

SERVICE REVIEW OUTCOMES – 2004/05

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS

DETAILS OF SERVICE

Public Affairs and Communications is a service unit reporting direct to council's Chief Executive Officer.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Public Affairs and Communications service team consists of 4.6 Equivalent Full Time staff. The service has both a corporate and an operational role in the management of public relations and communications for Maroondah City Council.

The team provides a range of services to all areas of Council, which includes advice, guidelines and policy on all aspects of public relations and media plus support for individual service areas, public relations activities, provision of marketing material, a corporate presence at events, corporate displays and promotion of the activities of all service areas of Council. The services corporate responsibilities include:

- Management of the Maroondah corporate identity,
- Manage an external communications program including printed publications and web site, media, public relations, civic functions,
- Projecting a positive image in all communications,
- Keeping the community informed,
- Promoting the work and achievements of Council,
- Manage internal communications program including weekly staff bulletin and a quarterly newsletter.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Note: The following is a summary of the activity and outcomes of the Best Value Service Review.

Best Value Principle	Key Performance Indicator	Performance Result 2004-05	Target 2005-06	Target 2006-07
Cost Standard	Operate within Annual Financial Administration Budget, 2004-05 budget \$540,592 (net)	0.8% saving on budget	Performance to budget	Performance to budget
Quality Standard	Community satisfaction rating for council’s advocacy and community representation on key local issues *	65	65	65
Quality Standard	Community satisfaction rating for council’s engagement in decision making on key local issues *	58	58	58

* Department for Victorian Communities Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

Consideration of Best Value Factors in setting Cost and Quality standards

Factors

Consideration Comments

Best on offer 208C(a)

The industry comparison indicator is the Department for Victorian Communities, Annual Community Satisfaction Survey, Advocacy and Community Engagement ratings. This is a comparative measure of community satisfaction against the mean result of like local government councils.

The survey compares Maroondah’s results with 15 inner metropolitan councils, Maroondah scored above the group in its Advocacy result and below the average but within the lower quadrant for Community Engagement. The previous high result for Advocacy was attributed to the Eastern Freeway no tolls campaign that at the time had a high media profile. The current results compare favourably when compared to an eight-year average demonstrating the reliability and consistent standards and quality of Maroondah’s service performance.

Consideration of Best Value Factors in setting Cost and Quality standards cont.

Factors

Consideration Comments

**Value for money
208C(b)**

The cost standard ‘to deliver all service within the service areas annual operating budget is a key value for money indicator and can be monitored on an annual basis in terms of cost per head of Maroondah population. As at 30 June 2005 Maroondah’s estimated resident population was 102,432, the current operating budget equates to a target ratio for delivery of services of \$5.27 per person. The actual ratio for the period was \$5.23, representing a reduction in relative costs for services.

**Community
expectation and
values 208C(c)**

The above quality standards represent key indicators of Victorian community expectations and value as identified and monitored by the Department for Victorian Communities. Local communities are surveyed on an annual basis and Council’s can monitor their performance against past periods as well as attaining a comparison of their performance and progress with other like council’s and communities. In addition the service area engaged a community survey group to assess the expectations of its community with respect to key community information resources. (See consultation section below)

The quality to which the service undertakes its community advocacy role was demonstrated and recognised by the sector when it won the 2003 LGPro Excellence Award for Advocacy Initiative for its campaign to raise the issue of HACC funding on behalf of its community in the media and to local politicians.

The service is also a public relations and promotions resource for all service providers within council and as such is a key tool through which internal services convey information and advertise their service programs to customers and the general community. As part of this Best Value review a series of internal workshops were conducted to identify internal customer expectations.

**Affordability and
Accessibility
208C(d)**

The service provides coordinated access to a range of information and resources aimed at assisting all sectors of the community and promoting council’s services and community support and engagement initiatives. Access to information including the Maroondah website and resource material is provided at no cost and is available to the entire community.

**Local Employment
208C(e)**

Maroondah’s Best Value Supporting Local Suppliers policy is a demonstration by Council of its commitment to supporting and promoting local businesses as a means of sponsoring local employment opportunities. A Council wide KPI relating to the policy is the target of 25% of purchasing activity to be directed to local suppliers of goods and services. The initiative also extends to the local advertisement of vacant positions and appropriate tenders.

Best Value Principle

Actions Taken

Responsive to Community Needs

The Public Affairs and Communications team is directly involved with the community through its media liaison and promotion activities, its primary contact role with community groups and its coordination of resource information including the community guide.

The team coordinates and manages the on-line Council website including online provision of newsletters, community information bulletins and guides to the range of information brochures available as well as promoting and coordinating on-line community poles and community feedback activity. The team provides this information to Council and Councillors to aid their policy and decision making processes. Through these activities the team demonstrates Council’s commitment to identifying and responding to the needs of its community by providing and managing one of the primary windows for community consultation and engagement.

Accessible

Access to the service and related information is achieved between normal business hours, Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm via telephone on 1300 882 233, via email: maroondah@maroondah.com.au or in person at one of Council’s three Customer Service outlets. The service also maintains council’s website <http://www.maroondah.vic.gov.au> which provides direct access, 24hours to a range of information, interaction, service enquiries, programs and projects being offered and undertaken by council.

Continuous Improvement

During the period of the best value review of the service the following service improvements were identified and implemented:

- The Maroondah Focus community newsletter is now available in audiotape format with Braille labelling for the visually impaired.
- A welcome page for new residents was introduced on Maroondah’s web site providing links to specific information relevant to them.
- Resource kits with information on local government were made available on-line through Maroondah’s web site for primary school students and teachers
- Community groups now have 24-hour on-line access to update their contact details in Maroondah’s community guide.
- The timelines for update and production of the Community guide were changed in response to requests for community groups.
- A strategic Public Relation / Media schedule was established for key Council services.
- A system was introduced to ensure local media are kept informed and invited to Council events.

Best Value Principle

Actions Taken

Consultation

The service visited nine locations and groups including local libraries, shopping centres, our leisure centre and citizens groups inviting people to participate in a survey group to establish the community’s expectations and opinion of its primary community publication the Maroondah Focus, which is distributed to all households within the municipality every six months. The discussion covered a wide range of aspects from the design, content, format and reliability of distribution asking the group to rate the current publication and provide feedback on any areas of improvement or concern.

The purpose was to ensure that the service was meeting the community’s expectation and providing a valuable community resource. The aggregate score from the survey showed 81% of respondents rated the publication as Excellent or Very Good; there was no negative rating from the survey group.

The service also provides on-going opportunities for and monitors feedback on a wide range of emerging community issues via Maroondah’s website. All feedback and commentary is collated and reported to the organisation for consideration and action. The service provides a public relations and promotions resource for internal service areas, to identify internal customer needs and expectations internal group workshops were conducted to review the level and scope of services being provided and to identify areas for potential improvement and innovation.

Reporting

A copy Maroondah’s Best Value Annual Community Report of key findings and key performance target and results will be available to the community via the following methods and access points;

- Council’s community web page for public access,
- At each of our three Customer Service Centres for public viewing,
- At each of Council’s Public Libraries for public viewing.

Performance reporting against key service indicators is undertaken on a monthly basis and the results documented in Council’s monthly performance report. This report is tabled before Council on a quarterly basis and is a publicly available document. Each service area has an annual business plan, which is strategically aligned with Maroondah’s Council Plan, and our overarching strategic community plan Maroondah 2025. Annual performance and key achievements of the strategies in these plans is reported in Council’s Annual Report.