

Annual Business Plan 2025-26

Submissions Summary Report

June 2025

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Introduction

On 21 May 2025 Council publicly notified the Annual Business Plan and Budget and invited submissions (See **Attachment 1** - Public Notice).

Three submissions were received at the close of the engagement period.

Council has prepared a Submissions Summary Report, which lists the main points made by each submitter, and what outcome they seek from Council's decisions. All non-confidential submissions are available in **Appendix 2**.

It should be noted that the Response and Action columns are draft recommendations presented to Council as part of the decision-making process. Consequently, Council may resolve to accept them with or without amendments in the final document.

Privacy

Please note that only the name and location of each submitter is detailed in the report. All personal details in the original submission contained in the appendices are redacted to maintain privacy.

Any commentary that is considered defamatory or inappropriate have been redacted.

Annual Business Plan 2025-26 Submission Summary and Response

Name Supplied, Blanchetown

Submission#/ Point #	Provision	Submission Point Summary	Decision Sought	Response	Action
1.1	NA	It would be helpful to have a 'plain English' document showing the proposed changes/updates. I feel the community would understand Council's reasoning for changes better, if the information was more targeted to the community, that may not understand the role of Council and Community Development	Adopt a plain English approach to documents	Noted, consider issuing a Summarised ABP & Budget for the public consultation.	Tabled in Council Report
1.2	NA	I do not support the rate increase, without increased services to our town. I would like to see a change in bin collection and more sustainability education. We need a green bin pick up or at the very least - drop FOGO for free at the dump (not just green waste). Red bin can reduce to fortnight.	Does not support rate rise. Would like changes to waste services.	Noted, future consideration when reviewing waste collection service.	Tabled in Council Report

Len South, Port Mannum

Submission#/Point #	Provision	Submission Point Summary	Decision Sought	Response	Action
2.1	NA	While Council's efforts to contain costs within are to be commended, the 4.94% increase in average rates is unacceptable given the current cost of living crises.	Does not support rate rise	Noted.	Tabled in Council Report

Appendix 1 – Public Notification

Notification of the Public Consultation

The Public Consultation was advertised in Murray Pioneer and Leader Newspaper 21 May 2025 and Murray Valley Standard 22 May 2025 (see ad below)

The Public Consultation was promoted on Council's Facebook page on the following dates – 21 May, 28 May, 5 June and 10 June 2025.

Notification of the Public Consultation was emailed to Council's Subscriber list (including Associations) on 21 May 2025.

On the engagement page of Council's website from 21 May (and as a tile and banner on the front page of website from 22 May 2025).

Hard copies of the plan were available at all Council offices for the period of Consultation.

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2025/26 Draft Annual Business Plan & Budget, Draft Long Term Financial Plan and Draft River Structures Asset Management Plan

Mid Murray Council is inviting feedback from the community on the following documents:

- 2025/26 Draft Annual Business Plan & Budget
- Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2034/35
- Draft River Structures Asset Management Plan

The Public is welcome to view these documents from 12 noon Wednesday 21 May 2025 at Council Offices during normal office hours or on Council's website www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au

Written submissions are invited on the documents and will be received by the Chief Executive Officer, Mid Murray Council, PO Box 28, Mannum SA 5238 or via the feedback form on Council's website or email to; postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au until 12 noon Wednesday 11 June 2025.

Persons should indicate whether they wish to speak in support of their written submission prior to 12 noon Wednesday 11 June 2025.

Council will also provide the opportunity for the public to attend a meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 17 June 2025 in the Council Chambers, Adelaide Road, Mannum, between 9:30 and 10:30am for the purpose of asking related questions, making a verbal submission or speaking in support of their written submission.

Ben Scales
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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MEDIA RELEASE

FUTURE LIVEABILITY, PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS OF MID MURRAY COUNCIL'S BUDGET

Continuing to build a strong financial foundation while also delivering services and projects to support enhanced community liveability, prosperity and sustainability are the focus of Mid Murray Council's financial plans for the coming year.

In its *Draft 2025-26 Annual Business Plan and Budget*, Council has set out a plan to further strengthen its long-term financial position, while meeting the community's needs with investment in essential infrastructure, ongoing service delivery, future planning, and economic development. This is supported by its *Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35*, which maps out Council's priorities for the coming decade. Both draft plans are now open for community consultation, with feedback received until Wednesday, 11 June 2025.

Mid Murray Mayor Simone Bailey said Council had worked hard to find a balance between continuing to deliver essential services and projects, while also keeping rates as low as possible during challenging economic times.

"This year's draft budget is about building on the strong financial foundations we've created over the past couple of years, while ensuring that we're supporting our community and delivering the services, programs, infrastructure and opportunities they need most," Mayor Bailey said.

"In planning for the year ahead, we've had to balance our community's needs with the financial impacts we're still experiencing from the River Murray flood. We're mindful, too, that many in our community are currently struggling with cost-of-living pressures, compounded by the current drought conditions. This has also been front of mind in our planning, as has our need to be as efficient and prudent as possible to avoid shifting any financial burden onto future ratepayers,"

"Council also has a hardship policy in place for ratepayers experiencing financial difficulties and State Seniors Card holders may be eligible to have their rates postponed on a long term basis."

Overall, the proposed rate increase is lower than expected in previous long-term planning for 2025-26, as a result of Council's significant cost reduction effort, sustainability measures undertaken by Council and additional recovery of costs through service charges.

The average rate increase proposed in the draft budget is 4.94%, consisting of forecast CPI increase of 3.2% and a sustainability increase of 1.74%. A further 0.5% increase is expected in rate revenue from new development. That equates to an average increase of \$70 for the year for existing property owners – noting that the exact figure is dependent on individual property valuations.

Pleasingly, there has also been a 3.3% reduction in the Residential Rate in the Dollar (RID) (0.3815 cents in the dollar compared to 0.3944 cents in the dollar in 2024/25), which is a 3.3% reduction. Primary Production land will continue to receive a 10% reduction (0.3434 cents in the dollar compared to 0.355 cents in the dollar in 2024/25) compared to the Base RID.

"Council has made more than \$1.12m in savings since November 2024 through Stage 1 of our sustainability measures," Mayor Bailey said.

"These include \$546,000 in one-off savings, \$462,000 in recurring savings and \$115,000 in efficiency gains. This has helped us keep the proposed general rate increase lower than initially expected."

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Ben Scales

P: (08) 8569 0100 | E: postbox@mid-murray.sa.gov.au

Council has also undertaken a full cost attribution project to ensure internal costs are appropriately allocated to the specific services they relate to, such as Community Wastewater Management Systems (CWMS) and waste collection. Until now, general rates has been subsidising these service costs.

As a result of this change, the financial impact in 2025/26 includes an increase of 47% to the average CWMS service charge. Waste collection fees are also proposed to increase, with the single bin service rising by 9% (from \$223 to \$243) and the two-bin service by 8.6% (from \$313 to \$340).

While these adjustments represent material increases to annual service charges, they reduce the need for larger increases to general rates, promoting greater equity in how services are funded.

Council is proposing an adjusted budget deficit of \$402,000, including capital expenditure of \$11.645m. Most of that (\$10.1m) will be spent on renewing existing assets, including \$924,542 in upgrades to the Mannum Oval Complex supported by a Federal Government *Play Our Way* program grant. A further \$1m will be spent on renewing existing sealed roads, and more than \$1.8m on maintaining unsealed roads.

Forecast borrowings for 2025/26 are \$8.9m, down substantially from the previously forecast figure of \$13.6m. Looking ahead, Council's net financial liabilities ratio is expected to reduce in the longer-term from 30% (\$9.3m loans) in 2026/27 to 2% (\$47,000) in 2034/35.

Continuing to progress Council's financial sustainability is a priority for the coming year, with the progression and implementation of Stage 2 outcomes of Council's Sustainability Review, which focuses on finding savings and efficiencies within the operations of the business, as well as its community facilities and assets, and tourism, heritage and maritime assets.

"While Council remains committed to finding ways to operate more efficiently, we also can't ignore the fact that we're not operating on a level playing field when it comes to fair funding support for regional councils," Mayor Bailey said.

"That's why we will also be continuing our advocacy efforts for equity in the Federal Government's Financial Assistance Grants, so that councils with smaller populations and higher needs for assistance aren't continually disadvantaged by the current funding model."

Also among Council's priorities for the year ahead is to enhance the Mid Murray's liveability, connectivity and prosperity. This will be boosted by future planning through the development and implementation of a *Community Development Strategy*, the finalisation of the *Growth Management and Housing Strategy* for the region, and an *Economic Development Strategy* for the whole of the Mid Murray.

Council will support the continued growth of the Mid Murray's tourism sector through the implementation of its *Dark Sky Strategy and Action Plan*, along with the finalisation of Mid Murray's new tourism brand, website and app.

"Together, these will better promote and connect our region and its tourism operators with visitors from across Australia and around the world," Mayor Bailey said.

Consultation on both the *Draft 2025-26 Annual Business Plan and Budget* and *Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35* opened on Wednesday, 21 May 2025 and closes at 12pm on Wednesday, 11 June 2025.

For more information, or to read the plans and have your say, visit www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.

- ENDS -

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Ben Scales
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Appendix 2 - Submissions

Annual Business Plan 2025-26

From: Social Pinpoint <noreply@socialpinpoint.com>
Sent: Friday, 30 May 2025 9:14 AM
To: Tracy Bawden
Subject: IFOR9900-25 - 18/CON/SUR/10 - Feedback Form - Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget Form Submission

SynergySoft: IFOR9900-25 - 18/CON/SUR/10

Feedback Form - Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Feedback Form - Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget through your Mid Murray Your Say website.

Do you wish to remain anonymous?

Yes

First Name

Last Name

Address

Blanchetown

Did you find the Draft 2025/26 Annual Business Plan & Budget easy to understand?

No

Any other Comments (limited to 300 characters)

It would be helpful to have a 'plain english' document showing the proposed changes/updates. I feel the community would understand Council's reasoning for changes better, if the information was more targeted to the community, that may not understand the role of Council and Community Development.

How Satisfied are you with the Draft 2025/26 Annual Business Plan & Budget.

Unsatisfied

Any other general comments (Limited to 300 characters)

I do not support the rate increase, without increased services to our town. I would like to see a change in bin collection and more sustainability education. We need a green bin pick up or at the very least - drop FOGO for free at the dump (not just green waste). Red bin can reduce to fortnight.

Do you wish to make a representation in person by attending the meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 17 June 2025, between 9:30 and 10:30am

No

This is not SPAM. You are receiving this message because you have submitted feedback or signed up to Mid Murray Your Say.

Submission to Mid Murray Council re 2025/26 draft budget.

While Council's efforts to contain costs within are to be commended, the 4.94% increase in average rates is unacceptable given the current cost of living crises.

With inflation currently running at 2.4% the proposed overall increase is more than double this figure.

Any increases are compounded on the back of larger bases given home valuations being increased exponentially through no fault of the constituents.

Revenue raising bases on the theoretical value of family homes has been weaponised by all levels of Government but these assumed values do not by any means translate to identical increases in peoples bank accounts.

Given that a large portion of your constituents are pensioners or on fixed incomes, they therefore have no means by which expand their incomes to compensate for increases such as these.

Any rates deferred payment schemes are a frank admission that they have reached a point beyond affordability for some.

I recommend a further hard look into the sustainability of constituents as well as Council would be appropriate now.

Len South

Port Mannum