

Shire supports farmer charter

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THE Hamilton Charter for Farmer Health will be acknowledged and supported by Southern Grampians Shire Council, after some queries were rectified at a meeting on Wednesday night.

The charter was established on behalf of the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH), after the 'Opening the Gates' conference in Hamilton in October.

It was recommended that council support the charter and use it to guide council planning and decision-making processes in areas where the health of farmers and farming communities may be impacted or improved.

Cr Don Robertson was concerned council might be discriminatory if they supported the charter as only 20.3 per cent of the community was involved in the farming industry.

"It concerns me a little bit while 20.3 per cent of employment in the shire is connected with an agricultural base including livestock ... 80 per cent is not," he said at the meeting.

"I'd be very fearful of council going too far out the line of supporting financially a lot of the follow-up work that is in this rather interesting document.

"Can we adopt this in the Southern Grampians Shire without appearing to discriminate against the other 80 per cent of the workers employed in other sectors?"

The shire's chief executive, Richard Perry, said the charter was not being adopted and would be used merely as a reference point.

"We're not adopting the charter, the recommendation is to support the charter and not to adopt it, it's not our work but we are acknowledging the background to the charter and the relevance of the charter to us as a reference point."

The charter took six weeks to complete last year after extensive research and consultation with all the conference's presenters and chairs.

NCFH director, Sue Brumby, said the aim of the charter was to provide greater literacy for groups who worked with farming families such as government agencies, doctors and schools.