

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **COMMUNITY NEEDS, FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THE FOCUS OF MID MURRAY'S ANNUAL PLAN**

Mid Murray Council has responded to its community's needs, while maintaining its focus on achieving long-term financial sustainability in its updated plan for the coming year.

Council's *2025-2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget* was updated following community consultation and endorsed by Council at a meeting this week.

While Council will continue to prioritise improving its long-term financial sustainability over the coming years, it has also closely considered the cost-of-living pressures and challenging economic climate impacting the Mid Murray community. As a result, following community feedback and further internal reviews, Council has revised its proposed average general rate increase for existing properties from 4.94% down to 3.84%

Mid Murray Mayor Simone Bailey said the updated plan delivered a more balanced outcome for ratepayers.

"Council's original aim was to strike a balance between long-term sustainability and affordability—and through constructive community engagement and a commitment to identify additional operating savings, we've been able to refine our approach to ease the pressure on ratepayers," Mayor Bailey said.

"It's been a tough few years for our district, and our decision to reduce the proposed general rates increase reflects Council's commitment to sustainability and affordability. We are fortunate that we are in a position to be able to do that, thanks to the extensive work we've done as a Council over the past couple years to cut costs and increase efficiency."

Mayor Bailey said Council's commitment to improving long-term sustainability remains a core focus this year, especially in the face of increasing cost pressures and declining external funding for regional communities.

One of the key changes in the 2025/26 Annual Business Plan and Budget is the introduction of full cost attribution across the business, which allocates all internal administrative costs to the relevant areas. This will ensure that the administrative costs associated to services such as Community Wastewater Management and waste collection are covered by those who use them, rather than being subsidised through general rates.

"This is about making the services we provide our community more equitable and sustainable," Mayor Bailey said.

"By fairly attributing all service costs to the people actually using those services, we can avoid additional increases to general rates, while protecting the future viability of those services our community values."

The adopted plan and budget outlines \$10.6m in capital expenditure, including \$6.1m in capital infrastructure, and continues the roll-out of projects aimed at economic development, improved services and better community outcomes. These include:

- Implementing Stage 2 of Council's Sustainability Review
- Finalisation of the Cambrai Landfill Cell 2 development (funded through the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program – Phase 3)

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- Implementing Growth Management and Housing Strategy
- Rural recycling and township green waste service assessment
- Detailed design for the Swan Reach Community Wastewater Management System (CWMS)
- Construction of the Mid Murray Female Sports Facility at the Mannum Oval Sporting Complex
- LED street lighting upgrades to improve efficiency and reduce emissions
- Riverfront and boat ramp upgrades at Bowhill, South Punyelroo and Swan Reach
- Angas Valley and Stoney Banks Road junction upgrades
- Extension of bitumen sealing on Murraylands Road between Blanchetown and Morgan, delivering 2.5km of improved road infrastructure
- Open Space flood remediation funded through the State Government's *Community and Recreation Asset Restoration Program*.

Council will also continue advocating for greater support and funding from State and Federal Governments to secure the future of rural communities.

"Regional and rural councils like Mid Murray are facing disproportionate challenges," Mayor Bailey said.

"We're working hard not only to manage our budget wisely, but to also ensure our region gets its fair share of resources to meet the needs of communities across our vast district."

Other priorities for the year ahead include progressing the externally-funded Mid Murray Tourism Precinct Planning Project, which will develop strategies to support enhanced economic development, community development and growth in the Mid Murray.

Council will also continue to work with the State Government to seek greater protection for our River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve, which has the potential to develop into a significant visitor drawcard and generate increased regional economic growth.

Council will again offer assistance to ratepayers in need through its hardship policy.

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