

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, May 24, 2017



Yarriambiack Shire Council Mayor Graeme Massey said that Council had determined a 2.0% general rate increase for the 2017/2018 financial year and had spent a significant amount of time and effort in what was a very thorough and challenging process. As in previous years, a large proportion of this year's budget deliberations were allocated to critically reviewing and assessing Council's current service provisions.

Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989 Section 159 has also increased the Municipal Charge from \$70.42 to \$71.83 on all properties. Mayor Massey believed that the Council Municipal Charge rate is one of the lowest in the State.

In proposing the rate increase Mayor Massey said that Council had also taken into consideration the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) research into rates and charges levied by other municipalities. Mayor Massey added that Council had maintained the rate differential provided to farmers at 23%.

After several months of deliberation, Yarriambiack Shire Council is particularly confident that it has formulated a balanced budget that delivers on many of the strategies, considerations and priorities identified in the four year Council Plan.

Chief Executive Officer Ray Campling added that as a consequence of the State Government imposed 2.0% rate increase and also the freezing on the indexation of the Local Government Financial Assistance Grants that the 2017/2018 budget was undoubtedly the most testing and challenging budget that he had been associated with in his 28 years in senior management.

Council had also taken a number of crucial external and internal influences and factors into consideration which will impact significantly on the services provided and delivered by Council, including escalating direct and in-direct general costs.

Mayor Massey said that he was particularly appreciative of the input received from the community as it was generally very well presented. He also said that communities had in recent years become more appreciative and understanding of the confines of Council's budget and the difficulty Council had in maintaining and balancing existing service levels and provisions without increasing rates unrealistically. The budget is always a delicate and challenging juggling act with care taken to ensure that service provision and community needs are a priority. When examining and planning for both the short and long term it is encouraging that the community is interested and aware of the budgetary process, this offers capacity for partnerships and collaborative working relationships Mayor Massey said. A collaborative approach linking partnerships with stakeholders is the key element to achieving the best results for our communities.

Mr Campling also identified Council's ability to effectively source and secure community grant funding as an immense benefit and something that the community very much appreciated. Although this particular form of funding assistance does not alleviate the pressure to increase rates, it positively provides the community with additional infrastructure benefits that would normally not be available or achievable through Council's general budget processes. It is definitely the opinion of Council that the

2017/2018 budget is financially responsible and endeavours to address the objectives and strategies identified in Council's Strategic Plan.

Mr Campling said that Council's total operating budget for the 2017/2018 financial year will be \$24.168 million of which \$11.868 million will be generated from rates and charges, with the remainder predominantly being derived from State and Federal Government grants totalling a projected \$10.714 million with user charges, fees and contributions etc representing in the vicinity of \$1.696 million.

Mr Campling said that the proposed budget incorporated a number of significant projects including the allocation of \$7.352 million towards capital works expenditure of which \$4.421 million has been allocated towards the maintenance of roads including sealed, gravel and dirt roads, of which Council maintains in the vicinity of 5,000kms; in addition to an amount of \$126,000 towards footpaths, \$209,000 for kerb and channelling and \$1.2 million for plant, machinery and equipment.

The 2017/2018 budget will also incorporate reconstruction works to key roads including reconstruction and widening of the Dimboola Minyip Road (\$307,755), widening of the Longerenong Road (\$195,140), reconstruction of Corrong Swamp Road (\$245,448), construction and seal of the Sheep Hills Bangerang Road (\$203,912), reconstruction and widen Hopetoun Yaapeet Road (\$284,460) and reconstruction of Goyura East School Bus Route Road (\$143,600).

Council has also increased its contribution towards Swimming Pool, Recreation Reserves and Hall Committees by 2%, in addition the various Progress Associations and Consultative Committees will be provided with a contribution of \$1,000 each to assist with administrative and other related costs.

Mayor Massey congratulated Councillors and the Executive Management Team on their professionalism and overall approach to the budget process and conceded that although it definitely wasn't a particularly exciting budget it was a realistic and practical budget, designed to best address and cater for the realistic needs and requirements of the Yarriambiack Shire.

The Mayor added that Council is seeking community feedback in respect to the draft budget by Wednesday, 21 June 2017.

Copies of the draft budget can be viewed at the Warracknabeal Shire Offices, and at Gateway BEET, Hopetoun. The full budget document will also be available on Council's website: www.yarriambiack.vic.gov.au

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