



Communication with community regarding re-opening of op shops and management of waste (dumping)

Some op shops reported that pre-COVID over 50% of the donated goods would go to land fill, at a great cost to the them.

- o Macedon Ranges Shire Council developed a range of communication materials (large laminated posters) for the op shops. These signs guide the community about what can be donated (priorities and condition) to avoid “dumping” or leaving goods that are unusable at op shops.
- o Printed and social media have been published to support op shops waste management
- o Mount Alexander Shire Council worked with Castlemaine's Victoria Police to increase surveillance to prevent dumping at the op shops in Mount Alexander Shire.

Covid-19 prevention process planning

- o Op shops implemented social distancing precautions, regular deep cleans and provision of hand sanitiser
- o some op shops limited the time customers were allowed in-store or opened for a limited number of hours
- o at least one op shop had medical staff as volunteers, who supervised the op shop COVID 19 prevention strategies.

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The signage was very useful, professionally done which had an impact and because they were created by another organisation we felt supported and it legitimised our communications with the public regarding no dumping.

Op shop staff

WHAT DID WE LEARN

The pandemic highlights the essential service op shops provide for the vulnerable people in our community.

For many, volunteering at the op shop gives them a connection with their community and a sense of achievement and purpose. There was a reluctance to relinquish this role despite the risks.

The volunteer secondment process from one volunteer organisation to another is legally complex so the project relied on advertising for new volunteers and linking them with op shops.

INTO THE FUTURE

This project has built a relationship between *Volunteer Central Victoria* and the local op shops. *Volunteer Central Victoria* will continue to assist in recruitment and volunteer management.

The op shops have greatly appreciated the support of local government and they feel it legitimises the important role they play in the community. The local councils will continue to include the op shops in their waste management strategy to reduce dumping and landfill.

A simpler volunteer secondment process is needed to enable a local/regional collective pool of volunteers that can be mobilised effectively to wherever there is a need.

Through this project we have developed an op shop contact data base that will make support and sharing of information easier in the future.