

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, May 23, 2018



Yarriambiack Shire Council Mayor Graeme Massey said that Council had determined, as part of the 2018/19 budget process, not to apply for a rate increase above the 2.25% set by the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) which applies a limit on the rate increase that can be raised by Victorian Council's. He said that Council had spent a significant amount of time and effort in what was a very thorough and challenging budget 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 \$71.83 to \$73.44 on all properties. Mayor Massey believed that the Council Municipal Charge rate is one of the lowest in the State. The kerbside collection charge will increase by 2.25% and the recycling charge will increase by 8% per service due to the increase cost of disposing of recycling materials.

Mayor Massey added that Council had maintained the rate differential provided to farmers at 23%. This means that the farming rate will be 23% less than the general rate for residential and commercial properties. Differential rates are where Councils set different rates in the dollar for different categories of rateable land. Councils are able to levy either a uniform rate across all properties, or one or more differential rates. Differential rates are usually used to achieve greater equity or efficiency.

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.

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.

Acting CEO Mr James Magee 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 2018/2019 budget is financially responsible and endeavours to address the objectives and strategies identified in Council's Strategic Plan.

Mr Magee said that Council's total operating budget for the 2018/2019 financial year will be \$23.586 million of which \$12.183 million will be generated from rates and charges, with the remainder predominantly being derived from State and Federal Government grants totalling a projected \$9.914 million with user charges, fees and contributions etc representing in the vicinity of \$1.489 million.

Mr Magee said that the proposed budget incorporated a number of significant projects including the allocation of \$6.990 million towards capital works expenditure of which \$4.128 million has been allocated towards the renewal and upgrade of roads including sealed, gravel and dirt roads, of which Council maintains in the vicinity of 5,000kms. Other major projects in the capital works program include a \$300,000 upgrade at the Warracknabeal Transfer Station; \$500,000 will be spent on upgrade works on the tarmac at the Hopetoun Aerodrome after receiving a \$250,000 grant from the Federal Government under the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program and \$1.340 million for plant, machinery and equipment. Council will also facilitate the upgrade works at the Murtoa Swimming Pool change-rooms after receiving grants through the Community Infrastructure Fund – Better Pools and through the Federal Drought Funding Program. The total cost of this project is \$375,000.

The 2018/2019 budget will also incorporate reconstruction works to key roads including reconstruction and widening of the Dimboola Minyip Road (\$200,666), widening of the Hopetoun Yaapeet Road (\$320,000), widening of Sea Lake Lascelles Road (\$253,333), shoulder resheeting of the Minyip Dimboola Road (\$302,666) and widening of the Minyip Banyena Road (\$291,333).

Council has also increased its contribution towards Swimming Pool, Recreation Reserves, Weir Pools and Hall Committees by 2%, in addition the various Progress Associations and Consultative Committees will be provided with a contribution 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, 20 June 2018.

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

Media contact: James Magee, Acting Chief Executive Officer – ph. (03) 5398 0100