

MEDIA RELEASE

COMMUNITY INPUT SHAPES IMPROVEMENTS TO MID MURRAY COUNCIL'S RATES SYSTEM

Community feedback has helped the Mid Murray Council update its rating method to ensure it is simpler and more equitable – without increasing the projected rate revenue.

Public input into the Council's recent Rates Review process recommended several changes to proposed options put forward by the Council to streamline its rating system and improve equity for ratepayers.

The changes aim to remove complexity from the system, which used a differential rating method using a complicated mix of locality and land use, by changing to using land use only.

Updating the system spreads the rates responsibility more equitably among property owners. In the past, landowners in some areas were contributing a greater portion of the rates burden due to the differential system, while others were paying through general rates for services they could not access, such as waste collection.

Under the new measures adopted by Council:

- Council will change its differential rating method from using a complex mix of locality and land use, to land use only in the coming financial year – originally this change was proposed to occur over six years;
- A Waste Management Charge of \$197 will be introduced for the 2021/22 financial year;
- The minimum rate increase will be split over two years - rising to \$787 for the 2021/22 financial year. The 2022/23 increase will be determined during budget deliberations next year;
- Council's rate capping rebate will be increased to 15% to provide greater relief for ratepayers affected by the rating process changes by including the waste management charge into the calculation for capping for the first three years. (Ratepayers must apply for the capping, be living on their property as the principal place of residence and primary production ratepayers are not eligible due to having a differential rate that is 10% less than all other land use categories.)

Mid Murray Mayor Dave Burgess said Council had listened to the community and amended several of the measures in response to public feedback.

"Our community told us they supported the change to the differential rating method from using both locality and land to land use only, however, they were concerned our initial proposal to do this over six years would complicate things further," Mayor Burgess says.

"In response, we've agreed to make this change in one go, so it will come into effect for the 2021/22 financial year.

"People were also concerned about the impact of that change on rate increases in some areas, as well as the increase to the minimum rate, and the introduction of the Waste Management Charge. We heard the community's concern about how these increases would impact household budgets, in particular for vulnerable people in our community.

"To assist, Council will split the increase in the minimum rate over two years, starting in 2021/22, at the same time as it introduces the Waste Management Charge. However, we'll also be increasing the rates capping rebate available to 15% - which will include the Waste Management Charge. Residents will be able to apply for this capping if their property is their main place of residence, and as long as it's not a

primary production property (as this will already receive a lower differential rate than other property types)."

Mid Murray Chief Executive Ben Scales said the Rates Review process was about streamlining the Council's rates system, and ensuring the responsibility for financially contributing to Council's vital infrastructure, programs and services did not fall more unfairly on some sectors of the community.

"Our updated rates system will now spread the cost of providing our essential infrastructure, community facilities, programs and initiatives more evenly among ratepayers," Mr Scales says.

"The changes are not about increasing rate revenue for Council, but rather ensuring that the way in which we collect rates is efficient and fair.

"The introduction of the Waste Management Charge for example will mean those who cannot access Council's waste collection service no longer have to pay for it through their general rates. With this change, ratepayers may see a reduction in their general rates because the levy will now cover the cost of delivering this service."

Find out more about the Rates Review process at www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.

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