



MEDIA RELEASE

Subject: **Council releases Draft 2026-27 ABP + Budget for consultation**

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The Rural City of Murray Bridge has released its Draft 2026-27 Annual Business Plan and Budget for consultation. It sets out what Council plans to deliver next year, including services, community projects and proposed rates.

In preparing this budget, Council has taken a balanced and responsible approach, carefully considering the increasing cost-of-living pressures facing households, while maintaining a strong focus on long-term financial sustainability.

Importantly, this approach has enabled Council to deliver an average general rate increase of 3.9%. This increase remains below CPI, helping to ease financial pressure on the community, while continuing to invest in the services and infrastructure for our rural city.

Mayor Wayne Thorley said Council had taken a considered and community-focused approach in developing the plan.

"What we're hearing from our community is that rising cost-of-living pressures are placing increasing financial stress on households. This budget is designed to ease that pressure while ensuring we continue to deliver essential services," Mayor Thorley said.

"Over the past three years, Council has worked hard to strengthen our financial position. We now have resilient operations that will support our city as it continues to grow.

"Our strong relationships with the State Government also position us to benefit from a record \$100 million investment in our rural city and outer townships over the next four years."

The draft plan proposes a capital works program of \$12.8m, featuring public toilet upgrades, stormwater upgrades, Swimming Centre works, footpath construction and a new BMX dirt bike track at Sturt Reserve.

It also supports ongoing investment in open space, recreation and road infrastructure programs, aligned with Council's long-term growth strategy.

Chief Executive Officer Heather Barclay said the budget reflects disciplined planning and a focus on maintaining stability.

"This budget concentrates on getting the fundamentals right. It ensures our day-to-day operations are fully supported and a modest surplus is delivered, while maintaining the capacity to invest in strategic priorities," Ms Barclay says.

"Our previous three years of strong financial planning means we're also able to stay within our borrowing limit and maintain existing services - providing stability and confidence for our community and staff."

"However, it's important to note that local government operations are preparing for the impact of rising costs of fuel, construction materials, contractors and interest rate pressures – and this could change the shape of project delivery this year."

Council acknowledges in the Plan, that following the sale of the Lerwin Residential Aged Care Facility last year, it is moving into a different operating environment. Following a resolution by Council, the investment of the sale proceeds will be considered by the newly elected Council later this year.

Council now invites the community to provide feedback on the Draft 2026-27 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

In line with this, Council has also released its Draft Long Term Financial Plan, Draft Fees and Charges Schedule and Draft Rating Policy 2026-27 for community consultation.

How to provide feedback:

Community members can view the draft plan and budget and provide feedback via Council's consultation portal letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au. Paper copies can be found at the Local Government Centre and the Murray Bridge Library.

Council is encouraging the community to provide feedback on the plan via:

- **Online survey:** letstalk.murraybridge.sa.gov.au
- **Email response:** council@murraybridge.sa.gov.au
- **Post:** Rural City of Murray Bridge, PO Box 421, Murray Bridge SA 5253
- **Verbal submission:** To be made at the Council meeting on Tuesday 9 June. Each speaker is allocated a maximum of five minutes. Register your interest via phone (85391100) or email council@murraybridge.sa.gov.au.

Consultation closes 11.59PM, Tuesday 9 June 2026.

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