

EFFICIENCY FOCUS IN NORTHERN AREA SERVICE PLAN

The Mid Murray Council will discontinue its Northern Area Ranger at the end of July in favour of a more efficient service delivery model.

Figures show the role, in its current state, is not the most effective way to meet the needs of the Council's northern townships - including Morgan, Cadell, Blanchetown and nearby shack communities.

The Council decided in August 2018 to employ a ranger to patrol the area and respond to community complaints between Friday and Monday each week. But there were no suitable applicants, so Council instead chose to extend the existing contractor's term for six months to deliver the work.

A six-month log of the contractor's activities in the area showed that almost 85% of their time was spent patrolling, with no definitive service provision or tangible benefit to the community (with the remaining 15% on general enquiries and customer service requests). Further, of all the activities undertaken during this period, almost half were related to issues outside of the northern area.

Mayor Dave Burgess said these figures deemed the current Northern Area Ranger service ineffective and Council would look to replace it with a different model.

"Council is committed to ensuring all areas of our district are adequately serviced, but this review shows that the Northern Area Ranger model is not the most efficient one for this area," he says.

"Figures clearly show there is no demonstrated need for the Northern Areas position, so Council will be looking at other options to meet the needs of this part of our district.

"The community has told us it wants Council to be more efficient and this is an example of us responding proactively to ensure our residents can still access essential services, but in a more sustainable way."

Development and Environmental Services Director Jake McVicar said the Council will now review its regulatory services area to determine the necessary level of resourcing required and how that is provided.

"We will be looking closely at what is needed to ensure we have adequate resources in all areas of our district throughout the year, including at peak times, to meet the expectations of both the Council and the community into the future," Mr McVicar says.

"One of the key findings of the data collected was that adequate staffing levels are needed during peak times, such as fire danger season, rather than a blanket approach in a specific geographic area covering each weekend Friday to Monday inclusive.

"As a result, we will now focus on ensuring there are enough staff working across those peak times to meet community demand."

The Council will use a contractor (already budgeted for in 2019/20) on a casual basis to meet this need. It will also consider how it provides a weekend and after-hours service to the community, and whether this is still required.

“There are increasing demands placed on our regulatory services staff by the growing requirements of different State Government legislation such as dog and cat management, nuisance issues and litter control,” Mr McVicar says.

“This means we need to take a close look at how we operate to ensure we are making the best use of our staff resources and maximising the efficiency of our operations.”

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