‘Vicswim’ is indicated by support to that program at the departmental level.

Occasional support for major Capital Works projects to maintain or upgrade pool facilities is provided through programs such as ‘Better Pools’. These programs are not funded to the level of community demand, so pool operators must competitively bid for funding. The programs are focussed on building ‘new’ facilities or undertaking major upgrades to existing facilities.

There is an expectation that minor capital works will be funded locally, even though this is the major area of need for most facilities. Changes at facilities required by Government Regulation are normally undertaken as minor capital works, e.g. changes in chemical storage and handling, and disabled access, requiring such works to be funded by the local community, usually through rates.

Need recognised by the local community

In the eyes of the community, the pools are a very high profile service that should be available even if not every member of the community uses the facility.

The pools at Manangatang and Nyah are operated by local community committees, which were formed because those communities perceived a higher need for services than Council was (at that time) willing to provide, and hence undertook to operate the pools on Council’s behalf. This change to community management enabled the pools to operate for longer hours, and the communities have carried out significant improvements at both pool sites. The pools are also perceived to provide an important community open space, e.g. parents with small children, swim clubs, and a place to spend a hot afternoon.

Community needs are influenced by climate - there is a need/expectation that the pools are open during hot weather (whether during the day or in the evening - or outside of the pool season). Further, there is a perception that public swimming pools are a

service due to the community, i.e. funded from rates, not higher entrance fees. While the community accepts it has to pay entrance fees (user pays), the fees are expected to be minimal - not full cost recovery.

Need recognised by Council

Council recognises the need for aquatic facilities by funding the pool operations and minor capital works programs from rates.

The Council aims to meet community expectations, whilst balancing the management of cost vs. expectations. However, the increased expectations of the State government, in relation to basic safety (chemical etc.), are not being met by an increase in funding for pool operations, rather it is expected that these improvements will be achieved through efficiencies in operations.

Council funds approximately 80% of the pool operation and maintenance costs, and expects the users to pay the balance. This is regardless of whether the pool is managed by a Contractor or a Community Committee.

Council priority with pools is to meet community standards in relation to public swimming pools. Hence, the development of the indoor leisure centre in Swan Hill and focus on major upgrade in facilities available in Robinvale (rather than merely replacing existing infrastructure).

Indoor Sports Facilities

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The overall health of the population impacts on other areas of Government expenditure, particular health services. In recognition of this, both Commonwealth and State governments support participation in sport and recreation as part of promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

Similar to aquatic facilities (above) this support is limited to development and upgrading of infrastructure through Sport and Recreation Victoria. Unfortunately, the level of funding is limited, and the application process is complex and highly competitive. There is no financial assistance for ongoing operational expenses of facilities.

The support for active lifestyles is echoed by the education sector, requiring access to high ball courts and swimming facilities for students, which also translates to financial support of sporting facilities.

Need recognised by the local community

The community expects Council to provide a range of good quality sport and recreation opportunities and facilities, whilst appreciating that users need to make a direct contribution to assist with ongoing operational costs of such facilities by way of

entrance fees or user fees paid by a club or organisation. There is an expectation by the community that Council will develop, or support the development of, new or additional multi-use sporting and recreational facilities.

Need recognised by Council

Council recognises the need to provide and maintain indoor sporting facilities for the community, and seeks to meet existing and community needs in this area, whilst balancing the needs to be met with available funding.

Art Gallery

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The State government, through Arts Victoria, perceives an existing and immediate need to support arts that are relevant to the community. Specifically, its objectives are “to maintain and develop a dynamic arts and cultural infrastructure through a diverse range of organisations that:

- *Present a mix of high quality, innovative, marketable arts product.*
- *Support a regional infrastructure for the presentation and performance of high quality arts product.*
- *Deliver a range of industry support services.*
- *Provide a diverse range of high quality opportunities for the participation in the arts.”*

These objectives are supported by annual operational funding, and funding for capital upgrades to the Gallery.

Need recognised by the local community

Local community need for the Gallery is demonstrated in a variety of ways, with the most obvious being participation in the Gallery.

Participation can be broken down into:

- Visitation numbers - overall increase in visitation of 16% in the last financial year.
- Participation in the Gallery through volunteer groups – i.e. Gallery Advisory Committee, Art Associates, Friends of the Gallery, Gallery Guides and volunteers.

Need recognised by Council

Council recognises the community need for the Gallery by annually contributing well in excess of the operational grant funding received from the government. Council also perceives a need by the wider community to this service by undertaking programs that seek to engage:

- Youth audiences.
- Senior members of the community.
- Community members that live beyond the environs of the Swan Hill urban area.
- Members of the indigenous community.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The State government, through Arts Victoria, perceives an existing and immediate need to support arts that are relevant to the community, as discussed for the Art Gallery (above). Arts Victoria provides annual grants to support the presentation of high quality performances to the community, and provides funding for infrastructure improvements to Council owned performance venues.

The objective of the funding is to enable regional audiences to enjoy performing arts in venues similar to those available in metropolitan areas.

Need recognised by the local community

Community need for access to the performing arts is confirmed by attendance figures at the various productions. In addition, random exit surveys give a strong indication of the requirements of the community.

Local Community need for the performing arts is also supported by increased attendances and access by younger section of the community, through the schools and other programs, and through increasing sponsorship of specific performances by local businesses.

Need recognised by Council

The Swan Hill Rural City Council perception of community need for performing arts is evidenced by the existence of this program since the 1980's. Council support translates into providing funding for the program well in excess of the operational funding provided by Arts Victoria.

Regional Library

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The State Government provides approximately 18% of total library funding each year, with an annual reduction in the recurrent component reflecting the cost-shift to local government. This may reflect the belief in passing on the majority of costs to those who benefit at a local level.

The criteria for this funding shows that this level of government supports the provision of free public library services for all Victorians. This is evident in the terms and conditions of funding, which includes details of which services must be offered free of charge.

Non-recurrent project based funding is made available for exploration of innovative operational ideas and service improvement, however the responsibility for continuation of additional services falls to local government.

Need recognised by the local community

A high level of community need for Library services is demonstrated by the increasing usage, high importance and satisfaction rating in Council surveys and the level of understanding of the Library service in the community.

Feedback from user and non-user focus groups shows the following perception of community need:

- Important for children, the elderly and people who are unable to afford to purchase books.
- A right to have access to information through a Library for free.
- A friendly non-threatening place to meet, sit down or study.
- Mobile library services to remote communities invaluable to those groups.

Whilst loans or borrowing of items is reducing slightly, visits and usage of the Library for a wider range of services is increasing, showing that for the most part the community's needs are being met. Where there are perceived gaps, this is often due to a lack of communication to the community of the range of services available.

Community Membership of over 42% (on the State average) also shows that the Library services are well utilised.

Need Recognised by Council

There is considerable historical evidence of strong Council support for the provision of a free public library service to the municipality. Council provides approximately 67% of library funding, reflecting the strong need perceived by Council to maintain this service.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

A recognition of the need for the Pioneer Settlement as a museum for the enjoyment of future generations has been relatively recent by the Commonwealth and State governments. Evidence of the need to maintain our history, as perceived by other levels of government, includes:

- A new partnership with Museum Victoria to provide museum support and services to the Swan Hill region, as part of the Museum's plan to integrate cultural tourism in the region.
- The listing of the P.S. Gem on the Heritage Victoria registry.
- Museums Australia (Victorian branch) (a State and Federal funded program) provides staff and volunteers with support and professional development to assist regional museums to carry out the National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy (1998).

However, this recognition of community need for services is not translated into operational funding support.

Need recognised by the local community

The perceived community need for the Pioneer Settlement Museum is evidenced through community involvement in the day-to-day activation of the Museum, and the reliance of the local tourism and hospitality industry on the Settlement as a drawcard for visitors to the town and region.

The community also makes regular donations to the Museum so that our heritage will be cared for and interpreted/displayed for future generations.

Need recognised by Council

Council has recognised, and is committed to, the value of the Settlement as a museum and tourism attraction. However, Council has difficulty in gaining acceptance by other levels of government that the responsibility for maintaining the history of the region for future generations should be the responsibility of the wider community, not just the community of this municipality.

Lake Boga Community Centre

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The State government perceives a need for the existence of infrastructure that facilitates the needs of rural communities. To this end, the Department of Youth Sport and Recreation and the Department of Education supported the construction of the Lake

Boga Community Centre. However, the operation and maintenance of the centre is seen as the sole responsibility of the local community.

Need recognised by the local community

The local community sees this facility as a major focal point. It adds a certain amount of prestige to the township, with an outstanding design that compliments the area with its appearance and ease of access. Ongoing need for the facility is evidenced by community use, including:

- A number of sporting groups within the surrounding district utilise the facility for practice and competitive sport.
- Use of the centre for social functions, weddings, balls and meetings.
- Use by the Lake Boga Primary School and Pre-School.
- Maternal and Child Health use the facility to provide local services.
- Senior Citizens Club of Lake Boga uses a meeting room and the auditorium for their functions.

Need recognised by Council

Council has acknowledged the need for the facility by the local community as evidenced by:

- Being on a joint committee of management of the Centre (with the Department of Education).
- Undertaking the operation, maintenance and daily management of the Centre, providing an operational budget of approximately \$20,000 per annum.

Manangatang Community Centre

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

Unlike the Lake Boga Community Centre, the State government has not provided any funding for this facility. It is assumed, however, that if such a facility did not exist in Manangatang, that the government would support the development of such a Centre.

Need recognised by the local community

The local community sees this facility as a community focal point. Ongoing need for the facility is evidenced by community use, including:

- Local community groups utilise the facility for meetings.
- The Manangatang Pre School is located in the Centre and has invested funds and support to cater for the district children of pre school age.

- The Senior Citizens Club of Manangatang has provided funding from time to time, and uses the facility for their meetings and social gatherings.

Need Recognised by Council

Council has acknowledged the need for the facility by the local community as evidenced by:

- Purchasing the land and buildings to provide a Community Centre to meet the needs of district residents.
- Undertaking the operation, maintenance and daily management of the Centre, providing an operational budget of between \$2,000 and \$8,000 per annum.

Nyah Community Centre

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

Similar to the Lake Boga Community Centre, the State government perceived a need for a community centre at Nyah, and provided support for its construction through the Department of Youth Sport and Recreation. The operation and maintenance of the Centre, however, is seen as the sole responsibility of the local community.

Need recognised by the local community

The local community sees this facility as a community focal point. Ongoing need for the facility is evidenced by community use, including:

- Community sporting bodies have adopted the venue as their clubrooms.
- District organisations utilise the rooms for meetings, functions.
- The local community use the facility for functions.
- Harness Racing Victoria utilise the facility and surrounding reserve, and support the Centre through some operational funding. Harness Racing Victoria also provided funding support in the construction of the Centre.
- Local Sporting Clubs have invested their own funds to upgrade areas for their use.

Need Recognised by Council

Council has acknowledged the need for the facility by the local community as evidenced by:

- Undertaking the operational management of the facility.
- Taking on the role of Committee of Management for the reserve and its buildings on behalf of the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

- Undertaking the operation, maintenance and daily management of the Centre, providing an operational budget of between \$12,000 and \$25,000 per annum.

Robinvale Community Centre

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

Similar to the other community centres, the State government recognises a need for a Community Centre at Robinvale, and provided support for its construction. In this case however, part of the funding came from Arts Victoria, in recognition of a need for performing arts and social activities in the growing community of Robinvale. Like all the other Centres, the operation and maintenance of the Centre is seen as the sole responsibility of the local community.

Need recognised by the local community

The local community sees this facility as a community focal point. Ongoing need for the facility is evidenced by community use, including:

- Use of the facility by local dance groups.
- Use of the facility for social functions, weddings, balls, meetings and movies.
- Attendance at the facility as a performing arts venue.

In recent years the local community decided to manage the operations of the facility, rather than it being managed by Council. This has seen an increase in the use of the Centre, and donations made to the facility for upgrade of equipment (particularly in the function area). However, after two years the community asked Council to take over the daily operations of the Centre, as the facility was too large to be operated solely by volunteers, but not large enough to fund a Centre manager.

Need Recognised by Council

Council has acknowledged the need for the facility by the local community as evidenced by:

- Undertaking the operation, maintenance and daily management of the Centre, providing an operational budget of approximately \$130,000 per annum (depending on maintenance requirements).
- Supporting the local community in taking greater ownership of the facility.

Swan Hill Town Hall

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

The State government acknowledges a need for a performing arts venue in Swan Hill, and provided funding through Arts Victoria for major renovations and upgrades to the stage, lighting and sound equipment. However, operation of the Hall is seen as the responsibility of the local community.

Need recognised by the local community

The local community sees this facility as a community focal point and a regional asset. Ongoing need for the facility is evidenced by use, including:

- Use of the facility as a conference centre.
- Use of the facility for social functions, weddings, balls, meetings.
- Attendance at the facility as a performing arts venue.
- The use of the facility as the civic centre, location of the Council Chamber, and civic receptions etc.

Need Recognised by Council

Council has acknowledged the need for the facility by the local community as evidenced by:

- Undertaking the operation, maintenance and daily management of the Centre, providing an operational budget of between \$130,000 and 160,000 per annum.
- Supporting the local community in taking greater ownership of the facility.
- A fee structure that encourages use by the public and community organisations.

Halls and Other Public Facilities

Need recognised by other government departments and agencies

Similar to the Community Centres, the State government perceives a need for facilities that provide a community focus. Many of these halls were constructed many years ago, and support small communities. Support for this role played by the halls is evidenced through minor support funding for capital upgrades or large maintenance projects – usually funded in partnership with the local community

Need recognised by the local community

These facilities provide the local communities with a place to meet, hold social functions and in some cases identify the area. This need is evidenced through the

ongoing use of the facilities, and the daily operation and maintenance of the halls, which is undertaken by community committees.

Need recognised by Council

Whilst Council recognises the need for the smaller local communities to have a meeting place, due to their number, the size of the communities involved, and the fact that many of them are located in areas where population is decreasing, Council provides limited support for these facilities.

Summary Of Council Financial Commitment

The financial analysis table for the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services, on page 29, reveals that in 2002-2003 Council expended in excess of \$7.2 million on recreation, culture and leisure services each year. Of this amount, over \$2.3 million is recovered, either in user fees levied on target groups in the community, or through grants from other levels of government.

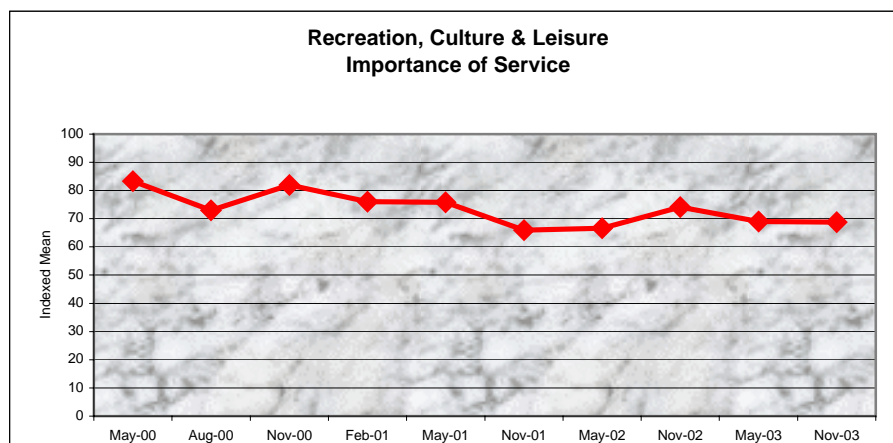
Council contributed over \$4.7 million to the operation and maintenance of the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services in 2002-2003 to enable the community to enjoy a diverse range of cultural and recreational activities.

An estimated replacement cost of the infrastructure associated with the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services is \$72.8 million, made up as follows:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Library | \$2.4 million |
| • Art Gallery | \$1.5 million |
| • Pioneer Settlement | \$8.3 million |
| • Sporting Reserves and Facilities | \$28.7 million |
| • Aquatic Facilities | \$1.0 million |
| • Parks and Gardens (including playgrounds) | \$18.2 million |
| • Community Centres, Town Hall and Public Halls | \$12.7 million |

Summary of 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 the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services. The results of the surveys conducted to date (see Attachment 2) reveal that the community considers the services to be of high importance, as can be seen from the following graph:



Recreation, Culture & Leisure Financial Operations (Actual) 2002/2003

	Parks & Gardens Pt 2318	Rec Reserves & Other Sporting Facilities 2569	Aquatic Facilities 2574-8	Indoor Sports Facilities 2581	Art Gallery 2610	Arts (performing) - Cultural Promotion 2621	Regional Library 2650	Pioneer Settlement Museum Various	Lake Boga Community Centre 5113	Manang. Community Centre 5114	Nyah Community Centre 5115	Robinvale Community Centre 5117	Swan Hill Town Hall 5178	Halls and Other Public Facilities 5179	Total
Operating Subsidies/Grants*	76,135	17,563	4,545	0	214,562	52,500	132,586	7,914	0	0	0	0	526,257	0	1,032,062
User Fees & Charges	1,733	23,064	0	0	7,772	41,826	5,600	376,418	4,247	2,092	6,399	24,823	3,566	0	497,540
User Contributions	2,850	25,148	0	117,706	0	3,579	0	825	0	0	0	0	330,000	0	480,108
Sale of Goods/Services	0	0	0	0	5,309	1,695	0	163,303	0	0	0	0	189	0	170,496
Contributions - Other Parties/Councils	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,164	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85,164
Other Income	562	3,040	0	0	2,261	10,771	30,323	10,641	0	0	3,937	0	55,398	1,838	118,771
Total Income	81,280	68,815	4,545	117,706	229,904	110,371	253,673	559,101	4,247	2,092	10,336	24,823	915,410	1,838	2,384,141
Wages & Related	237,720	63,121	22,613	10,000	117,589	67,854	385,664	806,404	180	880	1,240	8,280	30,876	2,710	1,755,131
Repairs & Maintenance	31,999	55,174	12,086	2,667	5,650	0	11,312	31,865	7,805	6,125	18,854	123,947	4,141	4,084	315,709
Premises Fees	440	0	0	0	0	0	46,092	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46,532
Travel/Vehicle	80,953	26,636	0	0	10,367	4,570	39,959	18,826	0	0	0	0	0	0	181,311
Contractors	103,261	55,451	239,298	2,000	891	0	0	94,279	1,014	0	208	15,118	721	0	512,241
Payments to User Groups	328	9,615	0	292,240	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	302,183
Consumables/Utilities	50,882	107,721	19,695	1,760	47,274	171,974	88,836	111,297	12,556	2,268	4,714	23,072	12,026	24,643	678,718
Other Expenses	7,964	-720	0	276	26,331	653	15,055	7,741	0	0	0	93	11,381	0	68,774
Capital Expenses	58,848	214,707	89,883	228,576	27,543	12,588	106,208	6,149	0	0	0	12,563	2,671,250	0	3,428,315
Total Expenditure	572,393	531,705	383,575	537,519	235,645	257,639	693,126	1,076,561	21,555	9,273	25,016	183,073	2,730,395	31,437	7,288,912
Total Council Contribution	491,114	462,890	379,030	419,813	5,741	147,268	439,453	382,868	17,308	7,181	14,680	158,250	1,814,985	29,599	4,770,180

*includes \$119,000 capital funding for Art Gallery for projects in 2003/2004.

Consultation

General

Significant consultation is undertaken with the community on the services included in the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services. A number of consultation processes are undertaken across a range of the services, including:

- *Council Community Satisfaction Survey*
The community is surveyed by telephone in May and November each year, regarding their perception of the standard of sports ground maintenance, the cleanliness and tidiness of parks and gardens, playgrounds and library services. The results of these surveys are included as an attachment to this Report.
- *State Government Survey*
The State Government conducts an annual survey of Victorians regarding the level of performance of Local Government Authorities on a range of Local Government services and programs, including recreational facilities. The results of this survey for the Swan Hill Rural City Council are considered in the delivery of recreation, culture and leisure services.
- *Development of Council Strategies and Reports*
In the process of undertaking Council initiated Studies, Strategies and Reports the community is heavily consulted. This consultation can be in the form of membership of a Study reference or steering group, direct contact as a study stakeholder, attendance at public meetings and being invited to comment on Study recommendations. Examples of where this consultation has occurred are: Councils Open Space Study, Playgrounds Strategy, Racecourse/Golf Club Master Plan, feasibility studies for new leisure facilities such as the Swan Hill Leisure Centre, the Robinvale Leisure Centre, and development of the Swan Hill Rural City Council Cultural Policy and strategy.
- *User Group Meetings*
Council meets with Users and Committees of Management (COM) of recreation reserves to help plan and deliver recreational services. Council meets with Alan Garden Netball Centre COM, Swan Hill Indoor Sports and Recreation Centre COM, Chisholm Reserve Users, Ken Harrison Sporting Complex Users, and Swan Hill Skate Park Users Group etc.
- *Specific Council Projects*
Council consults with the community by holding public meetings and by direct contact with stakeholders/residents when undertaking specific projects, such as improvements to parks and playgrounds.

In addition to these general consultative arrangements, the following specific consultation is undertaken:

Aquatic Facilities

- Specific survey of the community (both users and non-users) conducted by Council in 2001, on public swimming pool usage and pool maintenance and upgrade expectations.
- Annual survey of pool users undertaken by Belgravia Leisure, contractors at the Swan Hill and Robinvale Swimming Pools.
- Belgravia Leisure also maintains customer feedback records and complaint forms. These provide further input from the community to the program operation.
- Whilst the community committees operating Nyah and Manangatang Swimming Pools do not carry out formal surveys, their position in their respective local communities means that the committees engage in an ongoing “Parish Pump” form of community consultation.

Art Gallery

- Use of front-of-house surveys and comments in the visitor book at front reception.
- Feedback is also gained from all voluntary groups. This is a particularly important role of the Gallery’s Advisory Committee.
- Surveys and questionnaires on individual Gallery programs, from education programs to special events, is built into the working practices of Gallery staff.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

- A market research survey of the community was undertaken in 2000 to gain an understanding of community requirements for this program as a whole. The performing arts programs have been designed around addressing the needs identified in the market research.
- In addition, community requests for certain types of shows or cultural experiences are used as a guideline to provide information on the selection of certain types of performances for the community.
- Random front-of-house and exit surveys are also undertaken to indicate the success or otherwise of shows presented.

Regional Library

- The library conducts surveys on specific issues, in addition to customer feedback forms, which are used on an irregular and regular basis. They show that satisfaction is high, and also respond to issues such as service improvements and suggestions.
- Additional feedback is received by word-of-mouth from users and non-users to staff outside the Library, comments from visitors to the area on quality, positive reporting from the local newspapers regarding the services, and letters of appreciation from community groups.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

- The Museum monitors all media articles involving the Museum, and assesses each public comment against professional industry standards and our own organisational policy to ensure that we are responding to the needs of the community.
- The Museum's policy is to reflect the needs of the local community. The process involves the use of visitor experience, education service, accommodation service and satisfaction surveys, community meetings, visitor comment books, staff speaking at local meetings, and through the interaction and involvement of local clubs at the Museum to gauge those needs. The compilation of this data to date has assisted with future planning for visitor programs, as well as market research on how best to attract both local and outside visitors to the Museum and region.
- Currently there are 60 volunteers assisting with the day-to-day activities at the Museum. The volunteers come from all sectors of the community, such as the Swan Hill Fire Brigade, The Swan Hill Lions Club, Swan Hill Sing Australia, as well as the Friends of the Pioneer Settlement. This involvement acts as an interface with the broader community.

Service Responsiveness To Community Needs

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities & Indoor Sports Facilities

The community has high expectations regarding the maintenance and management of Parks and Sporting facilities. The relatively few service requests for action, through the Council service request system, indicates that this service is provided at the standard expected by the community. A recent survey involving 30% of all residential properties in the municipality (with a response of over 1000 individuals - 5% of the population) indicated that expectations are being met, with some improvements possible in the quality of provision and the further development of existing Parks, particularly through the provision of additional shade.

The community is able to provide feedback and comment through the Council's Community Satisfaction Survey, direct to Council Officers and Councillors and via Council's complaint mechanism and procedures. Centre Managers also provide an avenue for the community to express their needs.

The sporting and recreational needs of the Robinvale community are currently not being met. Extensive community consultation and planning has identified the need for a new leisure facility involving a high ball court, crèche, change room/toilets and refurbished swimming pools. The Robinvale Aquatic Leisure Centre project, incorporating the above facility, is currently the subject of a capital funding application to the State Government.

Aquatic Facilities

Service responsiveness in these programs is a balancing act between the availability and affordability of services. Generally speaking, the operators of the facilities are best placed to monitor community needs, and tailor their programs to fulfill the needs of their users.

Council, as the 'owner' of the facilities, responds to community needs through the provision of new facilities, e.g. the Swan Hill Leisure Centre, or through renewal of existing facilities, e.g. Robinvale pool refurbishment.

Art Gallery

The Gallery program is focused on being relevant and accessible to the community, as highlighted in its mission statement. Programs and services are based on knowledge of the community, and programs are delivered to address the interests of specific target audiences. Target audiences are identified as: youth, people over 60 years of age, the Aboriginal population and people living in remote rural communities, reflecting the demographics of the population.

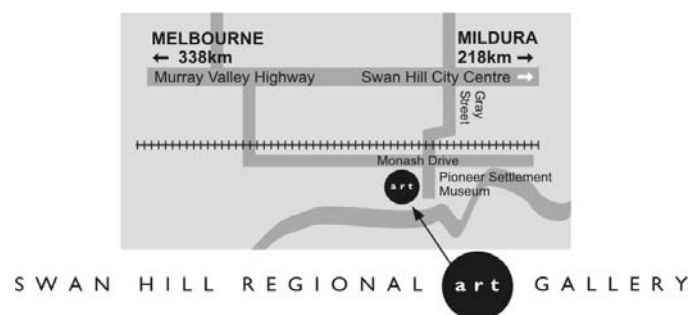
Since the adoption of the Gallery's Business Plan in 2002, there has been an overall increase in the Gallery program by target audiences.

Affordability Vs demand

Entry to the Gallery is by donation. This decision is based on the average earnings of community members, which, as a whole, are relatively low. The demand for education and public programs at the Gallery exceeds current levels of staffing. Currently, all educational services to schools within the region are delivered free of charge. The Gallery provides a range of public programs, from concerts to school holiday programs, and prices are tiered according to the nature of the event. Ultimately, it is intended that a wide range of opportunities be available to community members at a range of different prices.

Accessibility

The Gallery is situated at Horseshoe Bend, Swan Hill, and is located within the River Precinct next to the Pioneer Settlement Museum. This is a prime tourist precinct, with easy access to the able bodied and those with disabilities.



Delivery of the Gallery service

The community are encouraged to visit the Gallery. Based on current staffing levels, the Gallery is not generally able to take exhibitions or staff services out to the region. Information about the Gallery program is continuously promoted throughout the region. Community members gain access to information about the Gallery through a variety of means including: local media, community newsletters, members of various Gallery membership organisations and through the website.

Opening hours

Public opening hours are Tuesday to Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. In addition, an ongoing number of functions are conducted outside of these hours, particularly in the evenings. Opening hours cover the periods of highest demand.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

As a service provider delivering cultural experiences to the community mainly on a user pays basis, attendance numbers give a very good indication of the percentage of the community who enjoy the quality and type of programs being presented. As mentioned in the previous section, requests for certain types of shows or cultural experiences are also factored into the ongoing planning of the performing arts program. Other indicators that the performing arts program uses to ensure it is responsive to community needs are:

- Box office records. These provide information on whether audiences are drawn from the wider community, how often patrons attend and preferences for types of performances.
- Requests for the performing arts newsletter, published quarterly, increases each year.

Regional Library

Based on Council survey results, general word-of-mouth feedback, maintenance of membership numbers and increased visits, the Library is meeting the general needs of the community. Public libraries do not have a captive market, and therefore must offer a balance between wants versus needs to attract the broadest range of people to them. While it is not possible to directly provide everything wanted or needed by the community, the library is able to provide access to material from other sources if enough time is available.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

The Museum deals with the needs of the public on two levels:

Firstly, the Museum has a responsibility to the local community to ensure that this region's cultural heritage is collected and maintained, and that the events and people of the past and present are exhibited and explored for the current generation. The Museum also provides an education service, low cost accommodation, food and beverage outlets, Post Office, and also acts as a function venue. The local residents utilise these services on a regular basis.

Secondly, there is a service for the visitor to the region. The Museum provides an experience, and information, and also acts as an attraction to bring visitors to the region as a benefit to the local tourism industry. Visitors who are attracted to Swan Hill inject additional funds into the community through purchasing accommodation, food and beverages, and merchandise within the region.

The organisation tailors its visitor programs to the needs of the surrounding community whilst the education program, with an annual intake of 8,000 students, is responsive to the needs of each school and year level.

While some people in the community may not understand the role that the Museum plays in caring for their cultural heritage, which includes costly conservation and storage, they are aware of the profile and role that the Museum plays in attracting tourists and groups to the region.

The Museum has plans for future development so that the collection can have a professional storage facility, along with the ability to bring touring exhibitions into the region. Such development will enable the Museum to respond to the need from the community for something new to see each time they visit.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

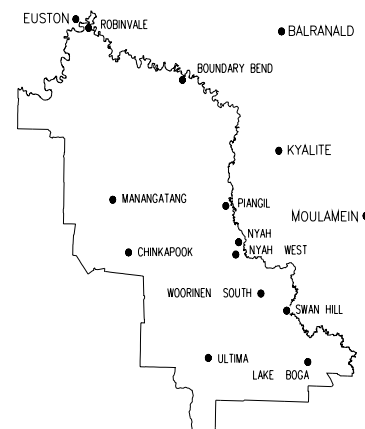
The number and standard of Community Centres and Halls within the municipality is in accordance with community needs and requirements. The community is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of eighteen Public Halls, while Council has responsibility for Community Centres and the Swan Hill Town Hall. Due to changing community needs and population trends, an issue exists with the number and location of some of the community maintained Public Halls.

The facilities are provided and maintained to the standard identified, with input from the community, and from assessments made by Council Officers and Community Centre Managers.

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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure services are available within the Swan Hill Rural City municipality as follows:



Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities & Indoor Sports Facilities

Parks, Gardens and Sporting Reserves are located throughout the municipality. Public Open Space is more than adequately catered for, demonstrated by the existence of several reserves fully developed for sports that are currently not being used by the community. Recreation reserves are located at Woorinen, Lake Boga, Woorinen South, Nyah, Ultima, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Manangatang. Parks and Gardens can be found at Manangatang, Swan Hill, Robinvale, Nyah, Nyah West, Piangil, Beverford, Vinifera and Lake Boga. The Reserves, Parks and Gardens enjoy full (free) public access other than at limited times when charged for events or functions are conducted.

Indoor Leisure and Recreational Centres are provided only at Swan Hill, as the major urban centre of the municipality. The Swan Hill Indoor Sport and Recreation Centre (the Stadium) charges a hire fee of \$30 per high ball court per hour for competitions, and \$13 per hour for squash court hire. The Stadium is open in accordance with demand, which is predominantly Monday to Friday. Usage of the centre indicates that these fees do not prohibit community use.

The Swan Hill Leisure Centre charges \$33 per hour highball court hire, \$39.60 per month for fitness club membership, and \$3.50 for swimming pool usage. The Leisure Centre is open from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm – Monday to Friday and 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Public access to the Leisure Centre is restricted during school hours as the local schools, particularly the secondary schools, have priority access.

Aquatic Facilities

The public swimming pools are located either at major population centres within the municipality (Swan Hill, Robinvale, Nyah), or at a key geographic location (Manangatang). All of the pools are outdoor facilities available to the public during the

summer, the period of peak demand. The price structure is set to encourage use of the facilities by all sectors of the community.

Art Gallery

As discussed under Service Responsiveness to Community Needs, the Gallery is situated at Horseshoe Bend, Swan Hill, and is very accessible, in terms of parking and access to the building, for both the abled and the disabled. Whilst the exhibition program is delivered at the Gallery, information about the program is distributed throughout the region.

Opening hours cover times of highest demand, and cover most people wishing to attend. The Gallery is open during, and outside of, standard business hours, i.e. on weekends and for frequent after hours openings, functions and events.

Entry to the Gallery is by donation, whilst pricing for special events/programs tiered to maximise accessibility. Education programs for local school children are delivered free of charge.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

Performing Arts for the region are delivered via three purpose built venues within the municipality: two in Swan Hill and one in Robinvale. Robinvale is 148 kilometres from Swan Hill, and is a small and fairly isolated community. Council maintains a fully professional theatre for the delivery of cultural experiences for this part of the community.

Pricing of performances is well below that of metropolitan areas, and is designed to ensure accessibility by the general public, as well as those on lower incomes.

Regional Library

The Library provides its range of services via the main branch of the Library service in Swan Hill, the mobile library service, and the home library service.

Through the provision of a web-based online catalogue of all resources, the Library can provide an additional searchable method for the public. Although the mobile service visits all townships in the municipality on a fortnightly basis, there are still pockets of sparsely populated people who must either make their own way to Swan Hill or to one of the eleven designated mobile stop sites. The website and a 24-hour free call telephone number allows people to renew loans, request items or seek information when staff provide follow-up.

The current open hours reflect the balance between affordability and demand: weekdays, one evening and one weekend day. The online catalogue and 24-hour

telephone recording service also allows extended availability options. Open hours reflect the balance as above: the library ensures that there is a time for every person in the community to access the services; standard range of weekday hours, one mid-week evening opening, and Saturday morning. Added to the telephone recording services (place requests, renew books, seek information), these are the most effective open hours with the resources available and the usage.

Due to funding conditions, charges are not made for the majority of services (hence the free public library name); all fees and charges are for value-added or non-core services, and to cover costs associated with providing those services (photocopying, floppy disks, printing, interlibrary loan fees, fax usage, email usage, library card replacement, etc).

Pioneer Settlement Museum

As part of the museum accreditation the Museum collection must be accessible at all times to the public and researchers.

Location of the Museum is part of the Cultural Precinct of Swan Hill and the parkland by the River, which makes it easy walking distance from the CBD. Opening times are responsive to the traffic flow of visitation. The Museum is not open on Mondays (outside school and public holidays, and the Monday prior to Melbourne Cup Day); the doors open at 10:00 am until 5:00 pm each day. To ensure that the Local community has assured access to the Museum and its facilities, there is free entry to all residents of the Swan Hill Rural City Council.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

Community Centres and Halls are available to the public on a casual or permanent booking basis. All community centres and halls are accessible to the disabled.

Hire fees vary for the facilities, reflecting the level and standard of the venue and its intended use as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Swan Hill Town Hall Auditorium | Maximum \$950 (Bar/Kiosk optional extra; reduced fee available for local organisations) |
| • Nyah Community Centre | Maximum \$291.50 |
| • Woorinen South Social Centre | Maximum \$44.00 |
| • Manangatang Community Centre | Maximum \$71.50 |
| • Lake Boga Community Centre | Maximum \$291.50 |
| • Robinvale Community Centre | Maximum \$517.00 |

Public Halls hiring charges vary but are largely at a nominal rate.

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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services is as follows:

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

The Parks and Gardens operation underwent an extensive evaluation and restructure process in preparation for Council’s competitive tendering arrangements. The Parks and Gardens team were successful in the tendering process.

The Parks and Gardens team are currently involved in benchmarking its general operation with the Super 11 group, to ensure efficiency of service and best practice. A process of continuous improvement is also being undertaken to implement changes and improvements to methods of operation.

Aquatic Facilities

The operation and management of the Swan Hill and Robinvale Swimming Pools was advertised for tenders in 1998. The current operator, Belgravia Leisure, was at the time considered to be the ‘best on offer’, and was awarded the contract to operate and manage the pools. This contractual arrangement will be retested in the near future to ensure that the operation continues to provide the best value to Council.

The Manangatang and Nyah Swimming pools are operated by Local Community Committees. It is Council’s judgment that this represents the best on offer both to Council and those communities. The communities are better able to undertake these smaller operations through their access to local volunteer labour for non-critical tasks, and have close links to local networks to optimise their aquatic programs. The level of satisfaction with the operation of those pools is such that Council is unlikely to competitively test this arrangement in the near future.

Indoor Sports Facilities

The Swan Hill Leisure Centre only recently commenced operations, construction being completed in September 2002. Due to its relatively short operating period, the Leisure Centre is currently in a phase of continually adjusting and modifying its level and standard of operation to achieve efficiency of operation. This 'efficiency of operation' is in the process of continuing assessment.

A Management Committee, consisting of major stakeholders, actively monitors the cost of operating the stadium.

A formal benchmarking process with the Super 11 group of Councils is in its infancy, but is expected to be undertaken during the 2004 year.

Art Gallery

Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery strives to offer the best services to the community within possible resources. To this end, the Gallery Director is on the Board of the Public Galleries Association of Victoria, and regularly participates in informal benchmarking with like-minded galleries. The Public Galleries Association is about to commence a formal benchmarking project to compare relevant statistics of public galleries. The Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery will be an active participant in this benchmarking project.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

Whilst this program is not involved in formal benchmarking, informal comparison of performance of the program, with those of other population centres of similar size, occurs at the quarterly meetings of the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres.

Regional Library

The library has a history of ensuring the service it delivers to the community is the best on offer:

Previous market testing

The Library service was the first Council program to be externally market tested under the CCT requirements in 1996. This process resulted in the inhouse team winning the 'contract' against stiff competition from both private bids and a bid from a large library corporation.

This summarises the major difference between country public libraries and other metropolitan-based service providers.

Benchmarking

The Library participates in benchmarking projects on a regular basis (mostly informal), using the Annual Survey of Victorian Public Libraries as the starting point. Public libraries are able to ascertain those other services in the State most closely comparable to their own, and therefore often use informal communication to compare performances on various data. These informal emails and telephone calls revolve around sharing particular data on a specific timeframe, i.e. comparing loan figures for January over a 3-year period to look for trends or service improvements. Ongoing participation in this information sharing also results in prompt feedback for Swan Hill Regional Library's own requests.

The Library also compares itself to the Victorian average of various statistics. Examples are: numbers of visits, membership, cost per loan, and cost per visit. The Swan Hill Regional Library currently compares well to the State averages:

- Slightly under the State average of membership to population.
- 20% under the State average for cost per loan.
- Well above the State average for annual loans per member and loans per visit.
- Swan Hill Regional Library also has an older collection overall, but this allows for more titles per person than the State average.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

Whilst the Pioneer Settlement does not participate in a formal benchmarking project, it is involved in achieving museum accreditation under the Museums Australia accreditation program. The accreditation program uses objective standards to determine whether services meet museum standards. The Pioneer Settlement Museum hopes to achieve accreditation during the 2004 calendar year.

Once the settlement is accredited, it will be able to undertake informal benchmarking in line with the work undertaken by the Library.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

The nature of these facilities makes benchmarking or direct comparison between facilities impractical. The location of the facilities throughout the municipality, and the high level of community involvement in their operation, results in a service that achieves the needs of the respective local communities.

To ensure that costs are minimised where practical, the following processes have been completed and are in place:

- Supply of gas and electricity to Community Centres and the Swan Hill Town Hall have been competitively tendered to ensure lowest supply charges.

- The cleaning of the Community Centres and the Swan Hill Town Hall have been competitively tested (where practicable) to ensure best standards at competitive prices.

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, the Recreation, Culture & Leisure programs do not report to the Community on the achievements of service standards and levels, as these can only occur after the Best Value review is completed. The current level of reporting to the community on these services includes the following:

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

Reporting to the community occurs primarily through the Council Annual Report. In addition, informal reporting and general communications with users and the public occurs through meetings with these groups on an irregular basis.

Aquatic Facilities

Reporting to the community occurs primarily through the Council Annual Report. In addition, the local committees operating the Nyah and Manangatang Pools provide an ongoing community reporting function through their Annual Meetings, and interaction with the members of the community on a daily basis 'at the pool side'.

Art Gallery

The Gallery develops an annual report on its operations each year, which is presented at the Annual General Meeting to the Advisory Committee, and the other groups supporting the operations and activities of the Gallery. Details of Gallery achievements are also included in the Council Annual Report. In addition the following reporting occurs:

- Fortnightly columns regarding Gallery activities are printed in local papers.
- The Gallery Director is interviewed on ABC Mildura/Swan Hill radio station once a month, and periodically on ABC Central Victoria and 3SH.
- Media releases are sent to regional media outlets for the launch of each new exhibition, or of newsworthy items.
- Regular newsletters and invitation to exhibition are sent to Gallery members.
- Regular reporting is also undertaken through monthly meetings with the Gallery's Advisory Committee, the Art Associates and the Friends of the Gallery.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

Reporting to the general community occurs primarily through the Council Annual Report. In addition, quarterly newsletters are sent to members of the community who have attended performances and who have requested to be on the mailing list.

The general public are also advised of performances through newspaper advertising, press releases, radio and television advertising. Handouts of flyers and posters, placed in strategic areas, are also used as a means to provide information on forthcoming services and shows.

Regional Library

The Library services make use of several forms of communication to report the various services to the community including, newsletters, regular newspaper articles and irregular press releases, guest speaking, irregular radio interviews and miscellaneous publicity of events.

The frequency of reporting is dependent on the type of publicity being undertaken: newsletters are produced bi-monthly and handed to library users, and distributed via mail drops, while Annual Reports are publicly displayed on site. Similarly, guest speaking at annual general meetings and other community events is very irregular.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

Similar to the Gallery, the Pioneer Settlement achievements are included in the Council Annual Report. With the following additional reporting to the community being undertaken:

- Fortnightly columns regarding Pioneer Settlement activities are printed in local papers.
- Senior Museum staff are interviewed on ABC Mildura/Swan Hill and 3SH radio station on a regular basis.
- Media releases are sent to regional media outlets for the launch of newsworthy items.
- Regular newsletters are sent to the region's accommodation and food outlets so that they are aware of what activities are available to their patrons.
- Reporting is also undertaken through regular meetings with volunteers and other groups associated with the Settlement.
- Staff speak at community meeting around the region upon request.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

Whilst there are no regular formal meetings with the surrounding communities on the operation of these facilities, reporting to the community occurs in the following manner, with level and extent of the reporting depending on the facility and its location:

- Regular media releases on issues of interest in relation to the facilities (sometimes followed with media interviews).
- Regular meetings with local community 'action' groups, including discussion on the local Hall/Community Centre.
- Information included in Council Annual Report and Annual Budget.
- Direct contact with relevant members of Council staff (such as with the Risk Management Officer on issues of insurance and liability).

How Continuous Improvement Is Being Achieved

The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services constantly review their operations in response to changing community expectations, and particularly in an effort to ensure increased participation in the services offered. Following are some examples of the continuous improvements undertaken:

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves, Other Sporting Facilities and Indoor Sports Facilities

- Achieved and maintain Quality Assurance of processes, used by Parks and Gardens operations, in accordance with AS9002.
- Attendance at 'Super 11' meetings with other Councils to discuss different operating/management practices.
- Attendance at various training courses, seminars and conferences.
- Introduction of User Agreements for sporting grounds and facilities.
- Introduction of Sports Ground User Fees policy.

Aquatic Facilities

Continuous improvement occurs both in the operation and the infrastructure of the facilities:

- The operators of the outdoor pools have, over several years, implemented programs such as hydrotherapy, learn to swim, family days, and provision of aquatic play equipment. The community pools have also introduced these programs to make the pools accessible to the entire communities that they serve.
- The contract for the operation and management of the Swan Hill and Robinvale pools requires the contractor to provide innovative aquatic programs to the community, so as to maximise the use of the facilities.
- The major infrastructure improvement in recent years has been the installation of automatic chemical dosing systems, and the change from liquefied chlorine to sodium hypochlorite as a water disinfectant. This has been a major reduction in the risk to staff and the users from a toxic chemical leak.
- Other changes have been the construction of a new amenities building at the Manangatang pool and the provision of an urban filtered water supply to the Nyah pool change rooms.

Art Gallery

Three years ago the Gallery developed a business and a marketing plan, ensuring that continuous improvement occurs in a structured manner. These plans have resulted in improvements such as:

- Increased visitor numbers.
- More efficient work procedures.
- Improved Occupational Health and Safety Standards.
- Increased funding.
- Internal improvements such as renovated main gallery space, and funding for a new climate control system.
- Achieved the requirements to receive and display work from the National Gallery of Victoria.
- Achieved 'gold rating' in the recent insurance review conducted by Arts Victoria.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

The most significant contribution to continuous improvement of performing arts has been the redevelopment and upgrade of the two performing arts venues in Swan Hill, the Harrison Hall and the Swan Hill Town Hall. Under this development, Harrison Hall was converted to a professional 250 seat 'black box' theatre, and the stage and performance area of the Swan Hill Town Hall have been brought up to industry standards. This significant investment has resulted in facilities that are able to stage performing arts and other events in first class facilities, usually only available to much larger communities. To further support this change, trained technical staff are employed to maintain and operate the equipment within the theatre, and to provide this service to the community using the facilities. Booking of facilities, and information regarding up-coming events, is provided through an up-to-date computerised booking office.

Regional Library

Continuous improvement for the library includes:

- Transfer of the static library to a larger more modern facility four years ago.
- A progressive increase in open hours since 1999 from 33.5 hours to 41 hours per week.
- Improvements to staffing flexibilities through the use of 'shifts' and different starting/finishing times to maximize customer service.
- Developed a partnership with TAFE to share resources.

- Maintained various collections despite falling State Government funding.
- Construction of new mobile library is underway, replacing the 23-year-old vehicle.
- Increased customer service staff numbers.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

Continuous improvement for the Pioneer Settlement Museum includes:

- Developed and implemented all industry required policies and procedures.
- Joined the Museum Accreditation Program run by Museums Australia (Vic).
- Reviewed and updated grounds maintenance program.
- Reviewed and updated the collection management program.
- Instigated a process of working with the community to ensure the museum better reflects the needs of the whole municipality.
- Commenced collaboration with other cultural organisations in the area to develop an integrated approach to attracting visitors to the region.
- Increased focus on seeking funding from State and Federal bodies to assist in it's projects.
- Currently developing a business plan centred on the core role of collection management and visitor programs.

Community Centres

- Undertaken a hazard identification process and developed procedures to improve the service standards and security of facilities.
- Developed and providing a blanket Public Liability policy at reasonable (affordable) rates for casual users of Council owned or controlled facilities.
- Implemented OH&S and Risk Management awareness and procedures to ensure that the facilities are safe and secure for use by the community.
- Ensured appropriate processes for cleaning and care taking of facilities.
- Improve booking and service agreements with users.

Robinvale Community Centre & Swan Hill Town Hall

- Major redevelopments have been undertaken at Robinvale and Swan Hill to improve amenities and technical equipment.
- Developed and implemented new booking systems, which has allowed for increased customer service.

- An increase in technical staff and provision of continuous training programs to improve technical knowledge to support professional productions.
- Reviewed and amended the cleaning programs to improve customer satisfaction.
- Updated safety features and work practices to comply with current regulations.

Halls and Other Public Facilities

There is a constant review process being undertaken with the public halls, particularly to ensure they meet community needs. This has resulted in the closure of two halls in the previous seven years, in response to requests from the local community. This has also resulted in a significant maintenance program for the Robinvale Historic Homestead, which includes new air conditioning and improved disabled access.

Local Employment Growth/Retention

The services grouped under recreation, culture & leisure have not been outsourced as part of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering undertaken by Victorian Councils in 1995 – 1999. Staff of the Swan Hill Rural City Council undertake all these services.

It is considered that given the nature of the on-site tasks associated with the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of 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 recreation, culture and leisure services therefore promotes employment within the region. Specific employment impact of these services are as follows:

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

These services directly employ 8.4 equivalent full time staff, with an additional .6 equivalent full time position to be added in July 2004 to meet an expansion of the service, due to the provision of additional Parks.

Indoor Sports Facilities

The Swan Hill Leisure Centre employs 11 full-time staff and the Swan Hill Indoor Sport and Recreation Centre provides an employment opportunity for one full time person. Other employment opportunities are available for part time cleaning and kiosk attendant staff. The positive economic flow-on effects of the recreation sector are considerable, particularly with the impact of special events such as basketball tournaments etc.

Aquatic Facilities

The swimming pools are a seasonal source of local employment for young people in the areas of recreation, customer service, and basic supervision and management. Whilst an external contractor manages the Swan Hill and Robinvale Pools, seasonal staff are recruited and trained locally. This is an advantage to both the community and contractor, in providing jobs and developing networks within the community. The pools operated by Committees of Management also recruit their staff locally for the same reasons.

It is unlikely that any move away from recruiting locally would be considered by the contractor or committees.

Art Gallery

Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery employs the equivalent of 2.5 full time staff. In addition, many more people benefit from the Gallery's existence in relation to local employment growth and retention:

Direct benefit:

The Gallery employs casual staff from time to time for exhibition installation, special concerts and events.

A Visual Arts Scholarship student who works at the Gallery over the summer months. The recipient is a local person who is studying visual arts at a tertiary level. One of the aims of this program is to encourage local young people to return to work in their professional area within Swan Hill Rural City Council on completion of their university training.

A shop at the Gallery sells works made by local artists and craftspeople. This is direct support for the local arts industry.

Volunteers are involved in the Gallery who gain skills and experience and in many cases improved confidence through this involvement. Voluntary work at the Gallery can support individuals in gaining local employment.

Educational services are provided to: Sunraysia Institute of TAFE, Swan Hill, primary and secondary schools both local and those visiting the region from other places.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

This program employs a number of staff from the local community on both a permanent and casual basis. These include two full time technicians, casual stage staff and ushers as required by the performing arts centres. Casual staff vary in number and length of employment depending on the type of performance being staged and the number of shows being produced.

Regional Library

The Library service is a popular employer of local residents, with a current staff of ten persons undertaking an equivalent of 9.3 full time staff. Volunteers play a vital role in the Library, assisting with Saturday Storytime activities, local history work, shelf tidying, and book repairs. In 2002/2003, over a dozen people undertook over 600 hours of recorded voluntary work.

A local resident and former employee undertakes a fee-based book processing service for the Library, preparing items for the public shelves once catalogued onto the Library's system.

At most times, there are students undertaking work experience (either compulsory or voluntary) for school credits or Scouting/Guide programs.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

The Museum employs 8 full time, 19 part time and 6 casual staff with skills varying from carpentry and administration, to registration and conservation/restoration of the collection.

Museum expenditure, excluding salaries and wages, is approximately \$600,000 annually, the bulk of which is spent in Swan Hill and the surrounding district supporting local industry. The Pioneer Settlement Museum acts as a major cultural tourist asset that draws visitors to the region, which has a flow-on effect for local accommodation and food outlets.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

The services grouped under Community Centres and Public Halls do not contribute greatly to local employment, primarily as their operation relies heavily on local committees managing the small facilities. Council staff provide part time duties to ensure proper maintenance, cleanliness and security is of an accepted standard.

As mentioned under performing arts, the recent refurbishment of the Swan Hill Town Hall and Harrison Hall has seen an increase in the number and capability of theatre technicians.

Partnerships With Third Parties To Achieve Service Objectives

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

These programs operate in close co-operation with a large number of sporting clubs, community groups and schools in delivering services. Partnerships are formed with the State government, principally for the financing of capital projects. Other third parties that work with Council on a regular basis to deliver these services are:

- Lower Murray Water.
- Goulburn Murray Water.
- Sunraysia Water.

Aquatic Facilities

Key partnerships exist to operate the aquatic facilities, both internal and external to the Council organisation.

The key internal partnerships are with the Fleet unit, who provide maintenance support for the mechanical plant and water treatment systems across all four of the pools, and with Engineering Services – Works, who provide maintenance support to the buildings and fixtures at the pools.

Other partnerships within Council include the provision of administrative and financial support services by the Corporate Services Department, annual building and fire services maintenance by the Development Group, and water quality testing by the Environmental Health staff.

The key external partners are Belgravia Leisure, the operator of the Swan Hill and Robinvale pools, and the Community Committees at the Nyah and Manangatang pools. The partnerships are primarily financial, in that Council has engaged these partners to deliver the service on its behalf. These partnerships, however, are essential to Council's ability to provide this service, as these partners bring both the professional expertise and local contact required in the operation of these facilities.

Other partnerships also exist between Council and equipment and materials suppliers, with whom Council has developed relationships over several years.

Art Gallery

Key partnerships that enable the Gallery to provide an effective service to the community include:

Internal

Gallery staff work with many other Council departments including: Economic Development and Tourism, Finance, Administration, Performing Arts, Regional Arts Development, the Library, Corporate Services and the Pioneer Settlement Museum.

External:

The Gallery has numerous partnerships with local organisations from both the public and the private sectors, including local businesses who sponsor the Gallery, and with whom the Gallery undertakes joint events (e.g. the biennial National Print & Drawing Awards).

The Gallery also has state based partnerships with Arts Victoria, Tourism Victoria, Art Education Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Public Galleries of Victoria network.

Federal partnerships occur with federal funding agencies, the National Association of the Visual Arts, the National Gallery of Australia.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

The performing arts program works with a number of other organisations to deliver a cultural experience to the community. These are:

- Schools – performances provided to the young of the community.
- Clubs and community groups.
- Secondary colleges in the presentation of the George Fairfax Memorial Schools Drama Festival.
- Victorian Arts Centre in the presentation of workshops.
- Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres.
- Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery.
- Arts Victoria.
- Other service departments within the Swan Hill Rural City Council.

Regional Library

The Swan Hill Library is involved with many internal and external partners:

Internal:

- Out of School Hours program,
- Regional Arts Victoria locally-based officer,

- Associated programs within the Culture and Leisure group.

External:

- Murraylink Libraries Inc: involves sharing resources to provide an online catalogue, joint purchasing contracts for books, and a roving collection of audio books.
- Country Public Libraries Group: involved with lobbying, sharing of ideas to improve procedures and develop new ideas dealing with country issues.
- Viclink: Statewide peak library body, mainly involves lobbying, dealing with all levels of government, plus some online resources such as the Gulliver consortium.
- State Library of Victoria/Vicnet: Assists libraries with project administration, coordination of statewide projects.
- Department for Victorian Communities: Provides assistance with project based funding.
- Swan Hill and District Librarians: Sharing of ideas and resources to assist our respective customers.
- Local sponsors such as businesses.

Pioneer Settlement Museum

The Pioneer Settlement Museum has the following strategic partnerships:

- The Museum currently works alongside the following groups within the municipality Swan Hill Lions Club, Swan Hill Rural Fire Brigade, Friends of the Pioneer Settlement, Swan Hill Regional Library, Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Director Performing Arts, Sing Australia, and Swan Hill Inc.
- The Museum is currently negotiating a partnership with Museum Victoria.
- The Museum is a member of the Australian Heritage Parts Association, which has members from across Victoria with similar issues that enables an exchange of ideas and concepts.

Community Centres, Swan Hill Town Hall, and Public Halls and Other Facilities

The provision of services from these facilities involve many internal and external partners:

Internal:

- Annual inspections by Building department staff to ensure that adequate maintenance is undertaken.

- Customer Service department provides support for bookings, information and facility promotion.
- The Economic Development Unit provides a ticketing service for performances, and undertakes promotional services.

External:

- Senior Citizens' groups utilise both Lake Boga and Manangatang facilities and rely on Council to provide regular maintenance to suit their objectives.
- The Manangatang Pre School is located in the Manangatang Community Centre.
- Department of Youth Sport and Recreation works in partnership with Council to achieve specific capital improvements in relation to sporting and recreation requirements.
- Arts Victoria provides advice and, where appropriate, funding for capital works on performing arts venues.
- Employment agencies are used to provide casual staff for performances and productions.
- Project managers work in partnership with local committees to provide advice on operation issues and insurance needs.

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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure services as part of the implementation of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), at which time these services were fully compliant with National Competition Policy requirements. 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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services.

This review is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed by September 2004.

Future Improvement Options

A number of improvement options are available for further consideration and investigation. These include:

Parks and Gardens, Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

- Review the use of water for irrigation on reserves, parks, playgrounds and sports grounds.
- Review of open space resources in light of the Open Space Strategy.
- Secure funding and construct the Robinvale Aquatic Leisure Centre.
- Investigate regular renovation (de-thatching) of sports grounds.
- Investigate a Council grants scheme to assist with capital funding for sports ground users.

Aquatic Facilities

- The replacement of ageing water treatment and filtration systems is a major priority over the next three years. The systems at the Manangatang and Nyah pools are both forty years old and have reached the end of their useful lives. New systems would significantly improve the operating efficiency and quality of the aquatic environment.
- The chemical dosing systems at all of the pools use liquid chemicals that require complex storage and handling procedures. Converting to systems that utilise dry chemicals would significantly enhance the safety of both staff and public by reducing the risk of spillage and contamination of the pool environment.
- The amenities building at the Nyah pool is forty years old, and while substantial upgrades have occurred in recent years, the replacement of the building would add to the overall quality of the facility.
- The Swan Hill pool is equipped with a diving facility and a water slide in addition to its swimming pools. The diving infrastructure is ageing and should be replaced with modern equipment to enhance its usage as both a recreational and a sports facility. The water slide is in need of refurbishment to ensure its long-term existence on the site. Relocation and redesign of the shape may be considered as a means of broadening its accessibility to the pool users.
- Other improvements to the general poolside environment, for the increased amenity of both swimmers and spectators, include:
 - o The provision of additional shaded areas.
 - o Rejuvenation of the lawn areas.
 - o Renewal of the concrete concourses.
 - o Replacement of carpet around wading pools.

Art Gallery

- The next obvious opportunity for growth is in the field of education and public program services. The demand continues to grow and a need exists for an education/public programs officer.
- Along with being able to meet existing demand for these services, opportunity exists to bring in more students/visitors, such as targeted programs for schools visiting the region who generally stay at the Pioneer Settlement lodges.
- There is also the opportunity of delivering some education services off site.
- The precinct between the Gallery and the Pioneer Settlement also needs to be redesigned so as to integrate the two assets and to provide the appropriate entrance for two showcase venues.

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

- Development of the George Fairfax Memorial Drama Festival to build the younger generation into future audiences.
- Development of a performance to showcase local talent of all ages.
- Development of a youth festival.
- Presentation of a major gala performance.

Regional Library

- Development of a Robinvale branch library, most likely as part of a combined Council facility.
- Further progressive capital expenditure would complete the main library building, including the rear area currently not utilised, and improve areas to make the physical environment more appealing to visitors.
- Improvements to the lighting systems at the main branch, and the construction of an airlock to reduce air-conditioning loss and dust intrusion (underway march 2004).

Pioneer Settlement Museum

- Major infrastructure to house and exhibit the collection.
- Continued visitor programs based on commemorative, allied with the region's and Museum special events.
- Increased public programs in areas of social interest, such as history seminars.
- Increased marketing.

Lake Boga, Manangatang & Nyah Community Centres

- Investigate whether an increase in level of caretaking and cleaning times will improve the presentation and security of each facility.
- Develop and implement a furniture and equipment replacement program to maintain the quality of the venue and facilitate increased usage.
- Consider other avenues to encourage increased use of the facility by the community.
- Consider options to deter vandalism.

Robinvale Community Centre & Swan Hill Town Hall

- Consider options to customer service.
- Implement a box office facility for onsite booking and inspection procedures.
- Develop a program to update technical equipment, such as lighting and sound, to cater for larger productions and provide higher standards of performance.
- Investigate the possibility of a commercial lease for the kitchen/kiosk/bar area, to augment Town Hall operations.
- Investigate options to reduce the incidence of vandalism and theft.

Halls and Other Public Facilities

- Investigate ways to clarify and formalise relationship between Council and Committees of Management, to enhance communication and minimise misunderstandings.
- Undertake an audit of existing facilities and local community needs, to verify perceptions of community needs and the best way to achieve them.

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 will be reported each year in an Annual Best Value Report.

Parks and Gardens

<i>Quality Standards</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Maintain grass height between 25 – 60 mm.	100%	100%	100%
• Maintain playgrounds in accordance with national playgrounds standard.	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Net operating cost per hectare.	\$6,705.00	\$6,905.00	\$7,115.00

Recreation Reserves and Other Sporting Facilities

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Maintain grass height between 25 – 60 mm.	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Net operating cost per hectare.	\$12,925.00	\$13,315.00	\$13,710.00

Indoor Sports Facilities

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Number of visitors/users of the indoor sports facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swan Hill Leisure Centre. ○ Swan Hill Indoor Sport & Recreation Centre. 	90,000 46,000	93,000 45,000	95,000 45,000

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
• Net cost to Council per visitor to operate the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swan Hill Leisure Centre. ○ Swan Hill Indoor Sport & Recreation Centre. 	\$3.55 Nil	\$3.38 Nil	\$3.31 Nil

Aquatic Facilities

Quality Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with the Royal Life Saving Guidelines for 'safe operation of public swimming pools' by each public swimming pool. 	100%	100%	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of visitors to the pool during the swimming season: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Hill Robinvale <p><i>Note: Manangatang and Nyah pools are operated by voluntary committees, and as a result patronage figures are unavailable.</i></p>	20,500 7,000	20,500 7,000	20,500 7,000

Cost Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net cost to Council to operate the swimming pool per visitor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Hill Robinvale Net cost to Council to operate the swimming pool *per capita catchment population: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manangatang Nyah <p><i>*per capita pool catchment area used as patronage figures are unavailable. (Manangatang population-251; Nyah/Nyah West population-856)</i></p>	\$7.61 \$9.41	\$7.84 \$9.70	\$8.07 \$9.98
	\$211 \$42	\$151 \$43	\$156 \$45

Art Gallery

Quality Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Visitors to the Art Gallery (per annum). 	14,000	14,200	15,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement of objectives as set out in the funding agreement between Arts Victoria and Swan Hill Rural City Council. 	100%	100%	100%

Cost Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net cost to Council to operate the Gallery per visitor. 	\$13.15	\$13.10	\$13.05

Arts (performing) – Cultural Promotion

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people attending performing arts events during the year. 	3,860	4,246	5,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with Arts Victoria touring funding grant requirements. 	100%	100%	100%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net cost to Council to operate the performing arts program per patron. 	\$17.23	\$23.55	\$22.00

Regional Library

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members as % of total population served. 	34%	35%	35%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits to service points. 	102,000	104,000	106,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community satisfaction rating (Council May survey) 	85%	85%	85%

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net cost to Council per visit. 	\$7.50	\$7.50	\$7.65

Pioneer Settlement Museum

<i>Quality Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation with Museums Australia. 	In progress	100%	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with Education program grant conditions. 	100%	100%	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Visitors to the Pioneer Settlement (per year). 	65,000	65,000	68,000

<i>Cost Standard/s</i>	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net cost to Council to operate the Pioneer Settlement Museum per visitor. 	\$10.25	\$9.71	\$8.98

Community Centres & Swan Hill Town Hall

Quality Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of times the facility is used by the community each year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Manangatang 170 ○ Nyah 130 ○ Lake Boga 128 ○ Robinvale 240 ○ Swan Hill Town Hall 120 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number people attending events/functions/performances at the Swan Hill Town Hall. 	25,700	27,000	28,000

Cost Standard/s	Year 04/05	Year 05/06	Year 06/07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net cost to Council per usage of the facility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Manangatang \$15.03 ○ Nyah \$113.50 ○ Lake Boga 204.10 ○ Robinvale \$373.26 ○ Swan Hill Town Hall \$615.24 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net cost to Council per person using the Swan Hill Town Hall. 	\$2.87	\$2.84	\$2.68

Attachment 1

Reference Documents

The following documents have been referred to in the compilation of the Best Value Report for Recreation, Culture & Leisure:

- **2003/2004 Annual Funding and Performance Agreement with Arts Victoria**, (2003), State Government of Victoria. Records File No: 110202.
- **Australia's Heritage Collections: National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy**, (1998), Commonwealth Department of Communications and the Arts, Canberra. Records File No: 793041.
- **Funding Agreement Between Swan Hill Rural City Council and the Victorian State Government 2001/2002** (Library), (2001), Victorian State Government, Melbourne. Records File No: 630307.
- **Playgrounds Development Strategy**, (2003), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 792300.
- **Public Library Grants Program (2001-2002)**, (2001), Office of Local Government, Melbourne. Records File No: 630307.
- **Swan Hill Leisure Centre Joint Use Agreement**, (2001), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 9935301.
- **Public Open Space Strategy (draft)**, (2004), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 790002.
- **Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery Business Plan (2002-2005)**, (2002), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 110807.
- **Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery Marketing Plan (2003-2004)**, (2003), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 110205.
- **Touring Victoria Program – Annual Program: Regional Performing Arts Centre**, (2003), Arts Victoria, Melbourne. Records File No: 110202.
- **Water Management Strategy (draft)**, (2004), Swan Hill Rural City Council. Records File No: 981300.

Attachment 2

Analysis of Community Satisfaction With Recreation, Culture & Leisure 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 RECREATION, CULTURE & LEISURE**

SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS OF RECREATION, CULTURE & LEISURE

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 Recreation, Culture & Leisure.

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, such as 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, November 2002, May 2003 and November 2003.

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 three of the services provided under Recreation, Culture & Leisure:

1. "How well does Council look after the sports grounds?"
2. "How well does Council provide public library service/mobile library?"
3. "How well does Council keep parks and playgrounds clean and tidy?"

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 some of the services grouped under Recreation, Culture & Leisure, such as the Art Gallery and the Pioneer Settlement Museum, where the benefit is not readily identifiable by the

broader community, and the various community centres in the smaller townships throughout the municipality, as each of these is generally only used by specific sectors of the municipality.

Survey Results

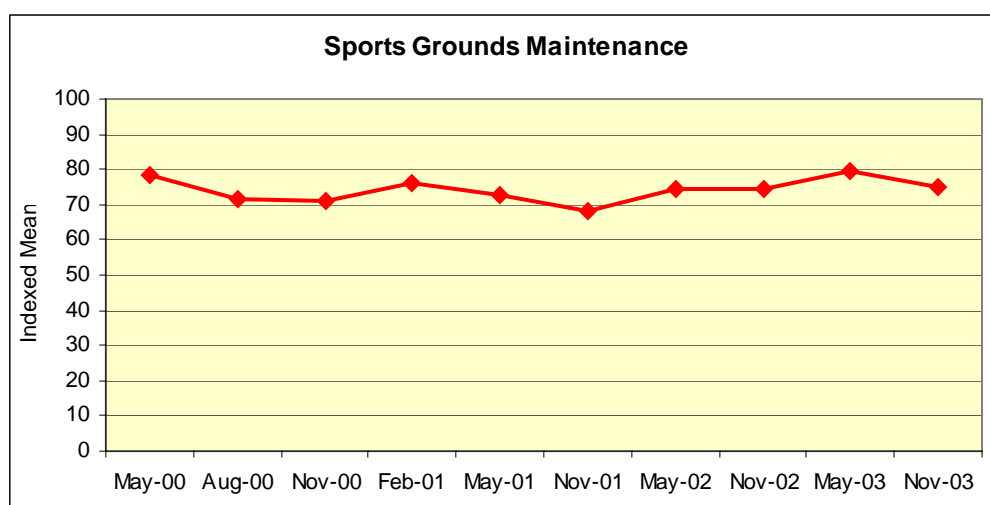
In each of the surveys conducted to date, the community's inability to give an informed opinion on the maintenance of sports grounds, and the provision of the public/mobile library services remains approximately 27% for both groups of services. The cleanliness of parks and playgrounds remains approximately 9%.

While the results in the graphs below represent the views of those who **are** able to form an opinion on services provided, care must be taken when using this data to identify the views of the wider community.

Maintenance of Sports Grounds

The aggregation of results for the community's opinion on how well sports grounds are maintained reveals that a large majority of respondents, 91%, are in the "Satisfactory" or better categories, with 45% of responses in the "Very Good" category, and the "Excellent" and "Satisfactory" categories receiving 19% and 27% respectively.

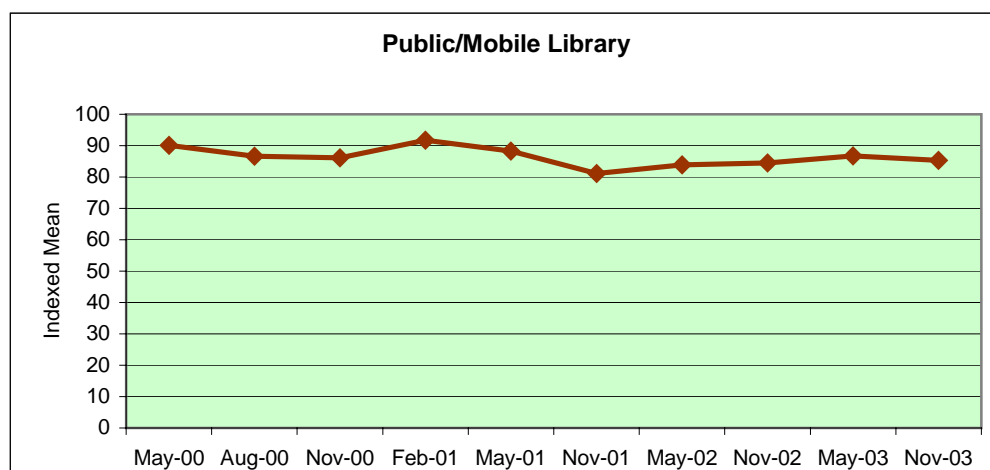
Respondents' comments reveal a wide disparity in views i.e. the sports grounds need more water, or are over watered. Some comments focus on the higher standard of facilities available in Swan Hill in comparison with smaller townships in the municipality. Other respondents have commented positively on the recreational facilities available and standard of maintenance.



Provision of Public Library/Mobile Library Service

The aggregation of results for the community's opinion of how well public and mobile library services are provided reveals that an overwhelming majority of respondents, 98%, are in the "Satisfactory" or better categories, with 48% of responses in the "Excellent" category, and the "Very Good" and "Satisfactory" categories receiving 40% and 11% respectively.

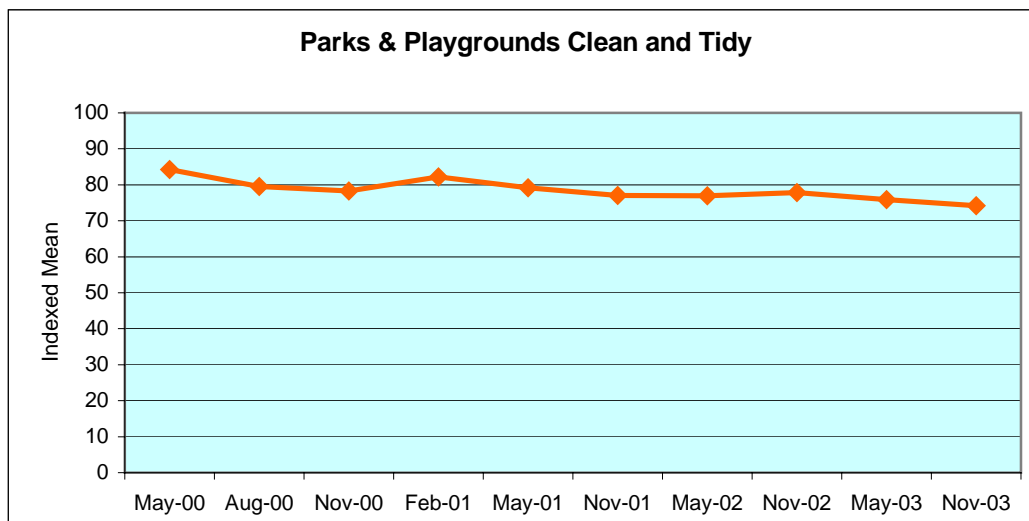
Very few respondents chose to provide comments on the library services. Comments both praise the services and reflect the growing demand for these services. In response to the demand for increased opening hours, the library opened on Monday afternoons in January 2002, and this was extended to a full day in January 2003. In 2004 a new mobile library came into service, with an increased book carrying capacity of 20%. Each of these improvements in service levels and standards resulted in a minor increase in satisfaction.



Parks & Playgrounds Kept Clean and Tidy

The aggregation of results for the community's opinion of how well parks and playgrounds are maintained reveals that a large majority of respondents, 93%, are in the "Satisfactory" or better categories, with 46% of responses in the "Very Good" category, and the "Excellent" and "Satisfactory" categories receiving 28% and 19% respectively. The graph below reveals a slight downward trend for parks and playgrounds since surveying the community commenced in May 2000.

Respondents' comments reflect some of the same issues as expressed for sports grounds, i.e. under/over watering of facilities, and a disparity in the perception of the level of maintenance undertaken between particular parks and playgrounds in Swan Hill, and between those in Swan Hill and other townships in the municipality. Quite a number of respondents comment on the incidence of weeds that are endemic in the region, such as Khaki weed and 3-Corner Jacks (Caltrop). A number of positive comments have also been made on the condition of parks and playgrounds.



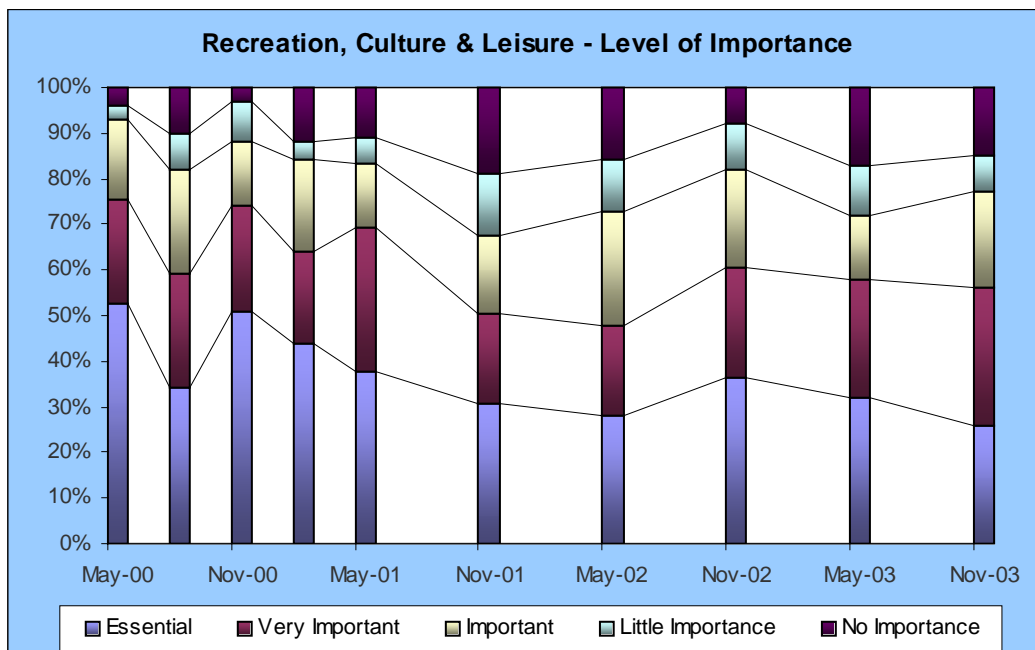
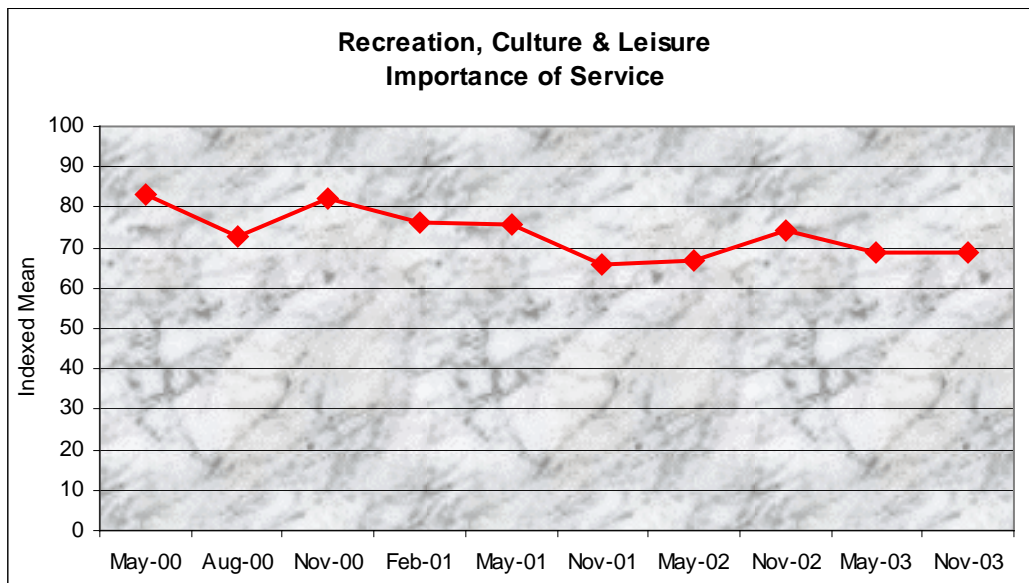
Importance of the Recreation, Culture & Leisure Group of Services

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

Prior to November 2001 respondents were only asked to rate the importance of services individually, without any relativity between the services. It was anticipated that an adjustment to the survey form, effective November 2001, might impact on the results of the services being surveyed, now that respondents were being asked to rank the seven groups of services relative to each other. As was anticipated, the adjustment to the questionnaire had very little impact overall for some services and a quite significant impact on others. The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services, seen in the graphs below, reveals that the change in the format of the question in November 2001 resulted in an overall reduction in the level of importance.

The first graph depicts the overall score (indexed mean) of importance for the Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services. Whilst there has been an overall reduction in level of importance, results demonstrate that this group of services continues to remain important to the community, receiving a consistent rating since November 2001 of between 66-74, on a scale of 100.

The second graph depicts the differing levels of importance forming the overall score assigned to this group of services. As mentioned above, the change in question format in November 2001 impacts on results, but overall shows that the 'Essential' and 'Important' categories consistently form approximately 70% of the total score.



Summary

In summary, it can be seen that, overall, for the services provided under Recreation, Culture & Leisure, and for which the community is able to provide an informed opinion, the community is satisfied with the standard of service, and considers the services of high importance.

Sports grounds, parks and playgrounds are used by the community for a wide range of activities. Disparate concerns surrounding the watering and maintenance of these facilities likely reflects the differing expectations in the community of what is an 'acceptable' standard.

The public library and mobile library services are highly valued by the community, and these services continue to grow in response to the increasing needs of the community.

The Recreation, Culture & Leisure group of services shows a slightly reduced change in level of importance since the adjustment to the survey form in November 2001. However, it does not mean that this group of services has necessarily altered in absolute importance for respondents, but that the services may simply have found an apparently stable position relative to the other groups of services measured in the survey.

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

Community Survey Comments May 2000 – November 2003

Sports Grounds

May 2000

5 Comments

- Visual appearance & involvement in sporting club.
- Sports ground in our town is untidy.
- High school ground very good. Guys who do gardens are great - lawns, clean up is good - was very impressed with grounds people & gardeners.
- Woorinen Football Club deserves more assistance from Council. Woorinen South reserve gets money - not used, the other one (Woor. F.C.) is used & doesn't get as much support.
- Belsar's Reserve looked disgusting - looks better now maintenance works done.

August 2000

4 Comments

- Enjoys going to the local football - grounds usually good.
- Community needs sporting areas. Required for all ages especially kids.
- Being involved in junior sport.
- Would like netball courts (Ken Harrison Complex) to be cleaned.

November 2000

8 Comments

- Robinvale lacking in facilities for age 10 and up.
- Sports ground - soccer at Yana St is like a swamp, comments people will sue if nothing is done - if kids hurt themselves. Drainage needs to be looked at.
- Public toilets are locked cannot access especially around sports grounds.
- Play netball out of Ultima - don't get as much attention. People live out of town don't get as much as in town facilities.
- Sports ground maintained well.
- Sports grounds surrounds are like a tip. Surface is good.
- Watering sports grounds when it is raining.
- Need a sporting facility, cinema, playground equipment. - Indoor squash/rollerskating rink. - Save the kids going to Mildura.

February 2001

4 Comments

- Swan Hill - bitumen courts at Ken Harrison need upgrading (tennis).
- Piangil is neglected in sports grounds compared to Swan Hill area. They are left behind in play equipment and paths.

- Sports grounds in Swan Hill are excellent but in Woorinen South needs a lot more maintenance in sporting and recreation areas.
- Have children playing sport - impressed by sporting facilities.

May 2001

4 Comments

- More sporting facilities.
- More done in Swan Hill in regards to sports grounds than Nyah.
- Is a sports player.
- Some sports grounds and surrounding grounds need more watering at times.

November 2001

3 Comments

- Paper laying around at the football after a length of time after the match.
- Netball courts need improving and other sporting grounds.
- Football grand final - grounds not enough water - goal post bent.

May 2002

7 Comments

- Areas and services well used.
- Would like to see more trees for spectators. Too well lopped, should be more natural.
- Sports ground nice and clean. Has special rubbish bin for rubbish collection.
- City golf club comes under Council and receive no help what so ever.
- Expense of bills for use of sports ground.
- More bins and empties more often at sports grounds and parks.
- Nyah - rabbit holes have to be filled each week before games are played. Grass is also dead.

November 2002

3 Comments

- Member of Lake Boga football club.
- Showgrounds watering system is good.
- Some sports grounds are looked after better than others.

May 2003

4 Comments

- Walks past football ground - always green. Secondary College over watered.
- Sport - Soccer doesn't get attention, football does.
- Shouldn't have to pay so much to use grounds, already paid for through rates.
- Impressed with soccer fields.

November 2003

4 Comments

- Uses sports grounds - netball courts need improvement and more maintenance.
- As a sport player in summer, grounds are not mowed and watered enough.
- Use lots of recreational facilities - think they are great.
- Son plays a fair bit of soccer; the field needs further improvement.

Library

May 2000

7 Comments

- Great library service.
- Once a library comes to Piangil.
- Would like mobile library once a week instead of fortnight.
- Library is relevant.
- Library - later hours. In particular students.
- Always get help from library.
- (Mobile library) only comes to Robinvale once a week, would like more often.

August 2000

3 Comments

- Library not open Mondays.
- Library great.
- Mobile library is brilliant.

November 2000

2 Comments

- Able to get any information from library. Very happy with staff and service.
- Library is excellent, but would like permanent library in Robinvale.

February 2001

2 Comments

- Only involved in the library.
- Library is an excellent service.

May 2001

2 Comments

- Service is fine - Mobile Library is required more for outer areas.
- Would like to see a permanent library in Robinvale.

November 2001

1 Comment

- Closed Mondays is a problem (library).

May 2002

4 Comments

- Library needs more books.
- Service at the library not satisfactory. Book returned but told it was not.
- Library - Robinvale needs its own library 3 days a week.
- Have friends who love the library.

November 2002

1 Comment

- Mobile library needs to increase range of books.

May 2003

4 Comments

- Library excellent, but not big enough range of books.
- Public library very important for elderly.
- Library - not enough spent on new books, seems too much spent on computers etc.
- Library full-time.

November 2003

2 Comments

- Need to let people know in Lake Boga when the mobile library is to visit. Dates and times at the Post Office in Lake Boga.
- Library excellent.

Parks & Playgrounds

May 2000

14 Comments

- Vinifera Park needs to be cut and maintained.
- Town looks presentable.
- Very good job in presenting Swan Hill. Positive outlook. Heading in right direction.
- Terrific.
- Sometimes not council fault - public make a mess of parks.
- Prickle problem is some of the parks - Riverside Park.
- Very concerned at weeds in parks – 3-corner jacks & Khaki weed.
- Skate park should go ahead. Spot is good which has been picked. Good for tourists.
- Sees that maintained in good condition.
- Surrounds of Swan Hill reserve needs improving.
- Lives at Lake Boga. Would like more maintenance & regularly, of lake/parks/surrounds.
- General appearance of Swan Hill.
- Looks nice and tidy.
- Clean appearance.

August 2000

12 Comments

- Overall fairly well looked after.
- Doesn't use most facilities.
- Children, especially visitors, need parks of a high standard so they will return. This would increase revenue for the town and Council.
- No - don't use facilities but for the community it is essential for tourism etc, but not for personal use.
- General good feeling about Swan Hill.
- All services in Swan Hill, nothing in Robinvale.
- Parks - action was promised but nothing seemed to happen.
- For your children and grandchildren - not personally.
- Parks are lovely.
- Council is very helpful (staff).
- Great for kids.
- Younger family use the facilities, so it is important they are maintained.

November 2000

12 Comments

- Particular weed is very bad, especially in Riverside Park. Parks are also not clean.
- General performance is good.

- Important to get a balance between work and recreation.
- General use of facilities.
- Rubbish bins in park need to be emptied more regularly or more bins.
- George Lay Park under utilised and full of prickles.
- Around Piangil not enough park maintenance done.
- Playgrounds close by is essential.
- Children use.
- Parks in Swan Hill are kept good.
- Weaver Drive Park is full of prickles and ferals who break the swings.
- Seats of swings need replacing (Federal Square between Elwood Crt. -Weeds need eradicating in park.

February 2001

13 Comments

- Park is clean and tidy. Equipment in good order - no problems.
- Compared to other area's they are doing a great job.
- River Park Nyah, Lewis Park needs water connected.
- Parks should be better maintained.
- Parks in good condition.
- After rain its ridiculous to have sprinklers on the next day, after two inches of rain.
- Children playing sport.
- Harrison Crescent - syringes found.
- On hot days green parks look nice and cool.
- Lawns at Lake Boga.
- Park is in bad condition, trees dying (Robinvale park near community centre) - covered in three-cornered jacks.
- Parks are good, but need more shade in playground area.
- Being older her answers are only based on what she sees.

May 2001

8 Comments

- Not used very often, but when you do like them to be a good service. Park has improved.
- Fair bit to do with them.
- Swan Hill in the last 5-10 years lack of outdoor workers. Lack spread of weeds; no new garden trees, etc.
- Some areas not looked after in Robinvale (railway area). Parks kept well but railway needs more.
- Have seen some rubbish around playgrounds.
- Parks aren't as good as they should; weeds, prickles.
- Like living in Swan Hill and Council keeps things looking good.
- All kept very well.

November 2001

15 Comments

- What you see - regarding parks and playgrounds.
- Uses parks with grandchildren and is most impressed.
- Some parks are not so good and clean.
- Maintenance of parks could improve.
- Playgrounds are good.
- General neatness.
- Some are very dry and very burr ridden.
- When daughter comes home you visit areas - they look beautiful.
- Need a little more attention.
- Playgrounds not always tidy. Too many prickles.
- Needs improvement on Council's upkeep of parks and grounds - more staff.
- Walk through park in my area and it is always very presentable.
- Playground at George Lay park had big hill removed, but didn't see it as a problem.
- Proud of way town is presented.
- More care with watering - not on target. Watering when raining. Not enough staff to attend to needs. Cr Katis is excellent.

May 2002

16 Comments

- Piangil park area in town.
- Piangil park needs a clean up.
- Very go ahead and no complaints.
- Always looks nice and tidy.
- Riverside excellent. Some other parks not so good.
- Dog droppings and three-cornered jacks.
- Look out at one every day.
- Rubbish around the parks.
- Having children.
- Generally looking very well kept.
- I think the parks are wonderful.
- Use their facilities a lot.
- Now and again I see rubbish about.
- Lake Boga foreshore needs attention. Strip of land between highway and railway line needs attention.
- Mediocre in neat and tidy - low staff numbers an issue.
- General restoration - going well. Good to see work happening.

November 2002

23 Comments

- Usage of facilities.
- Active members – ratepayers.
- Use facilities with school children.
- In Swan Hill you can see where the rates go. Something is always being improved in the city.
- Council cuts lawns.
- Robinvale watering has a lot of run off. Look at water strategies.
- Riverside park is nice, neat and clean.
- Not happy with park.
- Riverside park - not a lot of water put on it.
- Use these frequently.
- Over watered in current climate. Otherwise looks great.
- Like to see Robinvale looked after more.
- Parks need more general attention.
- Parks water wastage.
- Our area is reasonable.
- Parks - Piangil not so good - equipment taken & hardly anything there.
- Woorinen South needs playground facilities & a clean up.
- Improvement on entry to north side of Swan Hill - need impact.
- Live in Swan Hill. Services are all good.
- Very well kept.
- Keep riverside clean, attractive & tidy
- Playgrounds need care - overgrown, rubbish, and litter.
- We organised a BBQ at park for kid's birthday. BBQ had faeces on it!!!

May 2003

16 Comments

- Riverside Park is very good, others need improvement.
- Utilise the river frontage more, like Echuca.
- Unnecessary funds used on these facilities.
- Parks generally good.
- Problem with graffiti at playgrounds - 3 parks - need better security. Rubbish hasn't been picked up at playgrounds - not always up to scratch. Facilities are good.
- Neatness and tidiness.
- Water a major issue. Opportunity to fix up around the lake and not being done. No signage indicating public toilets on highway.
- Clean and tidy.
- Sprinklers in Latje Road - go all over the road. Clear 2 houses near railway station - Robinvale. Would make a great park.
- Disgusted with the way they water. It is a drought and water is sprayed all over the road (auto sprinklers).
- Pond in Robinvale Park is dangerous for children.

- Used children's' influence to answer.
- Lives next door to park in Cobham Avenue - lawn not looked after - not enough equipment.
- Due to the 'three corner jacks' on the ground in George Lay Park.
- Nyah/Nyah West - always working around the area - excellent. Nyah Trotting Track excellent.
- Entry to town is always tidy, lawns are looked after.

November 2003

10 Comments

- Yana Street Complex goes under water quickly when it rains.
- Lawns well mown every time visited.
- Weeds in park in Federal Square.
- Over the last few years there is less staff, and mowing has slipped a little bit.
- Riverside Park beautifully kept.
- Parks - Riverside Park always green and well kept.
- Riverside Park nice and tidy.
- Parks have too many yellow splinter prickles - need more controls to prevent these.
- More toilets at park.
- If Council is responsible for the racecourse, it needs improvement.
- Dirty toilets at Riverside Park.