

## **MID MURRAY PRESENTS ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN TO SUPPORT RECOVERY AND DELIVER COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

***2020/2021 plan gives green light to drought programs, road and trail upgrades, Dark Sky Reserve development and 10-year Mental Health Plan***

The Mid Murray Council has this week adopted its 2020/2021 Annual Business Plan (ABP) – with an emphasis on stimulating the local economy in the face of challenging external circumstances and investing in community projects that will have a sustainable impact.

Following public consultation, and with community recovery the priority, Council will be investing in a number of significant regeneration projects to help alleviate the ongoing impacts of drought, bushfire and the COVID-19 pandemic. Council will also progress schemes which enhance the community for locals and tourists, striking a balance between growing economic value and investing in community wellbeing.

Some of the Mid Murray Council 2020-21 Annual Business Plan highlights include:

- Murray Coorong Trail – Construction of sections from Mannum to Kia Marina and Swan Reach to Nildottie
- \$1 million of drought extension funding projects
- Progression of River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve development and marketing
- Delivery of Stage 1 of the Swan Reach Master Plan
- Road sheeting improvements in the Cudlee Creek Bushfire affected zone
- Stage 4 of the Murraylands Road upgrade and Truro Road renewal
- Mid Murray Our Town 10-year Mental Health Plan

Along with the Annual Business Plan, Council adopted the revised 2020-21 budget at its meeting this week. This outlines a 2.9% (plus growth) increase in general rates, and takes into account the exceptional external forces impacting the district this year. This increase equates to less than \$44 per property per year, on average.

Mayor Dave Burgess said it had been an unprecedented 12 months of consecutive local and global challenges, which had led to this ABP being developed.

“As a Council, we want to be sensitive to the current issues impacting the local economy and community members, but must also strike a balance with the needs of long-term financial sustainability,” he says.

“This time last year, we couldn’t possibly have predicted the challenges that lay ahead. With the presentation of this plan and budget, we’ve considered how we can rebuild in the face of the impacts of drought, bushfire and the global pandemic. We’re also still moving forward on a number of community projects to benefit the region’s future, which in some instances, are supported by State and Federal Government funding.

“Economic growth will be essential in supporting the recovery of our district and Council has a key role to play in assisting this, particularly through the tourism sector.

“Further, Council staff are committed to identifying ongoing business efficiencies and savings wherever possible during 2020-21 and beyond.”

Council continues to offer hardship measures for ratepayers who have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis or other challenges, including deferral of rates payment and other flexible repayment options.

“We’re also pleased to be able to forge ahead with a number of key projects to enhance the community – not just in terms of physical improvements - but also in terms of the Mental Health plan to support the lives of many of our residents,” Mayor Burgess says.

“Like many other regions, we have taken a significant economic hit in recent years, and the flow-on effect to families and individuals can be devastating. The next 12 months are all about rebuilding and alleviating the damage caused by the pandemic and weather incidents.

“We’re a resilient and resourceful community though, and I believe this plan will provide investment in our projects and our people, which will lead to long-term sustainable prosperity and community vibrancy.”

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Ben Scales  
P: (08) 8569 0100 | E: [postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au](mailto:postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au)