

Mayor's Report to the Community



General Rate

The Council at its meeting on 24 June passed an increase of 1.09% in general rate revenue for the 2013-2014 financial year.

The rates this year reflect changes in the operations of the Council and increased costs due to increases in services and costs from suppliers. The major areas of increase are in waste management and parks and amenities. It is important to note that there are continuing pressures on the overheads of the Council, commonly referred to as the cost of doing business. Unless the Council maintains a realistic approach to the development of its Estimates and therefore the levying of its rates, then the overheads will start to bite into the level of works and services traditionally provided by the Council. Again, the Council has been challenged in balancing the competing priorities of required services, the continuation of strategic directions/initiatives, maintaining a sound financial position and keeping rate increases to an acceptable level. In the tough economic climate, it's crucial that the Council continues to provide core services at an affordable level, while being very mindful of the cost of living pressures which are facing our community.

The impact of the rate increase will not be the same across the whole municipal area due to the effect of the recent revaluation. It makes it difficult to compare rates from one year to another. While there is only a 1.09% increase in the general rate revenue, there has been considerable fluctuation in the assessed annual value from property to property. The revaluation will see a large number of properties with a rate reduction which will be offset by a similar number of properties receiving a rate increase above 1.09%.

This year will be the first year that the Council will receive dividends from the Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation. The majority of the

dividends is being transferred to Reserves to support our asset renewal program, with a small amount being provided in operations for payment of water and sewerage charges in our parks, along with increases in service levels identified by the Council. These increases include the maintenance of the Ulverstone Wharf Precinct along with additional cutting of roadside verges on rural arterial roads. Fees and charges have been increased to reflect the cost of service provision.

Service rates and charges

State Fire Protection Service costs have increased by 0.78% from \$510,000 to \$514,000. These costs are collected by the Council on behalf of the State Government.

The Waste Management charge which is charged to each household that receives a kerbside recycling and garbage collection service has remained the same as last year at \$176.

Rating policies

The Council has agreed to continue with the 5% discount where rates are paid in full by 30 September 2013, which has proven to be popular. The Council is also pleased to continue its practice of not charging penalties for late payment of rates. The Council will again offer the availability of approved regular instalments, and offers rate remissions of \$35 for eligible pensioners who live alone.

Capital works

A capital works program of \$7.77m. is planned for this year. Major capital works include \$715,000 to complete the Penguin Athletics Centre precinct redevelopment, \$974,000 for urban

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Capital works cont.

roads, \$1.57m. for rural roads, \$400,000 for foot-paths, \$265,000 for drainage, \$495,000 for waste management, including the site rehabilitation of the former Penguin Refuse Disposal Site, \$355,000 for parks and amenities, \$170,000 for aged-person home unit refurbishments, and \$131,000 on recreation ground and sports centre upgrades. This program is not supported by borrowings.

Strategic issues

Our Strategic Plan identifies Council's priorities for 2009-2014 to be delivered through the Council's Annual Plan. The Strategic Plan focuses on the distinctiveness of our location, lifestyle and strengths to achieve the aspirations of local communities and to set the direction for the Council in determining how best to direct its resources and efforts. It summarises the key objectives, strategies and actions that the Council plans to pursue over the coming five-year period.

The Annual Plan includes the initiatives and actions to be funded that will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives specified in the Strategic Plan and forms the basis of the Estimates.

Some of the major initiatives and actions in the Annual Plan for 2013-2014 are as follows:

- Completion of the Penguin Athletics Centre Precinct
- Staged implementation of the Dial Regional Sports Complex Master Plan
- Implement the Central Coast Open Space and Recreation Plan 2012-2022
- Develop a Central Coast Recreational Bike Strategy
- Develop a Rural Lands Strategy for the Central Coast area
- Explore options for gas to Ulverstone
- Create a plan for a network of transport routes to connect communities and attractions throughout Central Coast
- Develop a mentor/leadership register that stimulates creativity and innovation and supports local capacity building
- Investigate the upgrade of Leven River embankments
- Develop a Public Arts Policy
- Staged implementation of the Ulverstone History Museum Strategic Plan and Interpretive Strategy.

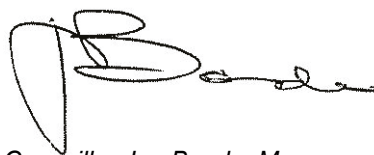
This is the final year of our Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and over the next 12 months we will review and develop a new strategic plan.

The Council is aware of the huge challenges in relation to asset management and the development of strong financial management plans and is continuing with the implementation of its Sustainability Action Plan over the next few years. As the custodian of community assets in excess of \$325m., it is our obligation to ensure that our property, plant and infrastructure assets are managed in a responsible way for the benefit of current and future generations. Considerable resources have been focused towards ensuring our Asset Management Plans, including our long-term asset renewal programs, have been updated and incorporated into our Long-term Financial Plan 2013-2023. The Plan establishes the strategic financial framework within which sound financial decisions are made and aims to achieve a prudent balance between maintaining the existing range and level of service provision and developing the capacity to grow and add new services while remaining financially sustainable. The Council's financial position remains strong in terms of its cash, liquidity and recent performances against budget.

Communications

As part of the Council's commitment to continuing to improve the way we do business, we invited feedback through a community survey on the Council's performance and the issues which are most important to you. Overall we received 484 responses from a good cross-section of our community. You rated our highest performance in areas of friendliness of staff, financial management, traffic movement throughout the municipal area, and appearance of Ulverstone and Penguin CBDs, with 62% of respondents indicating fairly high satisfaction with the Council, which is an excellent response.

A review is currently under way of our communication and the way in which we engage with the community. In recent years we have committed to a monthly page in *The Advocate*, however your feedback has indicated a preference for a Council newsletter as a means of receiving information through the Council. This, along with other options, will be investigated to ensure we communicate in the most effective manner, keeping you informed and engaged in activities within your community.



Councillor Jan Bonde, Mayor

July 2013