




To Auspice or Not to Auspice

The True Costs of Rural Shires Auspicing
Community Projects

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Contents

- Community Planning in Gannawarra
 - Benefits of Auspicing Community Projects
 - Issues for Councils in Auspicing Projects
 - Actions
 - Advocacy
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Community Planning in Gannawarra

- 10 Community Planning Groups
 - Each community identifies Community Plan with Vision, Priorities, Actions
 - Facilitated by Community Development Officer, supported by Consultant
 - Councillor participation mixed
 - Council considers Community Plans
 - Progress reports to Council quarterly
- 



Benefits of Council Auspicing Community Plans/Projects

- Community engagement, sense of self determination
- Community capacity building
- Utilisation of volunteer capacity, including qualified skills base for 'in kind' contribution
- Partnership/relationship building between community and local govt
- Informs Council re community priorities
- Can influence and work in with Council's priorities
- Economies of scale – like projects can be grouped and grant funding sought more effectively



Benefits for State and Federal Govts

- Local Government auspicing provides security for State government agencies re appropriate management of project, responsible accounting for resources, adequate reporting
 - Cost saving for State govt as risk of non-compliance minimised and project monitoring costs substantially reduced.
 - Cost shifting!




Issues with Community Plans and Priorities

- Initial focus by community groups on infrastructure
 - often largely non-council assets
- Competition between Council and community projects for Council resources and precious grant dollars
 - 40% of our Council revenue comes from grants
- Unrealistic expectations of what is achievable
 - time, cost, level of Council resources/in kind support expected
 - Council may be seen as roadblock if not responding immediately
- Quality of applications to or through Council
 - Lack of community capacity in project design, costing, risk identification, grant application preparation



Issues with Community Plans and Priorities

- Community planning encouraged/funded by one arm of State Govt (DPCD); but funding provided mainly by other Depts (eg RDV)
 - Most grant applications must be auspiced by Local Govt, whether or not any Council assets involved
 - Commitment to community planning not universal across State Depts
 - Federal and State Govt Departments liaise directly with community re projects, but Council required to sign off on application
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Issues with Community Plans and Priorities

- Financial risks for community projects need to be clarified
 - Who pays for cost increases (due to delay in funding approval, unknowns)?
 - Who pays if contractor falls over?
 - Who pays for legal costs if contractor fails to deliver?




Issues for Small Rural Councils

- Stress on Council resources
 - to facilitate planning process, develop designs, check technical specs including costing, planning and building permit requirements
 - extra demand on technical staff at least 1 EFT for GSC in Engineering area alone
- Retention of inefficient buildings such as multiple community halls in close proximity
- Need to ensure adequate consideration of risk, OHS and safety requirements
- Professional risk to Council Officers – personal liability



Issues (cont'd)

- For GSC, 10 Community Groups each with 5-10 Priorities some with multiple projects
 - Adds to substantial Council Capital Works program
 - Impacts on capacity to manage Council's own assets
 - Shortage of technical staff
 - Difficulty in using consultant/contract staff to project manage, particularly smaller projects
 - Geographic spread of smaller communities
 - Difficulty in attracting contractors, tradesmen etc.
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ACTIONS – Council Funding Support

- Carryover of Council funds from notional allocations for Pride of Place identified place projects
 - Annual seed funds of \$10k for large and \$5k for small community planning groups, plus \$40k pool (small groups get preference)
 - Matching grants/contributions required to access Council funds
 - Can accumulate funds over a couple of years
 - Application process to access allocated funds
 - Guidelines and Criteria
 - Event funding provided to each planning group annually
 - Other groups approach their local Community Planning Group
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ACTIONS - Council Community Liaison Committee

- Cross-Council internal Committee meets monthly
 - Includes CEO, Directors, Managers covering Planning and Building, Engineering, Environment, Grants, Communications, Community Services, Finance, Recreation, Risk, and Community Development (Secretariat)
- Gets updates on Community Planning Group activities
- Discusses community project applications
 - provides analysis, advice on proposals
 - considers links/synergies with any related Council projects
- Advantages
 - knowledge of community aspirations and activities
 - ability to provide technical advice
 - links community development to rest of Council's staff and activities



ACTIONS (Cont'd)

- Training for community members, eg grant application preparation
- Identify synergies – combination of like projects into a single, more substantial application
- Negotiate Agreements between Local Govt and Community Groups to cover “what ifs”
- Communicate timeframes required
 - Plan activities over several years
 - Build understanding of Council and other processes req'd
 - Manage expectations!




Advocacy

- Involve Councils, Council Groupings (eg Murray River Group of Councils), Council Representative Organisations (VLGA and MAV) in representations to State and Federal Government seeking
 - Increase in base funding for small rural Shires through FAG and R2R essential
 - Change in State grant funding conditions
 - Enhance direct funding of community groups
 - Change in grant conditions to cover extra Council costs
- Lobby State and Federal Ministers and senior Departmental Staff
 - In areas of local government, community development, regional development and others
 - Lobby Regional Managers
 - Possible project for Loddon Mallee Regional Managers Forum




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