

MEDIA RELEASE

MID MURRAY BUDGET BALANCES FLOOD RECOVERY, FUTURE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Mid Murray Council has adopted short and long-term planning that balances the need for immediate flood recovery work with its priority to achieve future financial sustainability.

The Council has adopted both its **2023/24 Annual Business Plan and Budget** and its **Long Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2032/33**, which sets out the priority projects, services, programs and other initiatives for Council over the coming year and decade respectively.

Following community feedback on both plans, the Council has revised projected average general rate increases from the proposed 10.2% for 2023/24, to 7.57% for both 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Mid Murray Council Mayor Simone Bailey said setting both the 2023/24 financial plan, and long-term plan, had been challenging when Council is faced with the double impact of rising cost pressures and a significant flood recovery bill.

“There is no doubt that Council – like many in our community – is facing a challenging financial period,” Mayor Bailey said.

“Not only have we continued to be hit by rising operating costs, but the 2022/23 impact of the flooding cleanup and repairs continues to be a considerable additional expense for Council. All of this adds to the already difficult position Council was experiencing prior to the floods of having many competing financial demands, as well as a small rate base from which to sustain itself.

“We understand that our community is also challenged by the financial pressures of soaring costs and flood recovery, and this has been a big factor in our decision to split the rate increase over two years. In addition, Council will also offer relief measures such as rate capping of 20% by application for eligible properties, as well as our Hardship Policy. I encourage anyone who may be struggling to contact Council and talk about the options that are available.”

If you believe your property valuation is too high or low, you can request, at no fee, that the value is reassessed. The objection needs to be in writing to the Office of the Valuer-General, and lodged within 60 days of receiving your first rates notice. A written objection to the valuation must set out the full and detailed grounds for objection. Further information and objection packs (including a reply paid envelope) are available on request by calling Land Services SA on 1300 653 346 or visiting www.valuergeneral.sa.gov.au

The **2023/24 Annual Business Plan and Budget** forecasts an operating deficit of \$7.16M, with loan borrowings of \$19.1M and a capital expenditure of \$10.2M. The 2023/24 Budget deficit has been increased by \$4.84m due to the 2023/24 Federal Assistance Grant allocation being paid in advance in June 2023, taking this into account the adjusted operating deficit is \$2.319m.

Key projects for the year ahead include:

- Review of Council’s Strategic Plan – *Our Plan 2020-24*, and a development of financial sustainability plan
- Development of the Truro Township Masterplan
- Detailed design and costing of the Wongulla CWMS

MEDIA CONTACT:

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

- Implementation of Council's Reconciliation Action Plan
- Development of Mid Murray Council Growth Strategy
- Implementation of the Astro Tourism strategy for the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve
- Blanchetown water re-use and playground project
- Mannum Waters boat ramp
- Len White Reserve upgrade
- Tungkillo, Morgan, Palmer and Mannum (Ramm Road), Stormwater Projects
- Cambrai Landfill Cell Development
- Murray Coorong Trail – Stage 3 construction
- Completion of *PS Canally* restoration project and the Mannum Murray River Heritage Tourism project.

These include projects funded by previous State or Federal Government grants.

Work has already started on several projects, with on-ground works progressing on the Len White Reserve upgrade, and the recent release of a draft Truro Township Masterplan for community consultation.

The review of Council's Strategic Plan and its financial sustainability measures is well underway, and will be a core focus of its work this year.

"Our work to review our operations to identify financial sustainability opportunities is ongoing, and this will inform our new Strategic Plan and future priorities," Mayor Bailey said.

"As a regional Council with a small population spread over such a large geographic area, our focus is very much on ensuring we continue to provide the services, infrastructure and programs our community needs in an efficient and effective way that makes best use of our limited financial resources.

"We have already consulted with community as part of this work, and we'll be coming back to people again later this year with our revised Strategic Plan. I encourage everyone to get involved in this process and to have a say on shaping our priorities for the coming decade."

For more information on the *2023/24 Annual Business Plan and Budget* and the *Long Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2032/33*, visit www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.

MEDIA CONTACT:

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