

No. 1, November 2000

## New Framework to Guide Municipal Public Health Planning

In partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Local Government sector, the Public Health Division of the Department of Human Services (DHS) is developing a new framework for Municipal Public Health Plans (MPHPs). The framework (previously referred to as a 'template') provides an opportunity to revisit an important requirement of local governments and to enhance their ability to improve municipal health. It will enable Councils to apply the knowledge and experience gained over the last ten years of MPHP development.

### Reference Group Meetings

Meetings are held monthly; two have been held so far. The 20 Reference Group members represent:

- Five local governments (one rural and four metropolitan)
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Victorian Local Governance Association
- VicHealth
- North East Health Promotion Centre, and

- Department of Human Services:-
  - Public Health Division
  - Aged, Community and Mental Health Division
  - Regional offices

In addition to the Reference Group, the consultation process with Councils for the development of the Framework will also encompass a wider group of relevant agencies and individuals. Consultation mechanisms will include local forums and one-to-one contact.

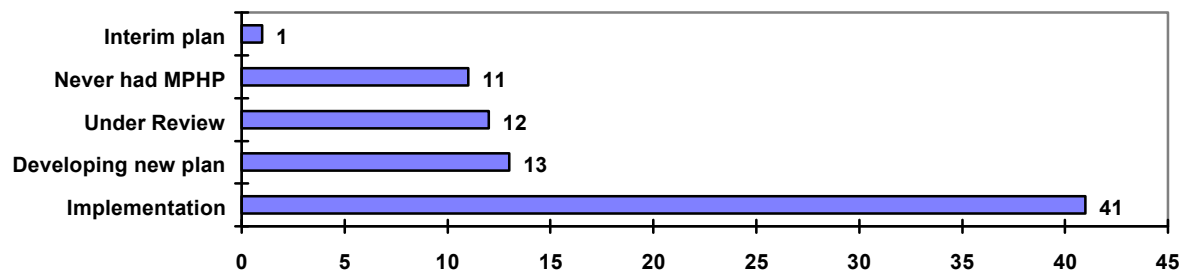
### Project Plan

We intend having the new framework finalised by 30 June 2001. Major milestones planned for the project include:

- Draft Framework developed for comment between January – March 2001
- MPHP Framework Forum – March 2001. The forum will form part of the consultation process, and will include good practice examples that illustrate the draft framework
- MPHP Framework finalised – April-June 2001.

### MPHP Status

The current status of the MPHPs for the 78 Councils across Victoria is presented below:

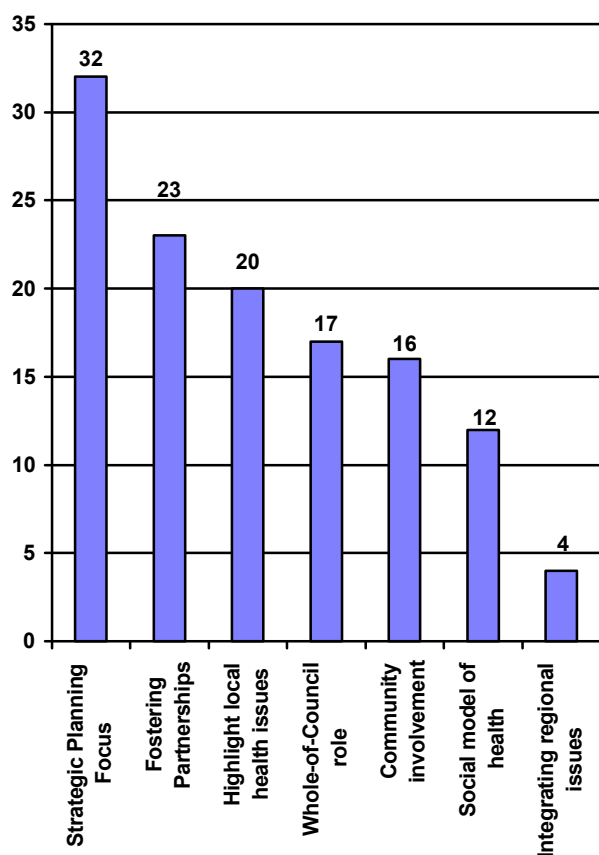


## Questionnaire Results

As part of the research component of the process, in August 2000 a questionnaire was sent to all Victorian local governments. We sought to determine the status and content of current MPHPs, and to obtain feedback from Council personnel about their experiences that could be used to improve municipal public health planning. Finally, we sought information on good practice, and model planning processes that can be incorporated into the Framework. Fifty-nine Councils returned data in time to be analysed. We appreciate your efforts in providing this information.

### Positive Features of MPHPs

A focus on strategic planning was the most commonly identified positive feature of MPHP's as seen in the graph below, which also lists other features in decreasing order of frequency:



For further information, please contact:

- Andrea Hay, Team Leader, Local Government Partnerships, in the Public Health Division of DHS (ph 9637 4755; andrea.hay@dhs.vic.gov.au); or
- Clare Hargreaves, Senior Policy Adviser, Social Policy at the Municipal Association of Victoria (9667 5543; chargreaves@mav.asn.au).

## Recommendations for Improvement

Participating Councils recommended that MPHPs could be improved by focusing on:

- Improved planning (whole-of-council approach; better data; improved evaluation; more practical; more solid theoretical grounding)
- Enhanced Resourcing
- Improved intersectoral collaboration
- Extended community involvement
- Use of a state-wide framework
- Improving internal Council response to municipal public health planning
- Addressing regional boundary issues
- Improved reporting and communication of outcomes

### Summary: Elements of an Effective MPHP

Responses have informed the development of a summary of the elements that make up an effective MPHP. The interconnected elements are provided below:

- Strategic plans must contain clear goals, objectives, strategies, intended outcomes, timelines, performance indicators and evaluation strategies
- Local health issues must be highlighted
- Community involvement is essential in identifying, prioritising and acting on local issues
- MPHPs must embrace 'new public health' principles (a social model of health)
- A whole-of-council approach must be taken
- Planning must integrate MPHP with local, state and national health issues
- MPHPs must foster effective partnerships and networking between agencies
- Steering committees and working groups are integral to successful planning

The questionnaire provided a rich source of data for guiding the development of the Framework. This data will be incorporated into the materials to be distributed shortly for comment.