



**CASE STUDY OF THE
WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMUNITY
PANEL (CITIZENS' JURY) PROCESS**

Max Hardy
Twyford Consulting

and

Sandra Ruecroft
Wollondilly Shire Council

1st Floor 156 Keira Street
WOLLONGONG NSW 2500
Postal address:
M C Box 6004
SOUTH COAST MAIL CENTRE NSW 2521
Telephone: (02) 4226 4040
Fax: (02) 4226 4042
Email: twyford@twyford.com.au

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1. PREFACE

This case study describes the use of a revised citizens' jury model as a method of consultation to assist a local council prepare a social plan. It has been written by both the consultant, and the client representative, to offer a range of perspectives.

The limited literature available on the use of citizens' juries suggests that an appropriately run citizens' jury will cost no less than A\$50,000 (1998). The case study which follows describes some of the challenges, achievements and issues arising from using a modified jury process, necessitated by the limited resources of council. It is difficult to quantify how much the Wollondilly Shire project cost. Although the consultancy fees were less than one fifth the cost of the minimum amount recommended, considerable effort and paper was expended by Council. It took a real team effort to organise and manage the event in such a short period of time.

The **introduction**, section 2, describes the scenario of Wollondilly Council being required to produce a social plan as per the requirements of the Department of Local Government (DoLG - a state government department). It includes an overview of the political backdrop, the definition and purpose of a social plan as defined by DoLG and key demographic characteristics of the Shire.

Section three discusses the particular challenges in the **planning** stage facing the Manager Community Services to gain internal understanding and support for the citizens' jury approach, and the need to work with the consultant to find ways of adapting the model to alleviate concerns expressed by Council.

In section 4 we describe the **procedures** we used to implement the model, and relate some of the discoveries along the way. The need for a more thorough and independent review of the process is indicated.

Finally we list a number of points that represent the **key lessons**, findings, learnings and matters worthy of more thought in regard to this consultation tool.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Political background

The 1996 NSW Social Justice Directions Statement “Fair Go, Fair Share, Fair Say” committed the State Government and the Department of Local Government to promoting a more inclusive community by ensuring that government services are responsive to community need and diversity.

The Local Government (General) Amendment (Community and Social Plans) Regulation 1998 has been introduced to help meet this commitment and is specifically designed to achieve three key objectives:

1. *To improve Councils' ability to take into account the range of needs within their communities when they are formulating their management plans.*
2. *To assist Councils to provide or advocate for appropriate and accessible services and facilities for the benefit of their communities.*
3. *To increase the community's ability to monitor Council's efforts to address the needs of the local community over time.*

The regulation is also designed to assist Councils to:

- *promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need*
- *recognise 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 and improving their quality of life*
- *give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.*

2.2. The Importance of Social/Community Planning for Councils

A social/community plan is an important management tool which help Councils to:

- *Develop an understanding of the needs of their communities including those more disadvantaged members.*
- *Identify appropriate strategies to respond to those needs.*
- *Identify the services, facilities and processes needed to address the community's needs.*
- *Identify which services Council should have a role in funding or providing.*
- *Advocate for those services that need to be provided by other government agencies, the private sector or community organisations.*
- *Monitor changes in community needs and the extent to which existing services and models meet these needs.*

- *Provide improved facilities, services and regulatory activities that are more sensitive and appropriately targeted.*
- *Achieve a more coherent service system by working cooperatively with other government agencies, the private sector and community groups on service planning.*
- *Address quality of life issues to benefit the whole community.*

2.3. What is a Social/Community Plan

A social/community plan describes the local community, summaries the key issues facing this community, and formulates recommended strategies which Council and/or other agencies could implement to address identified needs.

Most social/community plans incorporate a community profile, some needs statements, and a set of strategies and action plans based on broad community concerns. They also usually focus attention on the particular needs of certain disadvantaged groups in the community that may not always have their needs heard, understood or met.

2.4. How Does a Social/Community Plan Link in with Other Council Activities?

A social/community plan is a good starting point for Councils and the community to gain a strategic overview of their local area and the broad range of key issues facing it. The information and strategies identified in the plan can help Councils develop their management plans, business unit/service plans, equal employment opportunity plans, environmental plans, section 94 community facilities contribution plans and residential development strategies.

Councils may also have other specialised planning documents, such as cultural and recreational plans or local economic development plans, that examine particular themes in more detail. These specialised plans can also inform the content of the social/community plan and vice-versa.

2.5. Legislation that Councils are required to address through the Social Planning Process

The NSW Government defines its requirements through:

- *Local Government Act 1993 regulations for social / community planning*
- *“Fair Go, Fair Share, Fair Say” Social Justice Statement*
- *NSW Healthy Ageing Framework 1990-2003*
- *Social Planning Potential Issues and Priorities report*
- *NSW Disability Policy Framework*
- *NSW Government Action Plan for Women*
- *NSW Government White Paper ‘Building on our Cultural Diversity’*
- *Amendments to the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act*
- *Resource Book for Chief Executive Officers & Senior Managers – Ethnic Affairs Commission*
- *NSW Youth Policy*
- *NSW Government’s Statement of Commitment – Aboriginal residents.*

A Social Plan Guideline and Manual was produced to define the NSW Government prescriptions. Critical to these guidelines is the requirement that the outcomes must be linked to Council's subsequent Business Plan, potentially exposing the Council's annual and long term planning to external, uncontained priorities, without any resourcing.

In the current economic climate, local government is moving rapidly toward a corporatised operating model, based on economic outcomes, output-based budgeting, purchaser-provider structures and smaller expenditure. In contrast, increasing pressures are being placed on local government to subsidise State & Commonwealth services such as community safety, post hospital services, aged care and environmental management.

The move to greater public participation in social planning within the current political and corporate environment raises substantial challenges for that participation process at the local level. While the community may be enthusiastic and supportive of a more effective participation model, the client faces the diverging pressures of smaller government and increased demand that the process will create.

One important influence on the process of the consultation was because the social planning requirement was an externally imposed process on Council. Ownership of the whole project by the Council was not high and it was therefore without a 'champion' in the organisation's consciousness. Understanding of, and confidence in the process by the organisation was less than desirable to facilitate the consultation. Timetables were frequently adjusted, delayed and even left unresolved as corporate decisions and approval were obtained.

2.6. Demographic Information for Wollondilly Shire

Wollondilly Local Government Area is located 75 kilometres south west of the Sydney CBD. The LGA has an area of 2560.9km² with 727 hectares of local open spaces and reserves managed by Council. More than half of the LGA comprises national parks and sensitive water catchment lands. All of the settled areas of the Shire are located east of Sydney's major water supply source, Lake Burragarang. There are 675 kms of sealed roads and 125kms of unsealed roads in the Shire and major industries are coal mining, dairying, orchards and poultry.

Wollondilly Shire has an estimated resident population of 35,489 (1998 ABS) residing in 16 small towns and villages within a rural setting. The largest town is Tahmoor with a population of 4,400. The average annual growth rate for the 1991 to 1996 period was 2% and is expected to be 1.4% for the 25 year period from 1996, resulting in a total population in 2021 of 48,400. This sustained growth is a combination of a net positive migration (more people moving into the Shire than leaving) and natural birth rate.

Indigenous residents constitute at least 1.4% of the community and residents of non-English speaking birthplace comprise 3.7% of the resident population. The most common non-English languages spoken are Italian, German, Maltese, Croatian and Arabic and 5.3% of residents use a language other than English at home.

The stability of the Wollondilly community is indicated by the significantly high level of dwellings that are fully owned by the residents (38.8%), and also that 55.5% of residents were at the same address 5 years prior to the 1996 Census. Only 14% of dwellings are rental properties, verifying the market experience of an inadequacy of supply of rental properties, particularly in the towns with closer proximity to neighbouring employment areas.

There were 10,782 occupied private dwellings in the Shire at the time of the 1996 Census, of which 92% were separate houses, 2.1% were semi-detached residences, 1.5% were flats or units and 2.8% were caravans, cabins, accommodation attached to a business or an improvised. The occupancy rate for the Shire overall is 3.02 people per dwelling.

The level of self-care accommodation for retired and older people is almost equal to the NSW average however supported accommodation options are inadequate to meet demand. Public housing stock is significantly under supplied and currently has a 20 year waiting list. There are no plans to provide additional stock in Wollondilly.

Employment rates are generally higher than the region or state however the unemployment level for 15 – 24 year olds is 13%.

Major industries of employment are manufacturing, retail and construction for males and retail, health/community service and education for females.

Whilst more people are working from home, 64% of workers travel outside the Shire to employment in Campbelltown, Camden, Liverpool and other areas. This results in 60 % of dwellings having 2 or more cars to meet the commuting requirements for work, education and family business reasons.

Household incomes are generally comparable to Campbelltown incomes and 28% of households earned less than \$26,000 per annum in 1996. (ABS Census 1996). Household expenditure on every C.P.I. commodity is higher than for N.S.W., and particularly for housing, food, furniture, health care, transport and recreation. Expenditure on furniture, health care and transport by Wollondilly residents is significantly greater than for Campbelltown.

More Wollondilly home buyers (45.5%) are paying middle to upper levels of monthly housing loan repayments (\$800-\$1,399) than purchasers in NSW (38.4%) Rent levels however are at the lower range with 88.9% of rents being below \$200 (1996) .

Families and children are a strong feature in Wollondilly with 83.5% of households being a family, which is above the NSW average of 73.3% . One parent families are 13.9% of households and lone person households are 13.2% of the total.

Wollondilly has higher percentages of children than both NSW and South West Sydney, with a particularly high representation in the 5 – 11 year old group. Young adults are significantly under represented in Wollondilly with 18 – 24 year olds making up only 8.8% of total. This is significantly less than proportions in the populations of the Macarthur region, South West Sydney and NSW and is likely to be caused by the lack of local opportunities for further education and employment, coupled with the cost of commuting from Wollondilly to those opportunities elsewhere.

2.7. Wollondilly Shire Council

Wollondilly Council is a typical metropolitan fringe local government organisation with a predominance of independent elected members operating in loose and changeable coalitions, depending on the issues under debate. Council maintains a more rural approach to local government responsibilities, aspiring to minimise direct service delivery as a responsibility of other levels of government.

Public forums or working parties of community residents for specific issues is becoming an increasingly popular consultation model although these generally operate without additional resourcing for either functioning or outcome purposes. Issues of residential growth into

agricultural areas and environmental protection are significant. Council's income base is low, service and facility provision levels are unable to keep pace with population growth and demand for quality of life / environment initiatives by the community is substantial.

Total Council Budget	\$2.6million
Average rate per residential assessment	\$500
% Income source from rates	47%
Total staff	180
Council staff per 1,000 total population	5.2
Community Services costs per capita	\$27.88
Legal costs as % of Planning & Regulatory costs	10.32%

In this corporate environment, there is a substantial perceived risk of uncontrolled 'wish listing' coming from a consultation process that is new, that is externally imposed and that comes with major legislative imperatives.

The Client : Council's Manager of Community Services was the client representative for the social planning consultation project. Prior consultation experiences to determine human services needs have been of mixed success due to such constraints as:

- *inadequate comprehensive background information for decision-making,*
- *inadequate representation of the diversity of the community,*
- *consultation processes overly or solely dependent on public meetings and written responses,*
- *insufficient accountability to participants and the community for the post-consultation use of the outcomes,*
- *pre-set, private agendas for the outcomes because of organisational priorities.*

Requirements for this consultation were:

- *Comprehensiveness,*
- *durability of outcomes (not snapshot),*
- *legitimacy, needs/wants balance,*
- *adequacy of target representation & voice,*
- *comparability against benchmarking for regional planning,*
- *cost containment,*
- *flexibility of time, outcome & process to meet local government realities.*

3. PLANNING

3.1. Background to 'the Panel'

The citizens' jury process was accepted as a more effective approach to valid consultation that would produce social plan priorities within the legislative and Council parameters.

Organisational concern was expressed at the word, 'jury'. It was felt that this may suggest an ability of the jury to determine Council's resource allocations. To address this concern the process was renamed a 'community panel'. Throughout this paper, however the terms 'panel' and 'jury' are used interchangeably.

Community consultation and participation is more active at the local government level than at any other and this Council relies on the active and willing participation of residents in a range of programmes, services, consultations and working parties. The payment of sitting fees was a concern of the organisation because of the precedence that it may have set. A resolution was not achieved between the tension of:

- *allowing jury participation by compensating the costs of working residents and,*
- *not setting a fee-for-consultation precedence.*

The result was the payment of costs incurred such as travel & child care for participants. This proved to be only partly effective.

Accessibility of consultation venue, process and information was a challenge for this project. Physical access requirements were addressed by moving the meeting place of the jury for part of the proceedings. Other facilities such as interpreters, translations, hearing loops and support assistants were not requested and could have presented a major logistical challenge to the organisation. This issue highlights the many important resourcing requirements that are unavailable to small organisations and yet very important for the effective conduct of a citizens' jury.

The purpose of this citizens' jury was to fairly represent disadvantaged individuals and groups with less access to community resources. Representation of those communities on the jury was seen as a positive component of the process as an affirmative action. This was only partly achieved (see Jury Selection in next section of paper).

3.2. COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Communication with the community is an ongoing challenge for the client because of the inadequacy of available media. There is no radio station, no daily newspaper, no paper that covers the whole area, a Council newsletter with only a monthly distribution to letterboxes, and no major shopping centre.

This public communication environment had a major impact on the timetable of the process as a much longer public notification time is required. Also, more targeted communication was necessary such as individual letters, addresses to inter-agencies and phone calls to key community members.

In this environment it is also much more challenging to present a professional, legitimate, reliable image of the process to the public, as the 'grape vine' and word of mouth is an essential part of the channel.

4. THE PROCEDURES

4.1. JURY SELECTION

The relatively tight timeframe and budget available presented a challenge in the selection of jury (panel) members. The Jefferson Centre asserts that:

A citizens' jury is designed to be a microcosm of the population covered by the project. Jurors need to be chosen ... so that the final jury looks like a small version of that population in all important ways¹

An important principle is that any person in the community has an equal chance of participating in the jury. The other principle is that of developing a quota; an attempt to ensure that the jury is representative of the broader community from which the jury is drawn. In the United Kingdom, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) conducted a series of pilot citizens juries and believed that the following methods (based on work done previously by the Jefferson Centre) to be the most effective for balancing 'randomness' and ensuring representation of the demographic characteristics of the community.

- *Relevant population is drawn up containing a breakdown of demographic characteristics such as social class, age, and ethnicity*
- *Either of the following recruiting methods:*
 - *Face to face recruitment: recruiters match the profile through a combination of door-to-door visiting and approaching people in the street until a group approximating the planned quota is achieved.*
 - *Through the post: letters are sent out to a proportion of the local population, randomly selected, normally from the electoral register. They reply with demographic information about themselves. The jury is then selected to fit the profile (quota)*
 - *Through a telephone survey: as in postal recruitment but recruiters telephone a random selection of the population.*

Overall IPPR found the second method to be the most cost effective and reducing self selection to participate as a juror. Our challenge was that, unlike IPPR or the Jefferson Centre, we did not have the capacity to pay for jurors to sit for three days. Overseas, up to A\$100 is paid for jurors daily for their involvement. After considerable discussion the following method was used to recruit for the Wollondilly Social Planning Panel.

- *Firstly, advertisements in the Bush Telegraph (Council newsletter) and local papers were lodged inviting interested persons to participate either as a juror (panel member) or a presenter to the jury was issued (see attached)*
- *Interested residents phoned to receive an information kit which included background information, details on citizens' jury processes, and the issues to be addressed. The independent consultant was the contact person.*
- *Applications were sent to the consultant for assessment. Jurors were selected on the basis of demographic data and expressed attitudes, including interest in, the panel.²*

¹ Jefferson Handbook :Citizens Jury Handbook (1997) p5-1

Some residents who expressed interest in being jurors were encouraged to apply to be presenters in order to give them more freedom to advocate for particular needs groups or particular issues. The final composition, unsurprisingly, were not representative of the community. Applicants tended to be older people, or people who could be flexible with their time commitments, and were relatively close to the town of Picton. They were also people who were already more active in their communities than the 'average' resident, although two participants had never previously been involved in any kind of reference/advisory/ stakeholder group.

Although the recruitment method was a departure from usual practice (and it is acknowledged that this process reflected a pragmatic compromise) the process was undertaken independently of the commissioning body, Council. According to IPPR:

Questions may be raised about the merits of the different recruitment methods, but the separation of this function from the commissioning body has proved vital in building the credibility of the jury process.³

One of the dilemmas we confronted was that of how to involve the aboriginal communities in the process. We set out to actively ATSI representatives – however this proved to be complex. At one point an aboriginal woman had expressed interest in being a juror, and was selected, however she later withdrew. Finding representatives of the Aboriginal community was not easy, and for representatives to be endorsed by their respective communities they required greater lead time than we could offer. The prospect then of ATSI presenters giving evidence to a predominantly anglo-celtic panel, who would give a verdict about ATSI issues seemed highly inappropriate. In the end we ran out of time to be appropriately inclusive.

Random sampling here has its limitations, as the aboriginal communities would have to be satisfied that an ATSI juror was not biased toward any particular community. It would need to be politically acceptable to all groups for ASTI presenters to feel comfortable about the process.

This issue has been encountered in other parts of the world. Research revealed that:

'(Special interest groups) were concerned about the impact of citizens' juries, which emphasises a cross-section of the public taking majority decisions and about the dangers of marginalising minorities and special interest groups who already felt excluded.'⁴

IPPR recommended, in consultation with such groups that citizens' juries should be a vehicle for involving the public and can be used to help identify groups who need consulting specifically. The Wollondilly Social Planning Panel confirmed the need for this type of approach.

² IPPR (1998) Making Better Decisions, p11

³ IPPR (1997) Theory into Practice, p 71

⁴ IPPR (1998) Making Better Decisions, p15

4.2. SETTING THE AGENDA

The Jefferson Centre put forward the view that the goal of the Citizens' Jury is 'to inform and educate the jurors, a microcosm of the public, to enable them to reach wise and thoughtful conclusions ...'⁵ Research into jurors experience overseas suggest that excessive statistics and technical details tended to obscure the main messages and made the process of deliberation somewhat overwhelming. Being on a jury is hard work.

We decided to thoroughly plan the agenda and prepare presenters and jurors in advance of the hearing days. Presenters were asked to prepare handouts with their main points/messages made very clearly, and to ensure they address the key questions. For the purpose of the Wollondilly Social Planning Jury the presenters were briefed as follows:

Presenters have been allocated between 45 minutes and one hour – for both a presentation and time to respond to questions from the Community Panel and/or the Facilitator. It is important for presenters to:

Address the following key questions

- *What needs are you aware of in the Wollondilly Shire? How are you aware of these needs? (e.g., research, personal experience, service records)*
- *With regard to your area of interest what issues/needs are you unclear about? (i.e., about what sorts of issues is there insufficient information, in your view)*
- *What is presently being done, to your knowledge, to respond to this issue/ concern/ need? What is good/not so good about these efforts?*
- *How might these issues be responded to more adequately and appropriately?*
- *What do you see as Council's role, if any, in helping to address your areas of concern?*
- *What other agencies/govt. departments/community groups could help to resolve/respond to these issues?*

Leave plenty of time for questions (at least half your allotted time)

You may use visual aids to add to your presentation (overhead projector will be available, and whiteboard)

If you work in the local area use a story or two to highlight your key points – stories are easier to recall than lots of data/statistics

If presenting data/reports try to send to Sandra Ruecroft by 10 June for early distribution to panel members (otherwise bring with you)

Please bring a one page summary of your main points, including your name, the organisation/association/govt department you represent, and contact details for 25 June.

You may be contacted by a delegate of the Community Panel to clarify a point you made in your presentation, or obtain some additional information if required, and available. This is likely to occur 25 June on the Panel's deliberation day.

⁵ Jeffers Handbook :Citizens Jury Handbook (1997) p6-2

Jurors were briefed as follows:

Panel members will be asked to make notes, although proceedings will be taped. Booklets will be provided to assist with this task. Pre-reading will be distributed if available – otherwise it will be handed to you on Tuesday, 15 June.

Mid way through the presenter's allotted time the facilitator, Max Hardy, will invite Panel members to ask questions. In order to allow all members an opportunity it will be important to confine questions to one person each, and only if time permits will additional questions be invited.

The overall task is quite challenging. The following key questions will need to be addressed by the Panel. It will be YOUR report and where differences exist these will be acknowledged in your report. The questions to be addressed are as follows:

- *Based on the evidence/information presented, which residents/communities in the Wollondilly Shire do you believe are the most disadvantaged?*
- *What should be Council's main priorities for improving the quality of life of disadvantaged groups/whole community?*
- *How might this improved quality of life be achieved?*
- *What can Council specifically do to assist? What other agencies/departments/organisations may be able to assist council?*
- *Overall, how might the Wollondilly Shire improve quality of life for all residents*

Following the two days of hearing from presenters there will be a deliberation day. On this day the facilitator will be helping the panel to:

- *Answer the above questions as a group*
- *Clarify points made during presentations*
- *Begin drafting the report (the facilitator will finalise the report which will then be provided to panel members for feedback/sign-off before being presented to Council)*

Developing a 'charge' or question for the jury was something that required considerable thought. Research from IPPR suggests that jurors can deliberate effectively over complex questions, but there are risks attached to having too many questions. The following quote from a juror reflects this:

'I think one of the problems is that when you think of a jury, you think of the jury having to decide if someone is guilty or not guilty. In fact what we are having to decide is about 500 different things ... it made it a bit confusing'⁶

We were conscious that we, too, were asking lots of questions – yet to overly simplify the questions was to deny the jury the chance of offering their views on priorities and strategies for Council in line with the requirements of the Department of Local Government. In the end we decided to be ambitious and present a range of questions. This had the effect of turning the

⁶ IPPR (1997) Theory into Practice, p 75

deliberation day into a planning day – where priorities were identified Council's potential role for addressing those priorities were explored.

Identifying appropriate expert presenters (witnesses) was a challenge as well, one that fell to Council. Whereas the consultant focussed on recruiting the panel, Council recruited presenters. A very useful range of presenters were identified, and many very busy people volunteered their time. Many expressed great curiosity about the process and clearly went to a lot of trouble preparing handouts and presentations. Presenters were mostly drawn from:

- Current and previous professionals working in the area, including:
 - Case workers
 - Health planners
 - Service providers (youth workers, family support co-ordinators)
- Consumers of services
- Planners of State Government departments

4.3. HEARING DAYS

The program for presenters (ie, the hearings) can be found attached. The hearings mostly took place at a conference room at the Picton Library, although we moved to Council's administration building for a hearing involving a person with a disability. The panel were joined by the Manager, Community Services and for some of the time, Council's Strategic Planner. The facilitator, the independent consultant, served as timekeeper and attempted to ensure that panel members each had the opportunity to ask a question of each presenter.

Prior to the presentations being made the facilitator invited panel members to introduce themselves and then proceeded to brief the panel about their role. Emphasis was made about the final report to Council being one that they sign off on. This was welcomed and members acknowledged that this was quite different from other processes in which they had been involved.

Although 45 minutes was allocated for most presenters the hearings tended to go overtime. Feedback from panel members suggested that a balance of 'easy to understand' data and anecdotes was the most helpful for retaining key messages and note taking. Most presenters brought along summaries, which also proved to be useful later on just prior to deliberations.

The least helpful presentations, and there was only really one that the panel found unhelpful, relied on complicated data with little relationship to the task given to the panel.

The most innovative response was from a youth development worker who was invited to bring along a young person to speak directly to the panel. Instead she recorded conversations she had with two youth groups – about ways that Council could provide for the needs of young people in the Shire. When played to the panel it was influential in softening perceptions of youth in the area – the panel even suggested that it should be played to Councillors for their consideration!

We learnt that the preparation time was well spent. The frameworks given to the presenters and the panel members meant that time was generally well used – and notes were relatively easier to reflect upon later. Additional space for note-taking and perhaps a loose leaf folder may have been helpful for the panel members to file papers which accompanied the presentations. Another issue which emerged was the inclination of some panel members to make lengthy statements about their perspectives and not frame questions for presenters. This was discussed after the first day and members exercised more self-control on the second day of the hearings.

4.4. DELIBERATION DAY

The deliberation day commenced with each panel member giving a brief presentation about:

- *What they had learnt from the presentations*
- *What gaps they identified, and whether they had additional information that might help fill those gaps*
- *What they perceived to be the main priorities for the Shire*
- *What role they believed Council could play in responding to these needs*

Most panel members prepared in excess of expectations. As the time for actual 'deliberating' was shrinking the facilitator attempted to move members efficiently through their presentations – not surprisingly this was met with some disappointment by at least one member who would have liked to read through the many pages of work he had prepared. Instead he handed these in, and referred to the main points later in the deliberating process.

Consistent with overseas research the deliberation day had a sense of urgency and arriving at the agreed priorities proved to be somewhat hectic. Nevertheless panel members made a great deal of progress in a consensual manner. From observation no individual appeared to dominated the process – and no vote was required over any issue.

Priorities and strategies were recorded on a whiteboard and the panel requested the facilitator to prepare a draft report on their behalf. Two drafts of the report were prepared before all panel members signed off on the final report.

One of the interesting developments during the deliberations was the suggestion by a juror for their report to made publicly available for other people in the community to make comment on. They were aware that they were a small group making recommendations to Council as a 'microcosm' of the community. The whole panel endorsed the suggestion and this will now occur prior to the report being presented to Councillors. They also made recommendations concerning how progress against their recommendations might be monitored and reviewed. Their commitment to the jury process being part of a broader consultation process (as opposed to 'the' process) was seen as an indication of the thoughtful manner in which the jurors approached their task.

4.5. EVALUATION

An evaluation of the process is yet to be undertaken, although jurors at the conclusion of day 1 completed feedback forms. They suggested that people found the process extremely interesting and informative. The main area for improvement related to ensuring that presenters stuck to the framework suggested and that attempts be made to reduce duplication of material. Also more time for discussion was suggested – 'One hour for each presenter would have been preferable'.

Although comments from jurors and presenters have been, on the whole, extremely positive an independent evaluation following Council's response to the plan would be timely and very useful for assessing the merit of this model of consultation.

5. LESSONS LEARNED/ THINGS TO PONDER

The following points represent the key learning and issues arising from this process – both for the client, Wollondilly Council, and the consultancy firm, Twyford Consulting.

- *Greater lead time for ATSI groups is essential for finding helpful ways to involve their community members to participate in any meaningful consultation process*
- *More efforts toward a random selection of jurors would add credibility to the process – but will be difficult to achieve unless funds can be made available to pay jurors for their attendance*
- *Despite being presented with a great deal of information, jurors demonstrated their capacity to absorb information and critique the quality of that information. Jurors also openly expressed how the information had changed their perceptions about certain issues, and generally they considered they learnt a great deal about their community from the process*
- *Simple and clear frameworks for presenters and jurors assisted note taking and in the deliberation process*
- *Briefing jurors is critical –empowering the jurors is a central principle to the jury process, and facilitation needs to support this tenet throughout – whilst recognising the need to support quieter and more reserved members of the panel*
- *Gaining the commitment of the commissioning body to publicly respond to the jurors report is of fundamental importance. Council's expressed willingness to do so at Wollondilly meant that even if some strategies or priorities are not followed by Council there will be an explanation of their actions – if the report of the jury disappears into a 'black hole' then the process will only add to community cynicism about consultation.*

Max Hardy(Twyford Consulting)
Sandra Ruecroft (Wollondilly Shire Council)