

20 May 2022

MEDIA STATEMENT



ROADS, COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE KEY PRIORITIES IN SOUTHERN MALLEE DRAFT 2022/23 ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

The Southern Mallee District Council is close to finalising its *Draft 2022/23 Annual Business Plan and Budget* for community consultation.

Council considered the *Draft 2022/23 Annual Business Plan and Budget* at its monthly meeting on Wednesday, 18 May. Elected Members thoroughly reviewed the proposed plan and its capital projects before making minor changes. They voted to meet again next week to finalise the *Draft 2022/23 Annual Business Plan and Budget* before releasing it for public feedback.

Among the priorities for the coming financial year are Council's aims to deliver key road and community infrastructure projects while also continuing to pursue financial sustainability in a challenging economic environment.

In the draft plan, Council has proposed a 5.2% average general rate rise (based on Adelaide CPI of 4.7% plus 0.5% in line with its *Draft Long-Term Financial Plan*). This follows a modest 2.25% rate increase last financial year, and a 0% rate increase in 2020/21 in response to COVID-19 impacts on the community.

Council is also considering a number of key infrastructure projects. This includes ongoing improvements to the Lameroo and Pinnaroo town centres to support and encourage economic growth and prosperity as the region continues its recovery from the challenges of COVID-19.

Southern Mallee Mayor Jeff Nickolls said Elected Members would continue to thoroughly review the *Draft 2022/23 Annual Business Plan and Budget* prior to a special meeting next week to ensure it strikes a balance between delivering major projects to enhance the district's economy and liveability, and the current challenging national and global financial climate.

"There are a number of financial challenges Council needs to consider in setting its budget for the financial year, including significant increases in operating costs and a CPI that has risen to 4.7%," Mayor Nickolls said.

"We are also mindful that our community is facing cost of living pressures, so we want to make sure we get the balance right to continue stimulating our local economy and providing essential services and infrastructure, without overburdening ratepayers."

The Council will hold a special meeting on 25 May to discuss and endorse the revised *Draft 2022/23 Annual Business Plan and Budget* for community consultation.

Community feedback will be considered by Council when it makes its decision on the plan at a special meeting following the consultation period on 29 June 2022.

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