



MEDIA RELEASE

Subject: **2026-27 Annual Business Plan & Budget adopted unanimously**

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The Rural City of Murray Bridge has adopted its 2026-27 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

At a Special Meeting on Wednesday, 17 June, Council Members unanimously supported the plan – including a budget to deliver core services and the inclusion of capital projects that will help upgrade roads, footpaths and stormwater systems. The Plan also includes community projects such as the Pondi Playspace, BMX dirt track, public toilets and swimming centre efficiency upgrades.

In adopting the Budget, the Council has committed to a 3.9% average rate increase, being 1% below CPI and reflecting Council's desire to ease the cost-of-living pressures facing the local community.

In handing down this 2026-27 Plan, Mayor Wayne Thorley and other Council Members acknowledged that the goal of Council this year was to keep costs down for its community, while continuing to deliver key projects and services.

"We know that many in our community are doing it tough right now and our Council has reiterated at each point of this planning process that we're tightening out belt, because we don't want to add to this stress," Mayor Thorley said.

"From the outset, our goal has been to prioritise the needs of our residents, while also keeping an eye on the future and specifically, our growth plans. To say it's been challenging to strike this balance, would be an understatement.

"But what we have now is a strong and fair plan that keeps our average rate increase below CPI, while we continue to deliver on core public services and a range of positive community projects."

The Mayor also noted the work that Council had done to build relationships and advocacy on behalf of Murray Bridge, which continued to show up in State and Australian Government funding investment in to the Council area.

"We have the biggest commitment from the South Australian Government on record coming our way soon and have just signed a funding agreement for \$4.85M with the Australian Government for our major riverfront playspace," Mayor Thorley said.

"All levels of government have an eye on Murray Bridge's growth and the opportunities on offer here, which gives us confidence that our rural city has a strong and sustainable future."

CEO Heather Barclay acknowledged the ongoing financial implications of the global economic crisis would continue to have on Council costs including fuel, contracts, materials and more.

"Fortunately, we've done the work over the past three years to put Council in a strong, sustainable position - ensuring our operations are resilient and our rural city can continue to progress through this period of growth, investment and development," Ms Barclay says.

"We're also in a different operating environment now following the sale of the Lerwin Residential Aged Care Facility. This helps put Council in a surplus financial position for the first time in three years.

"Many of our day-to-day costs are being challenged by the global economic climate, and we are managing this as best we can in this budget, through delivering on core services, responsible financial management and continued progress on strategic priorities.

"Once again, we've also managed to reduce the rate in the dollar by approximately 9% this year, taking into account the Valuer General's most recent property value updates."

In 2026-27 Council will deliver a total capital works program of \$21m including \$12.4m on renewal and \$8.7m on enhancement, supported by \$6.35m in external grant funding.

At its Special Meeting, Council also adopted its Long Term Financial Plan, Fees and Charges Schedule and Rating Policy 2026-27.

More information on the Council's plans can be found here:

<https://www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/ABP>