



1999/2000

ANNUAL REPORT

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WALGETT SHIRE COUNCIL INFORMATION

Address:	77 Fox Street WALGETT NSW 2832
Postal Address:	PO Box 31 WALGETT NSW 2832
Telephone:	(02) 6828 1399
Facsimile:	(02) 6828 1608
Email:	admin@walgettshire.com
Office Hours:	9.00 am – 4.30 pm
Council Meetings:	Last Monday of each Month
Auditors:	Spencer Steer
Principal Towns:	Walgett Lightning Ridge Collarenebri
Villages:	Come-By-Chance Carinda Burren Junction Grawin Rowena

SHIRE STATISTICS

Area:	22,007 Square Kilometers
Population:	8550
Road Length:	2908 Kilometers
Distance from Sydney:	691 Kilometers
Distance from Canberra:	677 Kilometers

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Section 428 (1) of the Local Government Act provides that Council, within five (5) months of the end of each year, must prepare a report as to its achievements with respect to the objectives and performance targets set out in the Management Plan for that year.

The aim of the report is to increase the level of accountability and transparency of Council's operation and, to a large degree, the report achieves these aims as well as providing a relatively concise and informative insight into Council's operation.

Section 428 (3) of the Local Government Act specifies that the report need only be furnished to the Minister and such other persons and bodies as required by the regulations, and whilst Council complies with these directives it also feels that the report provides a valuable resource for Councillors and Staff as it provides a comprehensive yet concise overview of Council's operation and performance.

The report has been completed in accordance with the Guidelines of the Department of Local Government and includes information required under the following legislation:-

1. *Local Government Act 1993*
2. *Local Government (General Regulations) 1999*
3. *Local Government (Rates and Charges) Regulations 1999*
4. *Freedom of Information Act 1989*
5. *Information Protection Act 1998*

VISION STATEMENT

By the year 2005 the Walgett Shire Council will be a place where people increasingly want to live. It will be a community with a broadening economic base providing opportunities for its residents to live and work in a unique and desirable environment where there is a harmony between social, economic and environmental values.

The Walgett Shire Council will have contributed to the pursuit of this Vision by:-

- Providing strong leadership to our community
- Maintaining a strong community and customer focus
- Promoting the Shire as a great place to live
- Operating with a sense of unity, harmony and identity
- Being entrepreneurial, adaptable and flexible for changing times – grasping opportunities as they emerge
- Maintaining its technical and financial leadership in local government and within the region
- Being a local government whose Council members will be committed, knowing what their constituency wants and who keep their community informed
- Continuing to work with a motivated and highly professional workforce
- Ensuring all infrastructure is maintained and developed
- Operating in a business and commercial like manner – with an emphasis on value for money

MISSION STATEMENT

“Provide, as far as the efficient and economical use of resources allow, a pleasant, productive, healthy and safe environment for the residents of Walgett Shire Council”

COUNCIL'S CHARTER

In accordance with Section 8 of the Local Government Act, 1993, Council's Charter comprises a set of principals that guide Council in carrying out its legislative obligations and functions.

The Council's Charter is:-

- To provide directly or on behalf of other levels of government, after due consultation, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively
- To exercise community leadership
- To exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of cultural diversity
- To promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children
- To properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- To have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its decisions
- To bear in mind that it is the custodian and trustee of public assets and to effectively account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible
- To facilitate the involvement of Councillors, Members of the Public, Users of Facilities and Services and Council Staff in the development, improvement and co-ordination of Local Government
- To raise funds for local purposes by the fair imposition of rates, charges and fees, by income earned from investments and, when appropriate, by borrowing and grants
- To keep the local community and the State Government (and through it, the wider community) informed about its activities
- To ensure that, in the exercise of its regulatory functions, it acts consistently and without bias, particularly where an activity of the Council is affected
- To be a responsible employer

COUNCILLORS

<i>Councillor AH Friend</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>(Elected September 2000)</i>
<i>Councillor PA Hutchinson</i>	<i>Deputy Mayor</i>	<i>(Elected September 2000)</i>
<i>Councillor MP Bow</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor RL Greenaway</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor RG Hewlett</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor TJ Horan</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor WJ Jeffries</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor DA Lane</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor PL Lang</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor CJ Mitchell</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor JH Treweeke</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor PP Waterford</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

<i>Acting General Manager</i>	<i>Mr Graham Kellett</i>
<i>Acting Director of Engineering Services</i>	<i>Mr Rolly Lawford</i>
<i>Acting Director of Financial Services</i>	<i>Mr John Stuart</i>
<i>Acting Director of Environmental Services</i>	<i>Mr Maurice Freixas</i>

MAYORAL REPORT

This is my first message in the Annual Report required to be provided by Council under the Local Government Act 1993, following my election as Mayor in September 2000, although I have previously been Shire President for a number of terms, and would like to thank my fellow Councillors for the opportunity to provide leadership to the Council for the ensuing twelve (12) months.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts and contribution of outgoing Mayor Peter Waterford who during his twelve (12) months at the helm, worked tirelessly to further promote and assist Walgett Shire Council and its residents.

The ongoing problems in securing and retaining qualified staff has again proved a problem, with General Manager, Mr Kelvin Matthews tendering his resignation late in 2000 to take up the position of General Manager to Broken Hill City Council. Kelvin's departure together with the extended leave of the Director of Engineering Services and the resignation of our long serving Director of Environmental Services, Mr Edward McGuckin has created problems on an administration basis not possibly from a skill level but certainly from a basis of local and background knowledge.

The temporary staff assisting Council have done a tremendous job and Council is fortunate in being able to secure the services of Mr Graham Kellett as Acting General Manager whilst Council attempts to secure the services of a new General Manager to lead Council into this new millennium. The Local Government Act 1993 has made the appointment of the General Manager of any Council perhaps one (1) of the most significant decisions Council will make and it is essential the person chosen is not only able to provide Council with sound financial and administrative advice but also posses excellent communication and public relation skills.

Council continues to pursue a number of issues which affect not only Walgett but many rural towns particularly those in Western New South Wales and these include roads, law and order, unemployment, reduction of Government Services, rationalization and subsequent closure of Banking Facilities, Education and the lack of concrete evidence of any positive effect on the State and Federal Governments Decentralization and Job Creation Programme. The Barwon Darling Alliance has proved to be a successful lobby organisation in this regard, however, faces a continued battle in convincing our Political Leaders that there is a part of New South Wales located away from the Eastern Seaboard.

Council continues to involve itself in any project that has potential benefit to its ratepayers, residents and like many other Councils has been forced to become much more involved in Social Welfare issues as the State and Federal Government abdicate their responsibility in this regard under the excuse of Centralisation Policies etc.

The severe flooding that affected large sections of the Shire in late 2000 left many landowners with huge concerns financially, however, I am confident that the resilience of the people will again overcome this major set back. With the floods also came significant problems for Council and to the Council Staff and all the Volunteers who helped during the crisis period would like to say thank you. Council has been successful in obtaining flood damage funding and will continue to push for a greater amount as the extent of the damage continues to unfold.

The ensuing period will not be an easy time for Council, however, I am confident that with a continued co-operation approach and the support of residents that it will continue to succeed in its bid to make the Shire a better place to live and improve the quality of life for its residents.

Walgett Shire Council – 1999-2000 Annual Report

This Annual Report is designed to increase the level of accountability of Council and to a large degree it achieves that aim, however, the Report also provides the opportunity of Council to showcase its achievement over the period and I am confident it does just that.

Council is here to serve the residents of the Shire and is open to both positive suggestions and constructive criticism and it is important that members of the community provide Council positive feedback in its attempt to achieve its objectives as detailed in its Mission Statement, that is, provide as far as the efficient and economical use of resources allow a pleasant productive healthy and safe environment for the resident of Walgett Shire.

Alan Friend
Mayor

SEE ORGANISATION CHART SAVED AS:

WORD DOCUMENT

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COUNCIL

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

ANNUAL REPORTS

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

As predicted in my General Manager's Statement of last year, the 1999/00 was indeed challenging. The Community will no doubt be aware by now that with some regret and mixed feelings I departed as General Manager of Walgett Shire Council in early October 2000.

In September 1999, Councillor Peter Waterford was elected Mayor of Walgett Shire Council and during my subsequent tenure as General Manager of Walgett Shire Council I enjoyed a positive and strong working relationship with him. Councillor Waterford was a tireless worker with an outgoing approach to the community at large and would not hesitate to travel to all areas of the Shire district to consult with members of the community.

The most significant challenge before me upon my arrival as General Manager in 1999 was the impending legal matter regarding the Water for Walgett Project which was scheduled for hearing in the New South Wales Land and Environment Court for November 1999. Council faced the real prospect of severe financial loss due to the historical circumstances of the project and the subsequent appeal lodged in the Land and Environment Court. Council's legal advice was not to pursue the matter and in fact this was eventually Council's resolution in October 1999. This averted any further costs being borne by Council.

The circumstances surrounding Council's involvement in the Waterways Project was subject to an internal investigation by myself at Council's request. This was completed in February 2000 and submitted to full Council for consideration. The results of my internal investigation and of Council's subsequent resolution are well documented and available from Council's February 2000 Ordinary Meeting Minutes.

The loss of several Senior Staff impacted heavily upon the organisation during the 1999/2000 year, especially in Engineering and Financial Operations, and continues to present a problem. Other Staff Members are to be applauded for continuing to work under trying and difficult circumstances. The processing of back pays commenced in 1998/1999 due to Council having previously adopted the Wyatt Salary System in 1995 but having neglected to process Employee Appraisals and subsequent back pays. The obvious financial effect being significant due to such a lengthy delay. Again those Staff directly involved in processing these back pays are to be applauded for their dedication and perseverance under such adverse circumstances.

The implementation of Council's Year 2000 (Y2K) Program consumed Council's resources (both physically and financially) during the early part of the year. In the later part of the year taxation reform and the requirement by Council to register its ABN and prepare Business Activity Statements (BAS) while simultaneously ensuring that Council's computer system was able to accommodate the necessary reforms also consumed the resources of Council.

In March 2000 Council resolved that the New South Wales Department of Local Government investigate the earlier internal inquiry undertaken by myself regarding the Water for Walgett Project, as well as to investigate the process followed in the appointment of the Architect undertaking the project work for the proposed Multi Purpose Centre in Lightning Ridge, and the process of my appointment as General Manager. The Department's findings were presented to Council's June 2000 Meeting in which the Department found no reason to further pursue the matter and completely exonerated the actions of the General Manager in the internal inquiry undertaken in the period November 1999 to February 2000. A copy of the full report from the Department is available from Council's Administrative Office in Walgett.

Walgett Shire Council – 1999-2000 Annual Report

Planning for a proposed Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) for Collarenebri commenced in earnest in April 2000 with Credit Care being appointed due to successful Federal Funding being sourced to undertake a series of community consultations with regard to the forthcoming Management Plan. Consultation Meetings for Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Carinda, Burren Junction and Collarenebri were planned for July 2000. Council also resolved to conduct two (2) Ordinary Council Meetings per year outside of Walgett with the March Ordinary Meeting of Council held in Lightning Ridge and the September 2000 Meeting held in Burren Junction.

In concluding, the above reflects, as stated in my opening comments, what proved to be a challenging year. More detail concerning Council's general performance in the various activities it has been involved with can be found throughout the Report. This Annual Report provides me with an opportunity to express on record my appreciation to all of those Employees and Elected Members who supported me under difficult circumstances. I feel particularly privileged to have been General Manager of an Organisation which consisted of such people of commendable integrity and dedication and I applaud them for their loyalty.

Kelvin Matthews
General Manager

COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REPORTS 1999/2000

LGA Section 428 (2) (a)

Attached to this report is a copy of Council's Financial Report for the year ending 30 June 2000. Due to a significant number of Staff changes, Council was unable to complete the Statements within the four (4) months prescribed by the Act and sought an extension of time from the Department of Local Government which was granted.

The Statements were finalized in December 2000 and were presented to Council at its Meeting held on Monday 29 January 2000 and were adopted.

Included in the Financial Reports are the Auditors Report and Special Purpose Financial Reports and Special Schemes.

The Reports are contained in **Appendix "A"**.

STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE

LGA Section 428 (2) (b)

Attached is the report on the comparative performance that relates to the functions of Walgett Shire Council for the year ended 30 June 2000, and is marked as **Appendix "G"**.

REPORTS AS TO THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

LGA Section 428 (2) (c)

Council recognizes its responsibility not only as a level of Government but also as a Corporate Citizen, to ensure that the State of our Environment is protected and if possible enhanced for the future generations.

Of particular importance is the protection of both the quality and quantity of the water supply the continued sustainability of farming and grazing land and the protection of items and areas of heritage significance both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal.

The State of Environment Report that has been prepared for this Report and is attached in **Appendix "B"** is evidence of Council's commitment.

In the preparation of the Report, Council sought input from various groups who had a direct involvement with Environmental matters within the Shire including the following:-

- Barwon Darling River Management Committee
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Walgett Special One
- Lightning Ridge Office of the Department of Mineral Resources
- Great Artesian Basin Consultative Committee
- New South Wales Department of Agriculture
- New South Wales Department of Health

Walgett Shire Council – 1999-2000 Annual Report

- New South Wales Department of Education
- Pesticide Liaison Committee
- Namoi Valley Water Users Association
- Walgett Native Vegetation Committee

Responses received from the above groups and other interested groups and / or individuals form part of the State of the Environment Report.

The Report is contained in **Appendix “B”**.

REPORTS AS TO THE CONDITION OF PUBLIC WORKS
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LGA Section 428 (2) (d)

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Council has a total of twenty two (22) public buildings on which an amount of \$158,663.00 was expended on maintenance during 1999/2000 in order to maintain them at a satisfactory standard. With regards to public housing Council has twenty nine (29) dwellings on which an amount of \$71,980.00 was expended during this period to maintain them at a suitable standard. All of Council’s buildings are subject to a cyclic maintenance programme to ensure they remain at a satisfactory standard.

PUBLIC ROADS AND BRIDGES

Within the Walgett Shire area there is approximately 2,908 kms of public roads that Council is responsible for, this includes Council and classified roads, State Highways and Regional Roads. Of this total, 563kms is sealed with the remainder being gravel or black soil surfaces. Council also is responsible for 58 bridges within the shire. During 1999/2000 Council expended an amount of \$4,050,000.00 on maintaining these public roads and bridges. The estimate to replace such infrastructure would amount to \$4 m for roads and \$8.5 m for bridges.

PUBLIC WORKS

Walgett Shire is responsible for water and sewerage services in the three larger populated centres, that is Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri. The general standard of these works is exceeded with some towns having gone through recent augmentation programs.

Council expended a total of \$602,000 on maintenance and operations for the three sewer schemes and a total of \$1,031,000 for the three water supply services. Again, the Walgett Water Supply has required additional funds being spent on water cleaning due to the Algal problem experienced in the Barwon/Namoi River systems.

The current replacement costs of the sewerage schemes within the Shire have been estimated at \$12 m with the water supply schemes being \$15 m

SUMMARY OF LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

LGA Section 428 (2) (e)

DETAILS	COST
Walgett Waterways Current Status:- Council has decided not to proceed with the project	\$33,618.00
Misfeasance Public Office Current Status:- Matter currently at discovery stage – parties producing all documents	\$15,550.00
Public Liability Claim Current Status:- Still Proceeding	\$10,953.00
Dangerous Dog Declaration Current Status:- Council won the case	\$1,381.00
Contribution Legal Fees – Hawkesbury Council	\$779.00
Native Title Legal Opinion	\$1,702.00
These amounts are rechargeable to the Debtor	\$42,986.00

MAYORAL AND COUNCILLORS FEES AND EXPENSES

LGA Section 428 (2) (f)

The following amounts were expended during the period 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2000:-

Mayoral Allowance	\$11,100.00
Councillors Fees	\$65,250.00
Councillors Travelling & Other Expenses	\$61,266.00

A copy of the Policy is attached in **Appendix “E”**.

DETAILS RELATING TO SENIOR STAFF

LGA Section 428 (2) (g) and LGA Section 31 (1) (b)

In accordance with the provision of Section 334 of the Local Government Act 1993, the position of General Manager is the only position at Walgett Shire determined to be a Senior Staff Position as defined in Section 332 of the Local Government Act 1993.

The total salary package applicable for this position for the period 1 July 1999 to the 30 June 2000 inclusive of Salary, Fringe Benefits, Provision of Motor Vehicle and Employer Funded Superannuation was \$95,570.00.

STATEMENT OF CONTRACTS AWARDED IN EXCESS OF \$100,000

LGA Section 428 (2) (h)

Council recognises the need to ensure that Ratepayers receive the best value possible for their rate dollar. Council at all times attempts to maximize its scarce financial resources by monitoring the purchase of goods and services to ensure that the most competitive price is obtained taking into account quality, service and reliability.

During the year ended 30 June 2000, the following Contracts were awarded in excess of \$100,000:-

Supply of Road Making Materials	\$189,119.00
Bituminous Surfacing	\$256,799.00
Gravel Haulage	\$300,954.00
Plant Hire	\$111,887.00
Gravel Haulage	\$254,558.00
Plant Hire	\$174,106.00
Plant Hire	\$562,262.00
Plant Hire	\$110,132.00
Gravel Haulage	\$285,805.00
Supply and Deliver Recoated Aggregate	\$669,430.00
Gravel Haulage	\$195,503.00
Plant Hire	\$245,958.00

Gravel Haulage	\$138,488.00
Plant Hire	\$114,371.00
Plant Hire	\$119,430.00
Plant Hire	\$199,074.00
Plant Hire	\$1,624,389.00
Plant Hire	\$252,494.00
Gravel Haulage	\$157,347.00
Plant Hire	\$186,590.00
Plant Hire	\$136,301.00
Road Sealing	\$1,038,047.00
Gravel Haulage	\$355,975.00
Plant Hire	\$311,691.00
Plant Hire	\$143,979.00
Plant Hire	\$133,210.00
Contract Street Sweeping	\$137,528.00

BUSHFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

LGA Section 428 (2) (i)

GENERAL

The Walgett Shire covers an area of 22,007 square kilometers of which is protected principally by the local Rural Fire Service. The New South Wales Fire Brigade provide protection for the towns of Walgett and Lightning Ridge.

Both fire services assist each other under the Mutual Aide Agreement approved this year.

During the past twelve (12) months various infrastructure has been built in the Walgett Fire District a new two (2) bay Fire Station and Store Room being constructed in the Council Depot, Walgett.

Council has acquired one (1) Category 1 Fire Tanker and is stationed in the new Fire Station.

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Two (2) new Brigades have been formed during the year:-

- (a) Walgett Headquarter Brigade
- (b) Glengarry / Grawin Brigade

TRAINING

New Members of the two (2) new Brigades underwent a Training Program in both Basic Firefighting and Village Firefighting Courses held over two (2) weekends in Walgett.

HAZARD REDUCTION

The 1999/2000 Fire Season had the potential of a “high” fire danger following the floods in late 1998.

Hazard Reduction was carried out under the guidelines of the Bush Fire Management Plan by various ways:-

- (a) Controlled burning in areas adjacent to the waste tip, by Rural Fire Headquarter Brigade
- (b) Roadside grading and slashing by Council
- (c) Slashing of urban vacant blocks
- (d) Farmers with “permit” burns, burning large areas of cereal crop stubble and ploughing provided great fire protection
- (e) Controlled burning by New South Wales Fire Brigade within the urban boundaries

INCIDENT REPORTS

Incidents reported during 1999/2000 were:-

- (a) Thirteen (13) Bush Fires – Total area burnt 194 hectares
- (b) Four (4) Structural Fires – Two (2) with 100% damage
Two (2) with 20% damage
- (c) Two (2) Motor Vehicle Accidents- Both 100% damage

SUMMARY

Due to the Hazard Reductions mentioned above and the co-operation of the personnel responsible, the Walgett Shire experienced a quiet year with regards to fire related incidents.

PROGRAMMES TO PROMOTE SERVICES AND ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR PEOPLE OF DIVERSE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS

LGA Section 428 (2) (j)

Council has appropriately ensured that provision has been made for all Sections of the Community in relation to access to services.

Conscious of the need to meet the needs of all residents of this large and culturally diverse Shire.

Council commissioned the preparation of a Social Plan and the Plan was adopted by Council in October 1999 and will be updated with every significant change.

The plan is attached to and forms part of this Annual Report in **Appendix “C”**.

WORKS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 67

LGA Section 428 (2) (k)

There were no works undertaken under the provisions of Section 67 during the year ending 30 June 2000.

CONTRIBUTIONS UNDER SECTION 356

LGA Section 428 (2) (l)

A total of \$10,357.28 was expended during 1999/2000 by way of donations and contributions.

Of this amount \$3,900.00 was to Radio 2WEB to assist its continued operation and ability to provide essential community and emergency information to the Western Region of the State and in particular residents of this large Shire.

Other minor contributions were made to various sporting, cultural, school and community organisations.

Council recognises the valuable contribution made by the various community groups within the Shire and the fact that without such continuation on a voluntary basis many of the services and facilities currently available would not otherwise be able to be provided. Councils contribution under Section 356 in some small way recognises this impact.

STATEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITIES 1999/2000

LGA Section 428 (2) (m)

Salary System

Council has finalised the implementation of the Salary System under the Local Government State Award for all current Staff.

There is a need to address outstanding matters concerning payments to ex-employees – some of this work has been completed but due to the requirements to evaluate performance and skills of these employees this work will continue for some time to allow finalisation.

Occupational Health and Safety

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee has functioned very effectively over the period of review, addressing workplace safety issues. The Committee continues to identify unsafe work practices and prepares action plans to alleviate risks.

Recruitment

The loss of several Senior Staff impacted heavily upon the organisation during the year especially in Engineering and Financial Operations and continues to present a problem.

Active Recruitment initiatives have been taken to address the problem and will continue until a full Staff complement has been achieved.

Workers Compensation

An active review of current claims was undertaken with Council's Workers Compensation Insurer resulting in a saving of \$90,000 in premium.

This occurred despite an increase in the salary costs brought about by Council's obligation in relation to the New Salary System (one of the bases on which premiums are calculated).

Active steps continue to be taken to assist injured employees back to work through supportive rehabilitation processes.

Learning and Development

Like all other Employers Council was faced with both the Y2K and GST Implementation issues during the period. These activities consumed both physical and financial resources and required intensive training processes.

Training of Staff generally particularly in Customer Service, Occupational Health and Safety and Skills Development occurred during the period.

Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee with elected Councillors, Employee Representatives and Union Representatives, met on a regular basis to promote communication on Workplace Relations Matters.

Issues relating to Councils Training Plan, Restructuring Issues, Council's Induction Manual for new Employees and Competencies have all been discussed during the period of review with positive outcomes on a majority of issues.

A STATEMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL DURING THE YEAR TO IMPLEMENT ITS EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

LGA Section 428 (2) (n)

Council is mindful of its obligations under the Equal Employment Opportunities Legislation and has for sometime had an active and representative Equal Employment Opportunity Committee which has met to discuss issues as they arise.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan has been developed over some years and modified as deemed necessary.

Council has applied the principles of the Equal Employment Opportunities Legislation to all appointments and will continue to ensure that all job descriptions and induction procedures highlight its commitment to those principles.

A copy of Council's current Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan which incorporates a Policy Statement is incorporated in this Report in **Appendix "D"**.

STATEMENT OF ALL EXTERNAL BODIES THAT EXERCISE FUNCTIONS DELEGATED BY COUNCIL

LGA Section 428 (2) (o)

The only function delegated by Council to other bodies is that of the Control of Noxious Weeds.

This function has been delegated to Castlereagh Macquarie County Council.

STATEMENT OF COMPANIES IN WHICH COUNCIL HOLD A CONTROLLING INTEREST

LGA Section 428 (2) (p)

Council did not hold a controlling interest in any companies during the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000.

STATEMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS CO-OPERATIVES AND JOINT VENTURES

LGA Section 428 (2) (g)

NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY

This Regional Library Facility is based in Moree and is administered by Moree Plains Shire Council.

Membership of the Northern Regional Library and Information Service enables the provision of a far better level of services and access to resources than would be achieved under a stand alone Library and offers the service at far less cost than otherwise would be incurred.

Members of the Northern Regional Library and Information Service are:-

- (i) Moree Plains Shire
- (ii) Brewarrina Shire
- (iii) Walgett Shire
- (iv) Yallarois Shire

STATEWIDE MUTUAL INSURANCE GROUP

Statewide Mutual is a Local Government based Insurance Group administered by Jardine Lloyd Thomas Pty Ltd and supported by the Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales and a large percentage of New South Wales Councils.

The object of the group is to develop Insurance Products to meet the needs of Local Government and to negotiate the best possible price for all members.

Significant savings have resulted in all classes of insurance and in particular the area of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity.

NORTH WEST WEIGHTS OF LOADS GROUP

This group is administered by Moree Plains Shire Council and its function is to enforce the Road Act and Limits (Weights) on vehicles using Public Roads with a view to reducing Road Maintenance Costs.

Members of the Group are:-

- (i) Glenn Innes Municipal Council
- (ii) Severn Shire Council
- (iii) Bingara Shire Council
- (iv) Moree Plains Shire Council
- (v) Walgett Shire Council
- (vi) Yallarois Shire Council

BARWON DARLING ALLIANCE

This Group has been formed to provide combined voice and lobby movement for the Member Bodies all of whom are experiencing similar problems and have common goals.

The Alliance has looked at issues such as Employment Generation, Asset Contribution and Maintenance, Community Justice and Law and Order Issues.

A major initiative has been the investigation into the establishment of a Credit Union to fill the void in the Communities created when the major banks have withdrawn or substantially reduced services.

Members of the Group are:-

- (i) Walgett Shire Council
- (ii) Brewarrina Shire Council
- (iii) Coonamble Shire Council
- (iv) Central Darling Shire Council
- (v) Murdi Paaki Regional Council of ATSIC

FIRE CONTROL OFFICER

Walgett Shire Council and Coonamble Shire Council share a joint appointment of a Bush Fire Control Officer to co-ordinate and undertake the duties and responsibilities of Council under both the Local Government Act 1993 and the Rural Fires Act 1997.

TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

Council participates in several Tourism Promotional Groups, particularly those focusing on the Far Western Region of New South Wales.

OVERSEAS VISITS UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCILLORS AND STAFF WHILST REPRESENTING COUNCIL

LGR Section 31 (1) (a)

No Councillors or Members of Staff undertook overseas travel on behalf of Council.

DETAILS OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN

LGR Section 31 (1) (c)

Council works closely with all other Agencies to ensure that the needs of all children of all ages are met and whilst the needs of the Pre-School Children have over the past been the focus of attention the last twelve (12) months have seen a pro-active approach in the School Age Group.

Council has a Youth Development Officer who has initiated After School Activities and has put considerable energy in promoting activities at the Youth Centre in both Lightning Ridge and Walgett.

Programmes have been developed for the Summer Holidays and the Youth Development Officer has made considerable progress in gaining acceptance and support for the range of new initiatives.

The small population base of many of the smaller towns and villages make the task of organising and co-ordinating services and facilities in those places extremely difficult, however, the need is recognised and will be addressed as financial and physical resources allow.

It is important for the Youth of the towns within the Shire that a co-operative and bipartisan approach be taken for any new initiatives introduced and Council has always been willing to support projects that will provide benefits for the Young People of the Shire.

Further details are contained within the Social Plan – **Appendix “C”**.

REPORT ON COUNCILS PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO ACCESS AND EQUITY ACTIVITIES

LGA Section 1 (d) (i)

A comprehensive review of this area is contained within the Walgett Shire Social Plan which forms part of this report in **Appendix “C”**.

Walgett Shire accepts that it has a responsibility to provide access and equity of all access to all services and has adopted the following principles which are contained with the Social Plan:-

- promote families in the distribution of resources, particularly for those in need
- recognize and promote people's rights and improve the accountability of decision makers
- ensure that people have fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs to improve their quality of life
- give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

LGR Section 31 (d) (ii-ix)

CATEGORY 1 BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Council does not have any business activities which have sales in excess of \$2,000,000 and as such, no Category 1 Business Activities.

CATEGORY 2 BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Council has two (2) Business Activities which it has deemed to be Category 2 Businesses and these are:-

1. Walgett Shire Water Supply
2. Walgett Shire Sewerage Services

The Financial Statements for each of the above form part of Council's Annual Financial Reports and are contained in **Appendix "A"**.

PRINCIPLES OF COMPETITIVE NEUTRALITY

Council is mindful of the Principles of Competitive Neutrality and has applied them in its Category 2 Operations.

It must be remembered that Walgett Shire Council is a large Rural Shire in far Western New South Wales and in many instances undertakes activities which in large centers may also be provided by the Private Sector. Council, however, provides these activities as a service to the Community, as distance, isolation and low population base prevents the provision of the service by the private sector when motivated by profit rather than the Community Service Obligation of Council.

The need for Council's involvement is particularly important given the number of relatively small Communities within the Shire.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING FOR COMPETITIVE NEUTRALITY

As part of its General Complaints Policy Council has provided a mechanism for the handling of complaints regarding Competitive Neutrality. A copy of the Complaints Policy is appended to this Report in **Appendix "F"**.

Anyone who indicated that they wish to make a complaint concerning Council Operations is offered a copy of the Policy.

SUMMARY OF COMPETITIVE NEUTRALITY COMPLAINTS

No Complaints were received in the 1999/2000 Financial Year.

YEAR 2000 COMPUTER PROBLEM

LGR Section 31 (e) (I-v)

A essential component of last years Report was the action taken by Council to eliminate any potential problems to its operations as a result of the so called Y2K Problem.

Council like all Government Business Organisations and Individuals all over the World spend considerable resources in ensuring that there would be no problems within the Shire and that where possible assurances from external service providers that the on-going provision of services was not a problem.

It is pleasing to report that no problems were experienced.

The Community at large has questioned whether or not the potential problem was overplayed, however, this will never really be known and it must be assured that the awareness and rectification problems were effective.

The potential problem did allow Council the opportunity to identify more comprehensively potential problems caused by computer malfunction and take steps to ensure that contingency plans were able to be readily initiated.

RATES AND CHARGES WRITTEN OFF

LGR Section (Rates and Charges) Regulation Clause 15

Pensioners Rates (Section 583)	\$131,927.02
Cancellation of Leases / Claims	\$2,859.58
Mangankali Housing Co-Operation	\$10,596.35
Other – Including Receipting Errors, Amalgamations etc	\$6,495.81
	\$151,878.76

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1989*Section 68 (6) of the Freedom of Information Act***STATISTICS**

Council is required by the Freedom of Information Act to include in its annual report statistics relating to applications received for access to its records under the Freedom of Information Act and these are detailed hereunder:

FOI REQUESTS	1999/2000			1998/99		
	Personal	Other	Total	Personal	Other	Total
New (inc. transferred in)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Brought forward	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total to be processed	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Completed	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Transferred out	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Withdrawn	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total Processed	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Unfinished (carried forward)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

No further statistic analysis is provided due to the fact that no applications were received and the provision of further statistics would serve no real purpose.

IMPACT OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS ON COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Council feels it provides adequate access to records and information and this is reflected in the fact that there has been no need for any FOI applications to be lodged.

While there was no direct impact to Council caused by the lodgement of any FOI application, Council remains aware of the need for compliance with the FOI Legislation and will need to be aware also when there is any potential conflict with the privacy Legislation.

PRIVACY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT 1998

The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (1998) places obligations on Government Agencies including Local Government, within New South Wales to comply with the provisions contained therein.

The Legislation is far reacting and it will take sometime to fully clarify the impact of the legislation on Local Government and then in turn the impact on individual Councils and information that has traditionally been made available to the Public.

Council has adopted both the Model Privacy Management Plan and the Mode Code of Practice for Local Government as an interim measure and will have Staff attend the necessary training seminars when scheduled to further familiarise themselves with all requirements.

Walgett Shire Council – 1999-2000 Annual Report

As at 30 June 2000, there had not been any review conducted by, or on behalf of, Council.

Council is mindful of its continued obligations under the Act and will ensure that all Staff and Elected Members are briefed on the importance of the obligations.