

2000/2001

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 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 (Alan) Friend</i>	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>(Elected September 2000)</i>
<i>Councillor PA (Prue) Hutchinson</i>	<i>Deputy Mayor</i>	<i>(Elected September 2000)</i>
<i>Councillor MP (Marg) Bow</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor RL (Robert) Greenaway</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor RG (Bob) Hewlett</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor TJ (Tim) Horan</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor WJ (Sam) Jeffries</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor DA (David) Lane</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor PL (Peter) Lang</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor CJ (Charlie) Mitchell</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor JH (Joan) Treweeke</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>
<i>Councillor PP (Peter) Waterford</i>		<i>(Elected September 1999)</i>

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

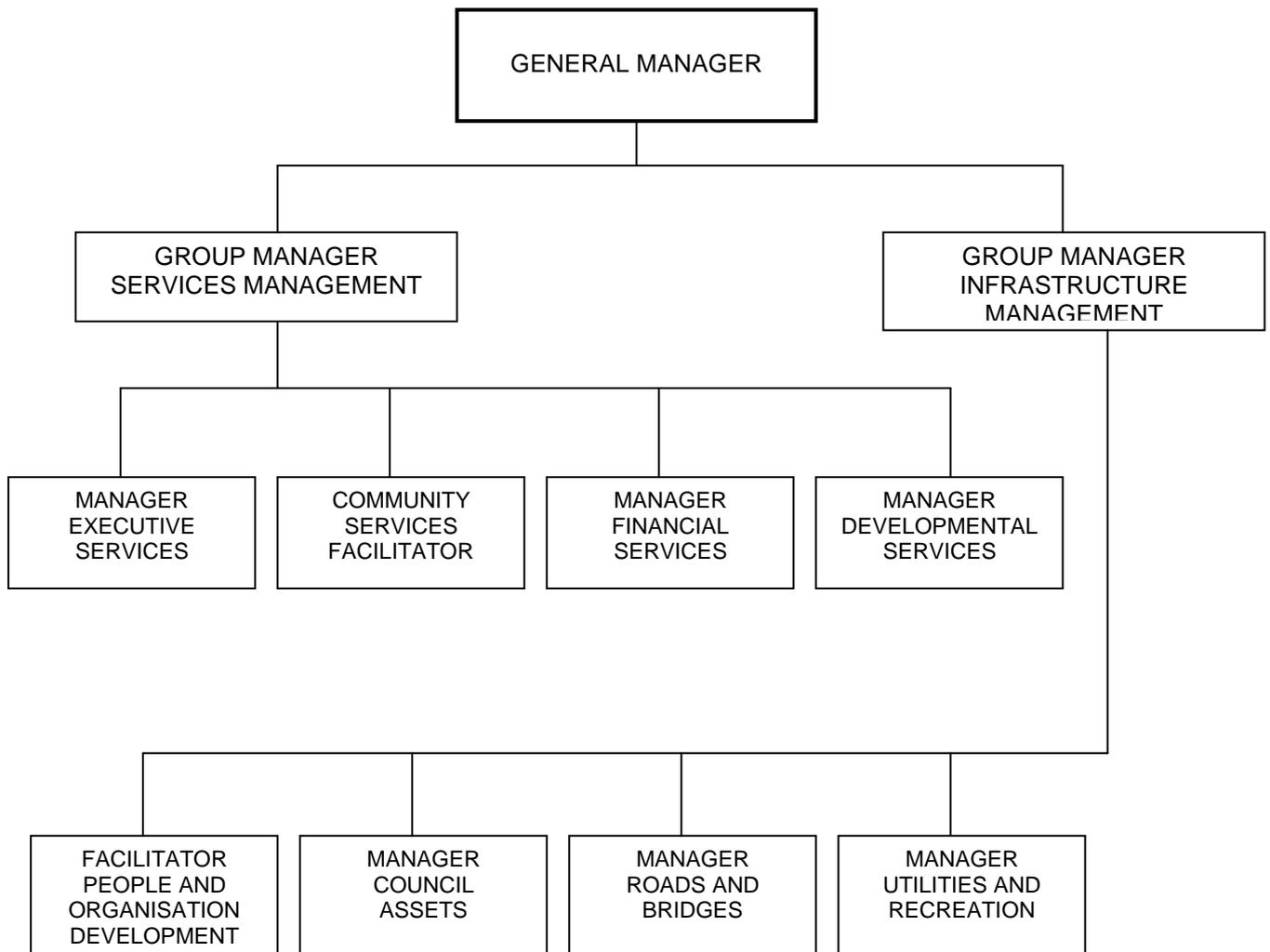
<i>Acting General Manager</i>	<i>Mr Graham Kellett</i>
<i>General Manager (from May 2001)</i>	<i>Mr Vic North</i>
<i>Acting Director of Engineering Services</i>	<i>Mr Rolly Lawford</i>
<i>Acting Director of Financial Services</i>	<i>Mr John Burden</i>
<i>Acting Director of Environmental Services</i>	<i>Mr Maurice Freixas</i>

MAYORAL REPORT

It is with pleasure that I provide the following report as part of the 2000/2001 Annual Report required under the Local Government Act 1993.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of outgoing Mayor, Peter Waterford during the twelve months to September 2001 and thank him on behalf of the Walgett community and my fellow Councillors for his support and commitment to achieving the best for Walgett Shire.

In May 2001 after undertaking a national advertising campaign, Council appointed Vic North to the position of General Manager. Vic immediately commenced the development of an organisational restructure resulting in Council agreeing to the following senior structure: -



PROPOSED NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

After discussions with three recruitment agencies Vic decided to carry out the recruitment process internally, primarily because of cost but also because of the proposed recruitment philosophy.

A CD Rom is being prepared comprising position descriptions for all ten senior positions, a detailed commentary on the challenges facing new incumbents, attractions and events within the Shire and other relevant information for intending applicants.

A nationwide advertising campaign will be undertaken to attract suitable candidates.

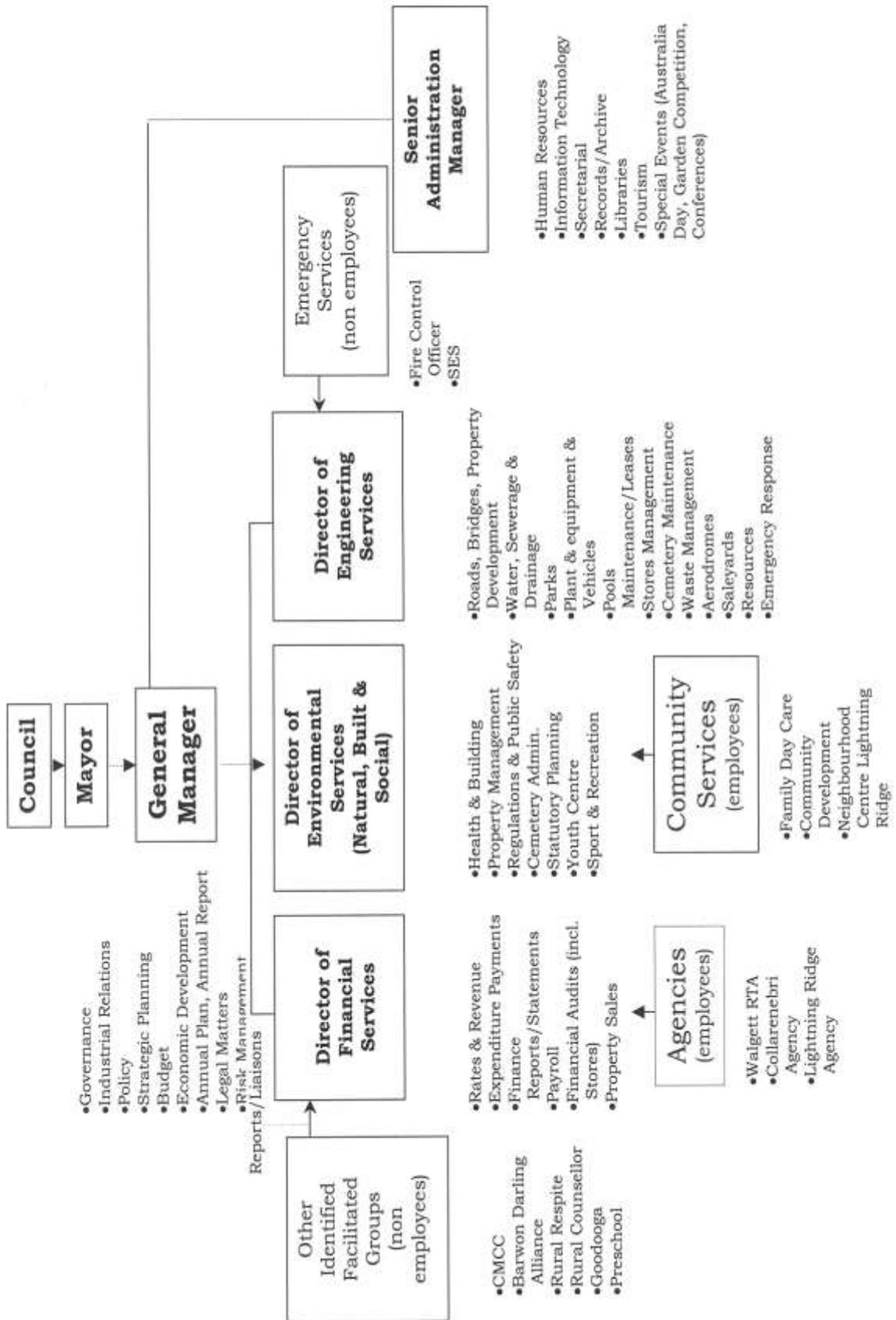
Council and the General Manager with current Acting Directors met to discuss strategic directions and priorities and commenced a program to develop a more strategic approach to infrastructure management, services provision and new initiatives.

Council continued to pursue a number of issues of interest and concern. In particular, law and order, unemployment, roads and road funding, education and other underlying social issues were high on the agenda in discussion with State Government Policy makers. Active participation in the Barwon Darling Alliance continued with a particular focus on the establishment of a Barwon Darling Credit Union as one of the main items on the Agenda.

Severe flooding that affected large areas in late 2000, resulted in significant difficulties for many landholders and businesses. Council was successful in obtaining flood damage funding. The floods created significant problems for Council and I want to extend my sincere thanks to Council Staff and Volunteers who helped during the crisis period.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support during the past twelve months and for their commitment to achieving outcomes for the health and well being of the Walgett Shire Community. It has been a real pleasure serving as Mayor of Walgett Shire Council.

Alan Friend
Mayor



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

I would like to acknowledge the previous work of General Manager, Mr Kelvin Matthews who tendered his resignation late in 2000 and the excellent groundwork provided by the Acting General Manager Graham Kellett who took over the role on Kelvin's departure and remained in place until I commenced duty in May 2001.

I would also like to recognise the friendly welcome that I received from all Councillors and Staff and particularly the support, cooperation and friendship extended by the Mayor, Alan Friend.

In the six weeks remaining in the financial year, my energies were devoted to understanding the issues prevailing across the Shire, Council's priorities and future directions and the development of a new relevant organisational structure.

The previous twelve months appears to have been significantly impacted by the instability of Senior Staff and an ongoing problem of recruiting short-term contract staff to fill these positions.

Staff morale appeared to be low and the uncertainty of Council's future directions and the proposed reorganisation played heavily on the anxiety levels of individual staff.

My initial priority was two fold, to prepare the groundwork for a new approach and to provide an early level of security and stability for staff who, despite the difficulties and uncertainty, maintained operational and service levels.

My observation is that we had a very committed and consciences Team, albeit needing better support systems and training and development opportunities.

I am confident that with the adoption of a more modern organisational structure, a planned strategic approach and the development of internal systems to support operations and service, the Council's objectives and priorities can be achieved progressively over the next few years.

Vic North
General Manager

COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REPORTS 2000/2001
LGA SECTION 428 (2) (A)

Attached to this report is a copy of Council's Financial Report for the year ending 30 June 2001. Due to a staff restructure, the commencement of a Finance Manager in November 2001 and other 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 denied.

The draft Financial Statements were completed and ready for audit on 24 February 2002, and were presented to Council at its meeting held on Monday 26 August 2002 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 2001, and is marked as **Appendix "G"**.

REPORTS AS TO THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
LGA SECTION 428 (2) (C)

Walgett Shire Council has a key role in ensuring that the quality of the environment is maintained in a number of ways, including:

1. Managing its operational activities, such as road construction and household waste disposal in an environmentally sensitive manner.
2. As a regulator by promoting community compliance with the requirements of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997.
3. Ensuring that appropriate environmental assessments are undertaken for new developments that require Council approval and that unnecessary environmental disturbance is avoided.

Each year Council is also required to produce a State of the Environment Report which provides information on the status of a range of environmental factors that include, land, air, water, biodiversity, waste, noise, Aboriginal heritage and non-Aboriginal heritage.

The Walgett Shire Council State of Environment Report has been included within this annual report as **Appendix "B"**.

As part of the process of preparing the report, information was sought from the following organisations:

- Department of Land and Water Conservation
- Walgett Rural Lands Protection Board
- Walgett Native Vegetation Committee
- Department of Mineral Resources
- Walgett Shire Pesticide and Environment Liaison Committee.

REPORTS AS TO THE CONDITION OF PUBLIC WORKS LGA SECTION 428 (2) (D)
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PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Council has a total of twenty two (22) public buildings on which an amount of \$163,208 was expended on maintenance during 2000/2001 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 \$65,980.00 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 2000/2001 Council expended an amount of \$4,445,819 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 \$245,835 on maintenance and operations for the three sewer schemes and a total of \$690,081 for the three water supply services.

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
Public Liability Claim Current Status: - Finalised	\$9,721.00
Public Liability Claims Current Status: - Still Proceeding	\$22,476.00
Native Title Legal Opinion	\$2,865.00
These amounts are rechargeable to the Debtor	\$10,997.64

**MAYORAL AND COUNCILLORS FEES AND EXPENSES
LGA SECTION 428 (2) (F)**

The following amounts were expended during the period 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001: -

Mayoral Allowance	\$9,600.00
Deputy Mayoral Allowance	\$1,500.00
Councillors Fees	\$64,800.00
Councillors Travelling & Other Expenses	\$19,804.60

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 2000 to the 30 June 2001 inclusive of Salary, Fringe Benefits, Provision of Motor Vehicle and Employer Funded Superannuation was \$136,011.52.

**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 obtaining taking into account quality, service and reliability.

During the year ended 30 June 2001, the following Contracts were awarded in excess of \$100,000: -

Supply of Road Making Material	\$153,348.00
Plant Hire	\$127,241.00
Plant Hire	\$257,382.00
Plant Hire	\$222,243.00
Waste Management Control	\$151,341.00
Plant Hire	\$176,514.00
Plant Hire/Supply Road Making Material	\$241,020.00
Plant Hire	\$139,386.00
Waste Management Control	\$111,073.00
Supply of Road Making Material	\$329,534.00
Supply of Road Making Material	\$159,651.00
Plant Hire	\$100,519.00

BUSHFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

LGA SECTION 428 (2) (I)

GENERAL

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

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

Council has acquired one (1) Category 9 Fire Tanker, which is stationed in the headquarters brigade at Walgett.

TRAINING

Nil

HAZARD REDUCTION

The 2000/2001 fire season had the potential of being a “high” fire danger period.

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 2000/2001 were: -

- (a) Thirty (30) Bush Fires –
Total area burnt approximately 260 hectares
- (b) Two (2) Structural Fires –
One with 100% damage
One with 25% damage

- (c) Four (4) Motor Vehicle Accidents-
 - Two with 100% damage
 - Two with 30% damage

SUMMARY

Due to the hazard reductions mentioned above and the co-operation of the personnel responsible, the Walgett Shire experienced a moderate 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 recognises the need for the provision of and access to appropriate services for all sections of the community within the Shire. Accordingly, Council has ensured that provision has been made for all Sections of the Community in relation to access to services.

Council is conscious of developing and promoting better understanding of the issues related to the people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who live in the Shire.

Council commissioned the preparation of a Social Plan and this was adopted by Council in October 1999 and will be updated with every significant change. This document has not required amendment in the 2000/2001 period.

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 2001.

CONTRIBUTIONS UNDER SECTION 356 LGA SECTION 428 (2) (L)

A total of \$19,656.48 was expended during 2000/2001 by way of donations and contributions.

Of this amount \$4,000.00 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. Council's contribution under Section 356 in some small way recognises this impact.

STATEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITIES 2000/2001 LGA SECTION 428 (2) (M)

SALARY SYSTEM

The arduous task of evaluating performance and skills of past employees has been completed and Council has finalised all payments due to them.

Staff appraisals have been completed and are up to date.

OH & S

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee functions well it meets regularly do discuss and review various workplace issues. The committee has set itself targets for workplace audits, which are designed to highlight specific workplace safety issues and unsafe work methods.

RECRUITMENT

Following the appointment of a new General Manager in March a plan of action has been developed to encourage applications for senior staffing positions within the Council.

These initiatives include the delivery of a CD, which highlights the many attractions, and the lifestyle of Walgett Shire.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training of staff in the new accounting software package has been underway for some time and will continue on a regular basis. Training will also take place at other Council's using the same software these include Dubbo and Moree Councils.

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Consultative Committee continues to meet regularly. Items discussed include the restructuring of the Council.

<p>A STATEMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL DURING THE YEAR TO IMPLEMENT ITS EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT PLAN LGA SECTION 428 (2) (N)</p>
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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"**.

<p>STATEMENT OF ALL EXTERNAL BODIES THAT EXERCISE FUNCTIONS DELEGATED BY COUNCIL LGA SECTION 428 (2) (O)</p>
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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.

<p>STATEMENT OF COMPANIES IN WHICH COUNCIL HOLD A CONTROLLING INTEREST LGA SECTION 428 (2) (P)</p>
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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) (q)

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) Yallaroi 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) Yallaroi Shire Council
- (vii) Inverell 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 unto 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) Bourke Shire Council
- (iv) Coonamble Shire Council
- (v) Central Darling Shire Council
- (vi) 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 in 2000/2001.

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

Vacation Care is provided for school age children for two weeks in each school holiday period in the communities of Lightning Ridge, Collarenebri and Grawin. Vacation Care in Walgett is provided through the Aboriginal Medical Service for one week in each school holiday period.

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 makes the task of organising and co-coordinating services and facilities in these 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 provided 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 as **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
- recognise and promote people’s rights and improve the accountability if decision makers
- ensure that people have equitable and fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basis needs to improve their quality of life

- provide access to give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives
- provide opportunities for people to participate and access community consultation in decisions affecting their lives and their communities

<p>NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY LGR SECTION 31 (D) (II-IX)</p>

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.

RATES AND CHARGES WRITTEN OFF

LGR SECTION (RATES AND CHARGES) REGULATION CLAUSE 15

Pensioners Rates (Section 583)	\$132,990.03
Rates Debt Write Off 1-1055-70	\$21,184.87
Small Debts	\$137.29
	\$154,312.19

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	2000/2001			1999/2000		
	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 reaching 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 Model 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.

As at 30 June 2001, 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.