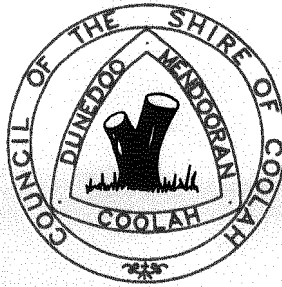


COOLAH SHIRE COUNCIL



INCORPORATED 1906

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0045, cn:h/standing committee economics.doc
Paul Muldoon

PM:CN

28th August, 2002

Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Economics
Finance and Public Administration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

House of representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration
Submission No: <u>270</u>
Date Received:
Secretary:

Dear Sir

Cost Shifting to Local Government

I refer to Council's previous letter of 2nd August, 2002. Whilst I understand the period for submissions has closed, one further small example of cost shifting has come to light. This is the cost of disposal of Sharps (needles) previously seen as a State Health issue.

A copy of a recent report to Council, which is enclosed, explains the issue.

Yours faithfully

Paul Muldoon
General Manager

SECTION D - MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SERVICES

1.	SUBJECT REASON OBJECTIVE	SHARPS DISPOSAL STRATEGY, file 0042 To mitigate risk to public health To adopt and implement a sharps disposal strategy
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INTRODUCTION

An article printed in the Coolah District Diary, dated 1st July 2002, contained the following statement from HSM Robyn Ringwood, 'I would like to request that people do not bring their domestic Sharps to the hospital....instead they can be taken to the local Council for processing'. Resulting from this exposure has been a series of inquiries from the community as to Council's protocol pertaining to the appropriate procedures for the disposal of Sharps. There is currently no Sharps disposal strategy in effect in Coolah Shire.

What are 'Sharps'? Any object capable of inflicting penetrating injury eg needles, needle/syringe combinations, lancets and any other sharp object or instruments capable of inflicting penetrating injury.

Who uses Sharps? Users of syringes within the community can be divided into two categories;

1. Medical users - Medical users have been identified as those people that use syringes as required by a medical condition, such as diabetes, haemophilia and renal failure.
2. Recreational users - Recreational users are defined as injecting drug users (IDU's).

It is not known at this point in time as to the number of users nor the frequency of use of Sharps within the community.

Why should Council get involved? Local Councils have responsibility for the maintenance of public health and safety in public places and to provide domestic waste management services. The existing landfill sites within the Shire are not licensed with the EPA and thus cannot responsibly accept clinical waste, which includes Sharps. It can be expected that a number of the used units are currently finding their way into the domestic waste stream due to the lack of alternative means of responsible disposal. This possibly poses a perceived public health risk to those contracted to collect domestic waste and those that access the landfill sites. The nature of this waste has to be regarded as potentially contaminated with communicable diseases such as AIDS, Hepatitis 'A', 'B' & 'C', and needs to be handled as such, with due caution.

What can Council do? Council can provide an alternative, responsible disposal service that would be accessible to the mainstream community without direct cost to the user. Currently, Macquarie Health utilise the services of a licensed contractor who provides appropriate disposal bins and a periodic collection service to the hospitals within the area of it's authority. The bins come in a range of sizes and are designed for 'full containment', minimising potential contamination. The pick-up/disposal service operates on a cyclic six (6) week period at both Dunedoo and Coolah Base Hospitals.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT TO THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COOLAH SHIRE COUNCIL, HELD 15th AUGUST, 2002.

SECTION D - MANAGER ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SERVICES

Arrangements can be made for a similar service to be run 'piggy-back' on the existing runs. It is envisioned that a disposal bin will be provided both at the Coolah Pharmacy in Binnia Street and the Dunedoo Pharmacy in Bolaro Street. This will allow for a discrete service with equitable community access during retail hours. As the pharmacy is generally the source of the sharps to be so disposed, it would certainly be the ideal location to facilitate said disposal process. Proprietors of both establishments have been approached with the proposed strategy and have agreed to act as receiving agents for disposable syringes.

This service would be introduced concurrent with press releases announcing the inauguration of the service and the proviso stressed that Sharps will only be accepted enclosed within appropriate 'fit' containers or other puncture resistant receptacles. This will allow for the safe handling of receivables by the pharmacy staff without exceptional occupational, health and safety concerns or specialised training requirements. This particular service would be free to the public, however it will not be available to health professionals or other commercial generators of clinical and related wastes.

Advantages

- (a) Reduce the risk of contamination and infection to the community and,
- (b) Minimise pollution of our environment by such waste.

Disadvantages

Council to fund cost of service.

Estimated Cost

Negotiations have been entered into with the contractor, Nuplex, currently servicing Macquarie Health and a quote has been provided as follows;

2 x 50 Lt bins \$nil per bin

Pick-up service \$10 per service plus GST

Disposal \$1.85 per kilo plus GST

Based on two pick-ups on a six-week cycle (8-9 services per annum), it is estimated that the annual cost incurred would be a maximum of \$180. Disposal charges are more difficult to estimate as they are based on weight of receivables - which is an unknown variable. It is understood that pick-up/disposal can be delayed until the bins are full or at the discretion of Council. This would provide a further saving on fixed costs.

Source of Funds

A budget review item.

Alternatives

Do nothing and accept the implied responsibility of the status quo.

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