

MEDIA RELEASE

MID MURRAY RATES REVIEW

Mid Murray Council is reviewing its rating system to make it simpler, fairer and more equitable for all ratepayers.

Council is considering a number of options to update the rating system, which is currently complex and difficult to administer. Council also has concerns about current inequalities in the rating system, with some ratepayers paying more than others relatively - and some are paying for services they do not use such as kerbside waste collection.

Options to update the system have been outlined in a *Rates Review Consultation Paper* that will be released for community comment from 18 February.

Proposed changes being considered by Council to simplify its rating process and make it fairer include:

- Increasing the minimum rate;
- Diminishing the differential between land uses;
- Moving to a differential rating structure based on land use (instead of a combination of land use and locality);
- Introducing a waste collection charge for those who receive general waste collection.

These changes would be introduced gradually over a five-year period.

Mid Murray Mayor Dave Burgess said the proposals would make it far easier for Council to administer the rates system and make it fairer and more equitable for all ratepayers.

"We are looking at adopting a number of changes that would bring our rates system into line with standard practice across many rural councils," Mayor Burgess says.

"Our proposals aren't about raising additional rate revenue, they're about ensuring our rate collection methods are simple to understand and apply, as well as being efficient and fair – and that our rate income is adequately supporting the future goals of both Council and our community in terms of providing the services, infrastructure and facilities required.

"These changes also aim to address inequalities in our current system, to ensure ratepayers aren't paying for services they don't receive, and that they aren't being unfairly charged on the basis of where they live."

As part of its focus on equality in rates, Council is shifting towards a user pays model for its general waste collection. Residents currently pay for recycling collection, but the cost of general waste has up until now been covered through general rates - despite not all residents being provided with a general waste collection.

Introducing a waste collection charge (proposed to be \$197/year) will mean that only those properties that are provided the service will pay for it. This change alone is expected to shift \$1.18 million from general rates to a service fee, resulting in a lower rate in the dollar – with those homeowners receiving a waste collection paying the new waste collection fee.

Mid Murray Chief Executive Ben Scales said the Council's current rating system was complex and the proposals being considered would make it simpler, more equitable and easier to administer.

“Using the mix of both locality and land use to determine rates is quite complex and means some ratepayers are shouldering more of rate load than others,” Mr Scales says.

“We need to strike a balance between equity, efficiency and financial stability, so that we are continuing to raise enough rate revenue to fund the ongoing infrastructure, maintenance and services our community needs, without placing an excessive burden on any specific sectors within our community.”

To read more about the rates review visit www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au. Consultation opens on 18 February and runs until noon on 25 March.

Public meetings will be held at Cambrai on 3 March, Adelaide on 4 March, Mannum on 10 March and Morgan on 11 March details including registration, times and venues are available on Council’s website.

Community feedback will be incorporated into a final report that will set out how the rates system will be improved, for consideration by Council.

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