

Draft Budget 2023-2024

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

Draft Budget 2023-2024

WHEN: Wednesday, May 17 to Wednesday, June 7, 2023

ENGAGEMENT METHODS: To encourage residents to get involved, we promoted the opportunity for people to have their say through our communication channels, including public notices, emails, social media and a have your say page on makewodongayours.com.au.

RESPONSES

16 submissions through Make Wodonga Yours

6 email submissions

1 relevant comments on social media

COMMUNICATIONS

3297 emails

51.95% average open rate

37 click-throughs

3 Facebook posts

1959 reach

14 likes and reactions

2 Instagram posts

558 reach

2 likes and reactions

3 LinkedIn posts

1058 impressions

38 likes and reactions

438 website visits

372 unique pageviews

3 radio stations

88 ad plays

2 public notices

CITY OF WODONGA VIC



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FEEDBACK

SUMMARY

Overall budget and 10 year plan

- One submission considered the Draft Budget 2023-2024 *"a fair and reasonable budget considering the current financial constraints".*
- Two submissions would like to see the draft rejected as they are concerned about the financial sustainability of the current proposal.
  "A challenging and serious concern, that seems to have been overlooked, is the draft ten-year financial plan and the increasing deficit."
- Three submissions were concerned about proposal to borrow an additional $5,000,000 and felt that council should work towards reducing its borrowings rather than accumulating more debt.
  "Borrowing money to cover the costs of keeping what we currently have is not financially viable, sustainable or responsible over any sort of time frame"

Proposed 2 per cent rate rise

- Two submissions shared that they were supportive of the proposed 2 per cent rate rise
- Three submissions felt that a 2 per cent rate rise was insufficient and would lead to "*dire long term impacts*". They were also concerned about what is being cut to achieve the proposed low-rate rise.

Community Grants Program

- Two submissions fully support the changes to the community grants program
  "While charities and not-for-profit organisations play a vital role in our community, it isn't ratepayers' responsibility to give money to these entities."
- Five submissions expressed concerns about the changes to the community grants program and requested that the budget be reviewed to include funding for 2023-2024.
  "Council needs to amend this budget immediately and to ensure adequate funds are available in this FY as well as revise the approval process to something more realistic."

Wodonga Racecourse Grandstand

- Three submissions were not supportive of the Wodonga Racecourse Grandstand budget allocation. They queried why it was still included given the recent council decision to not proceed with the works.

Other comments

- The operation of the council's arts program and the substantial budget for the Hyphen gallery seem disproportionate to the actual community engagement and impact. (1 submission)
- $200,000 expenditure for Cube Big Screen to be an unnecessary expense (1 submission)
- Cut staff costs (1 submission)
- Cut operational costs (1 submission)



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SPECIFIC REQUESTS

- Request for a comprehensive review or audit of the cost of services and a significant reduction in overall spending as well as exploration of innovative approaches to service provision (2 submissions)
- Duplicate Yaralumla Drive from Pearce St to Huon Creek Road, round about at Yaralumla Road and Clarendon Avenue
- Uniformity among store fronts along High St with eateries and boutique retail outlets rather than services and empty shopfronts
- Mural on the water tower in High St
- More drawing cards like a fun putt putt mini golf, better restaurants like a Korean BBQ restaurant or Teppanyaki, extend the plaza shopping mall and add in a few more stores or a food court.
- Just outside Wodonga there's enough space for a D.F.O shopping attraction, or even a Costco or IKEA.
- Please consider being a RV friendly town.
- Complete WAVES by adding the medium pool and water slide which was promised. Build the medium pool to Water polo standards and potentially get funding from Waterpolo Australia.
- Get the youth cafe at the Grove up and running.
- Instate a Future Infrastructure Fund for a Level 1 Community Centre and secure support from other funding sources
- Finish off the four lanes of Melbourne road heading East from Morrison Street to Murphy Street and widen the Bridge over House Creek.
- The pathway along the Murray Valley Highway from Killara to Bandiana needs resurfacing and clearing of undergrowth for all who use the path to connect with the rail trail at Bandiana.
- More discussion between the council and Business Wodonga regarding the attraction of new and growth of existing businesses in Wodonga.



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FORMAL SUBMISSIONS

- **Greg Haysom**
  There are points for and against funding of the Local business support agency "Business Wodonga"
  On one hand there is a perception from some businesses and some of the general public that Business Wodonga was a puppet of Wodonga Council, and separating them will dispel this in the future, it may take a while!
  On the other, with over 3000 local businesses in Wodonga, and hopefully more coming, a strong local business group would be a huge benefit to council, helping draw more business to Wodonga.
  The Albury Business Connect model creates a very strong business support organisation, and with a much larger retail and business community, I see little likelihood of Wodonga ever catching up, if Businesses, ratepayers and Council can't support each other and work together.
  I would like to request that there be a lot of discussion to make Wodonga a location for existing and new businesses to want to come and grow.
  Maybe there is opportunity for Business Wodonga and the Councils Eco Dev department, that would allow closer working together, sharing some joint resources that may be council funded. this could keep separation, but with bipartisan support. Graham Jenkins does a fantastic job, but needs some help, an Eco Dev employee, who could potentially give Graham some hours per week may be a solution in some way.
  As a member of Business Wodonga leadership team, and a Wodonga Business owner who also lives in Wodonga, I feel very strongly that we can do better by working together.
  I would be happy to discuss this further, with any of you that think working together is the way forward.
- **Christopher Cox**
  Infrastructure Feedback from the Council indicated that there will be $4.5 Mil plus land cost determined by the Valuer General for the Level 1 Community Centre which requires population catchment of 10, 000.
  More planning is required from the Council and the Developer but community involvement is key to the success of the Community Centre, which I am guessing will be a mixed use development. Funding for the project hasn't been considered well enough and with rising costs the Council will need to put a plan in place sooner rather than later to alleviate the burden of another rate rise. These costs will go up and I suggest a Future Infrastructure Fund for this project with hopeful support from other funding sources like Department of Planning and Community Development, Community Support Fund and Creating Better Places Program and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development along with Sustainability Victoria. Suggest $500,000 each year for five years with Interest on capital set aside.
- **Graham Jenkin**
  I make this submission on Council's Draft Budget where there will be no community grants program on 2023-24.
  Moving the process to annual submissions commencing January 2024 for Grants to be awarded after July 1, 2024, takes away hope for the thousands of volunteers in our community who form our heart and soul. These mostly small groups will now be disillusioned knowing that Council do not value their selfless contributions of time, labor and means for the benefit of others not as fortunate as the majority of the population.
  For the four individual councilors that voted for this, I ask you to look into your hearts and souls and re-consider your positions individually for the benefit of not just the community that you purport to represent, but for your own consciences so that you can walk amongst for your fellow residents with pride, rather than the shame that this course of action is bringing onto each and everyone of you.
  It is not too late to have community grants in the next fiscal year. Please make the change, set aside funds to be able to assist community organisations so that Wodonga continues to be a vibrant city with an engaged community rather than one whose soul is being plundered.

FORMAL SUBMISSIONS

- **Wendy McInnes**
  I believe that if the rate increase is Not more than 2%, the detrimental impact on our City will be 10 fold in the future. Please do not do this and then hit rate payers with a large rate rise in the future. Balanced is better.
  I am extremely concerned about the "services" that will be CUT in this budget to achieve this low-rate rise will be detrimental to our City in the future. As the caretakers voted in on the Council Board by the community of Wodonga, you owe the community a complete list of the services that will be cut in order to make a true and correct judgement of the 2% as opposed to 3.5%. We are all waiting in anticipation for that list so we can then make a call. Honesty and transparency.
  The community deserve to know the true and correct pricing for the removal of the Pine Trees in Lawrence Street and associated works in conjunction to the road and path works. I believe the figures quoted were pre covid and now fall way short of the true and correct costing. Please provide.
  Please outline and list ALL buildings that are owned by the citizens of Wodonga which have been payed for by way of funding, whether Local, State or Federal Governments and Wodonga Citizens rate payments. I believe that these building belong to the citizens of Wodonga as stakeholders, should therefore be available for use by the citizens of Wodonga. Please correct me if I have this wrong and the Council was able to pay for these with monies that did not come from all of the above coffers.
  The Volunteers and Community based groups can be the backbone of our community. As a rate payer of 2 properties, I am more than happy for part of my rates to be allocated to these groups for the continued benefit of their tireless works and commitments. Please leave the structure of the process of grants and assistance as it has been which works well.
  Finally, would Council please publish on all media's the motion that Councilor Hall presented in its true entirety she put forward on Monday 15th May Council's Meeting, and was seconded by Councilor Quilty, for ALL of the Community to view.
  I ask this because not all citizens of Wodonga are able to watch the live stream. The Community need to have a clear understanding of all points of the motion before making an informed input into the budget prospectus.
- **Dan Fewster**
  The draft budget appears to imply there will be no new community grants until 2024, Why is this the case?
  Furthermore, grant applications are being rolled into an annual budget review, again why is this the case?
  As someone managing a community conscious service provider and working with many others, I feel these changes will have a highly negative impact on the community.
  These community groups offer essential services and are often staffed with volunteers who are already stretched for time and resources. To expect them to plan their entire fiscal year in advance is unreasonable and will demotivate many from beginning to or continuing to offer these services. This change also excludes any providers or volunteer groups who are not ready to go prior to grant application time, some of these providers offer seasonal services or start only as particular issues arise.
  More thought needs to be given to how the community grants and funding models are developed lest Wodonga Council risk having a highly negative impact on the social fabric that holds our community together.
- **Kathy Gilchrist**
  Have funds been allowed to get the youth cafe at the Grove up and running. It's important that our youth have a dedicated space to meet and socialise.
- **Dale**
  Initially when Waves was planned there was going to be a medium pool and water slide, when is this going to be completed?
  Could the medium pool be built to Water polo standards and potentially get funding from Waterpolo Australia?
- **Chris Phillips**
  The council needs to consider the services which provide the most value for money. Areas in this draft can be trimmed to provide the community with better value for money.
- **Heinz (Harry) Apitz**
  I consider this a fair and reasonable budget considering the current financial constraints.
- **Robert Peffer**
  Duplicate Yaralumla Drive from Pearce St to Huon Creek Road, round about at Yaralumla Road and Clarendon Avenue
- **Brenton Ford**
  I am writing to submit a formal council submission requesting a comprehensive review of the cost of services and a significant reduction in overall spending.
  As a concerned member of the community, I believe it is imperative for the council to take proactive measures in managing public finances efficiently while maintaining essential services and meeting the needs of our residents.

In light of the prevailing economic challenges faced by ratepayers, it is crucial to adopt a responsible and prudent approach to budgeting. I propose a thorough examination of all areas of expenditure to identify opportunities for cost savings and ensure the allocation of resources is optimised.
To initiate this process, I suggest conducting a detailed audit of existing programs and services to assess their efficiency and effectiveness. By critically evaluating each initiative, the council can identify areas where cost reductions can be made without compromising the quality or impact of services. This evaluation should include a careful analysis of staffing levels, contracts with external service providers, and the overall value for money provided by each service.
Furthermore, I recommend implementing strict financial controls and accountability mechanisms to monitor spending across all departments. By enforcing rigorous budgetary discipline, the council can identify unnecessary expenditures, eliminate waste, and streamline operations. This will require a comprehensive review of internal processes and the establishment of performance indicators to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.
In addition to reviewing existing expenses, I encourage the council to explore innovative approaches to service provision that can yield cost savings. This could involve collaborating with neighbouring local governments or seeking regional partnerships to pool resources and share the costs of delivering certain services. By leveraging economies of scale and implementing shared service models, we can achieve greater efficiency while reducing expenditure.
While it is essential to cut costs, it is equally important to engage and communicate with the community throughout this process. I recommend establishing channels for public feedback and consultation, allowing residents to voice their concerns and provide suggestions for areas where spending reductions could be implemented. Engaging the community in this manner fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration, ensuring that the budget reflects the needs and aspirations of our residents.
I understand that implementing spending reductions is a complex and challenging endeavour. However, by conducting a comprehensive review of the cost of services, enforcing financial discipline, exploring innovative approaches, and involving the community, we can achieve a more sustainable financial framework that addresses the concerns of our ratepayers.
Thank you for considering my submission. I trust that you will carefully evaluate the proposals outlined above and take appropriate actions to ensure the responsible management of public finances. By implementing spending reductions and optimising resource allocation, we can foster a financially resilient council that continues to deliver essential services effectively.

- **Michelle Cowan**
  Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the 2023/24 Budget and 10-year financial plan.
  In light of the burden of the increasing costs of living on ratepayers, it is understandable and commendable that Council has looked for opportunities to adopt a lower rate increase of 2%, than the rate cap of 3.5%.
  Some concern has been raised about the possibility of funding not being available for community grants in this upcoming financial year. There are reams of evidence that tell governments about the leverage and multiplier effect of small community investments, and the positive impact on community wellbeing. Notwithstanding the need to improve the governance of Council-funded community grants in Wodonga, the loss of these small grants in 2023/24 would be disappointing, especially at a time when volunteer groups need continued support post-COVID.
  The more challenging and serious concern, that seems to have been overlooked, is the draft ten-year financial plan and the increasing deficit.
  For example; the cash flow is projected to go from a surplus/inflow of $25,815 million (23/24) to an outflow/deficit of $37,427 million in 10 years - a difference of $63,242 million.
  Compounding this is a cash flow modelling that does not appear to address how the necessary borrowings will be repaid or the interest costs to service the growing debt.
  No explanation has been provided for the dire longer term impacts on the financial sustainability of Council. It appears that Council is blithely heading for a crisis of liquidity.
  Why has this Council put forward a Budget without explaining the dire financial forecast, nor how it intends to prudently manage income and spending for new and ongoing projects into the future without significant detriment to future generations?
  I implore Council to reject this draft Budget and return it to Council staff for a thorough consideration of the future sustainability and provide Wodonga residents with either a balanced budget projection (with clear assumptions) or a justifiable explanation for leading Wodonga to a considerable cash crisis into the near future.
  In rejecting this budget, Council should request that staff develop a plan to restore this budget to a sustainable position.

FORMAL SUBMISSIONS

- **Clare Parslow**
  Dear Wodonga Council,
  I feel deeply concerned regarding certain aspects of the council's spending and budget allocation. As a aged pensioner ratepayer and concerned community member, I would like to provide feedback on the proposed budget for the financial year 2023-2024. I have reservations about some of the expenditures and financial decisions that I believe require further examination.
  Firstly, I fully support the changes to the community grants program. I strongly believe that council funds should be primarily allocated towards providing essential services to residents and maintaining council assets. While charities and not-for-profit organisations play a vital role in our community, it isn't ratepayers' responsibility to give money to these entities.
  I'm even more apprehensive the council is proposing to borrow an additional $5,000,000. As a ratepayer, I believe it is crucial for the council to work towards reducing its borrowings rather than accumulating more debt. No more debt than absolutely necessary please.
  Given the huge problems involving gambling I strongly object to any of my rates being allocated to support the Racecourse Grandstand, I question why $732,000 is still included in the budget despite the council's recent decision not to proceed with the capital works. It is important to provide a transparent explanation for this budgetary item and ensure that ratepayers' money is allocated to benefit every rate payer not just a sole t few.
  Concerned rate payer
- **Brenton Ford**
  Dear Wodonga Council,
  I am writing to express my concerns regarding certain aspects of the council's spending and budget allocation. As a ratepayer and concerned community member, I would like to provide feedback on the proposed budget for the financial year 2023-2024. I have reservations about specific expenditures and financial decisions that I believe require further examination.
  Firstly, I fully support the changes to the community grants program. I strongly believe that council funds should be primarily allocated towards providing essential services to residents and maintaining council assets. While charities and not-for-profit organisations play a vital role in our community, it is not the council's responsibility to allocate ratepayers' money to these entities.
  Furthermore, I have concerns regarding the allocation of funds to arts development programs. The operation of the council's arts program and the substantial budget for the Hyphen gallery seem disproportionate to the actual community engagement and impact. I request information regarding the number of weekly visitors to the Library, the Gallery, Cube, and Bonegilla Migrant Centre to better assess the utilisation and value for money of these facilities. It is essential to ensure that the council's spending aligns with the needs and interests of the majority of residents.
  I am also apprehensive about the council's proposal to borrow an additional $5,000,000. As a ratepayer, I believe it is crucial for the council to work towards reducing its borrowings rather than accumulating more debt. The allocation of a significant portion of ratepayers' money towards interest payments is not an ideal use of funds and could potentially strain the council's financial resources in the long run.
  In addition, I find the proposed expenditure of $200,000 on the installation of a big screen in the Cube Courtyard to be an unnecessary expense. While I understand the importance of community spaces, it is vital to prioritise essential services and infrastructure maintenance over discretionary expenditures that may have limited long-term benefits for residents.
  Regarding the Racecourse Grandstand, I question why $732,000 is still included in the budget despite the council's recent decision not to proceed with the capital works. It is important to provide a transparent explanation for this budgetary item and ensure that ratepayers' money is allocated based on accurate and up-to-date information.
  Lastly, I request further details regarding the Exhibition Centre Redevelopment, for which $300,000 has been allocated in the budget. It would greatly assist in evaluating this project if the council could provide a comprehensive overview of the redevelopment plans and the expected benefits it will bring to the community.
  In conclusion, I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed budget. I urge the council to carefully reconsider the allocation of funds and prioritise essential services, infrastructure maintenance, and the financial well-being of ratepayers. It is crucial to ensure that every expenditure is justified, transparent, and aligned with the needs and expectations of our community.
  Thank you for considering my concerns. I trust that you will take them into account during the budget review process and provide clear and comprehensive responses to the questions raised. It is through open dialogue and transparent decision-making that we can work towards a financially responsible and sustainable future for our community.

- **Mike Fraser**

General Comments:
My initial impression of this budget is that it is clearly focussed on maintaining what we have with very little investment in the future of our community. The major concern I have is even with minimal funds allocated to supporting the growth needs of our city we don't have enough income to maintain what we have now, and need to borrow ($5mill) just to keep the status quo.
Borrowing money to cover the costs of keeping what we currently have is not financially viable, sustainable or responsible over any sort of timeframe (short, medium or long).
Borrowing money to build assets for future generations makes sense as long as the costs of interest and repayments can be covered within the organisations financial structure. This budget and commentary provided does not identify the projects/activities which justify the need for borrowing funds, or provide any explanation of why council needs to borrow funds and how they will be re-payed.
When looking at this budget together with the 10 Year Financial Plan, with it appears that council has asked us to accept a budget which appears to be a launching pad to financial unsustainability.
In my submission for the 2022/23 budget I stated that at the time that over the last 8 years council had accumulated too much cash in the bank, principally as a result of delayed operational and capital projects. In this budget and financial plan "money in the bank" is going to move from over $50mill in June 2022 to nothing in 2026/27 and negative every year after that (which is not actually possible)
Clearly "acceptance" of a plan of this kind cannot be allowed to happen, and is irresponsible and unacceptable for any "board/council" to allow to happen. The fact that such a plan has been presented to the community without explanation must be addressed, along with clear justification as to why such a plan has been presented in the first place.
In recent times council has established a Finance and Budget Delegated Committee, it is very clear that based on the long term plan that this council has presented to our community there is a lot of work to be done by this group to get everything back to a sustainable future.

Rate Increases - how big should they be?
Wrongly (or rightly) almost all of the debate/discussion around the council budget has been, and will continue to be around what is the right level of rate increase the community should have to pay. To this discussion I have the following comments:
a) Having 'lower' rate increases at the expense of our future financial sustainability as presented in the 10 year plan just doesn't make sense. Are we risking our future generations for the sake of short term relief. I would much rather pay a bit more to protect what we have than risk losing it. Because once it's gone, we won't get it back.
b) I have listened for a number of years now about Wodonga's high rates and the need to make them "affordable". What I would like to see clearly explained is; a) at what level will the rates be "affordable", b) where on the rating scale compared to other council do we want to be and where do we sit now, c) how big is that gap with what we have now, and d) what is the strategy to get there without negatively impact the financial sustainability of council or reducing services the community believes it deserves. Having a clear picture of where the goal posts are, and how far we need to kick is essential, otherwise we will never know if we are there or not.
c) From a personal household budget management view, I am a lot more concerned about how I manage the much larger (% and value) increases in my energy, food and transport cost than whether my rates bill will go up by 60 or 80 dollars. At least I have a bit of a feel for where that $60 goes..... I have no idea what happens to the extra hundreds of dollars I am paying for gas and electricity, or if the increases are justified or not.



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ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

INTERNAL SUBMISSIONS

SUBMISSION SUMMARY

- Fees and Charges Schedule 9 - Civic Services: Amend the Pensioner Dog and Cat Registration fees to 50% of the standard fee - $15.00;
- Removal of Pine Trees Lawrence Street: Allow officers to use the current $50,000 allocation to properly plan and consult with the community and make a budget bid to the 2024/2025 budget process; and
- William Page Drive: Increase the allocation in the draft 2023/2024 capital budget from $50,000 to $80,000 to cover the costs associated with the planning and full detailed design of William Page Drive.
- Amendment to scheduling of Regional Projects contributions: Timing changes in 2023-2024 to 2027-2028
- Increase in FAG income for 2023-2024: Increased grant income of $331,559
- Increase in Workcover and Insurance: Increased expenditure of approximately $523,000.

FEES AND CHARGES

The Council resolved that the Fees and Charges Schedule be included as part of the Draft Budget 2023-2024 and reflect that sterilised cat and dog registration fees be reduced from $54.00 to $30.00 and that pensioner sterilised cat and dog registration fees be reduced from $27.00 to $20.00.

The reduction above sets an income loss of approximately $157,000.

With officers provided with more time to evaluate the above, it has been determined that the *Domestic Animal Act, 1994 (DAA)* requires at Section 15(6)(a) that a Council must waive 50% of a registration fee which a person would otherwise be required to pay for a dog or a cat if that person is an eligible recipient within the meaning of the *State Concessions Act, 2004.*

Generally, this would apply to pensioners who own a cat of a dog.

In accordance with the DAA, and if the Council resolves to accept the loss of income as set out above, the Fees and Charges, Schedule 9 – Civic Services for 2023/2024 will have to be amended as follows:

Sterilised Dog	–	$30.00
Pensioner Sterilised Dog	-	$15.00 (being 50% of the above fee).
Sterilised Cat	-	$30.00
Pensioner Sterilised Cat	-	$15.00 (being 50% of the above fee).

It is anticipated that the further reduction of the Pensioner rate by $5.00 will result in an additional loss of approximately **$11,500.**

The councillors also need to recognise that a compulsory fee of $4.16 per registration is paid to Animal Welfare Victoria – further reducing the income to the Council.

INTERNAL SUBMISSIONS

LAWRENCE STREET TREE REMOVAL

The Council resolution of the March 2023 Council meeting minuted the following:

> **"The budget expenditure be increased by $50,000 to incorporate removal of the pine trees in Lawrence Street outside the Wodonga Tennis Centre ..."**

While the two recent quotes obtained by the Mayor suggest that the removal of the 18 pine trees fronting the tennis courts in Lawrence Street can be done for $50,000, the risks associated with having to do additional, or subsequent works, have not been adequately considered.

These include, but are not limited to the following.

- Once the trees are removed and the stumps ground down, how do we deal with the decaying root systems and a subsequent and potentially collapsing roadway and nature strip?
- How do we deal with the existing damaged kerb and channel and how do we deal with further damage to the kerb and channel in the process of the stumps being ground down or removed?
- How do we deal with stormwater runoff from the nature strip onto the tennis courts (the kerb and channel is higher than the courts with the roots currently absorbing or detaining much of the runoff)?
- Once the trees are removed, what is the finished product – do we install additional and cut-off drainage, a concrete or bitumen footpath, do we undertake further landscaping and associated tree planting, do we re-fence the facility – these issues are not all understood and have not been resolved and unlikely to be if we continue to scope projects on the run, and in the Chamber;
- Officers would recommend reducing Lawrence Street to a single lane all the way through and over the bridge – how do we consult and engage with the community, and what amenity benefits would that change provide us with – space for a cycling lane, wider footpath areas, better landscaping and parking opportunities – again, aspects requiring some detailed investigation and assessments?

Proper planning is required and if the councillors hold the view that these trees have to be removed, there is the need to allow the officers the opportunity to undertake proper planning and consultation prior to implementing any works.

Request the $50,000 allocated in the draft 2023/2024 Budget be used for planning during the next financial year and that a well-considered budget submission be made to the 2024/2025 budget process.

WILLIAM PAGE DRIVE (PLANNING)

A recent planning permit application for the development of an industrial land parcel on the corner of Chapple Street and William Page Drive has brought forward a requirement to plan and design the whole of the length of William Page Drive (WPD) from its intersection with Chapple Street to the Bandiana Link Road.

Under direction, Scope have presented fee proposals from a team of suitably experienced consultants to undertake the investigations, feature surveys, design and traffic auditing for the length of road (circa 750m) and have ascertained that these costs are in the order of $100,000.

Council has written to the remaining three landowners who are located directly adjacent to WPD and proposed to them a cost-sharing model to cover the design costs of the roadway. This would see the costs shared, with council's contribution being in the order of $10,000.

However, if the three landholders are not supportive of the cost–share proposal, and no co-contributions are received, council's contribution would increase to approximately $80,000.

It is thus proposed that the allocation of $50,000 made in the draft 2023/2024 capital budget be increased to $80,000 and used to cover the costs associated with the full design of William Page Drive. If the three adjoining landholders elect to make a contribution, an appropriate budget variation will be prepared.

INTERNAL SUBMISSIONS

REGIONAL PROJECTS

Following the confirmation of funding for the Regional Projects implementation, to meet the matching funds requirement, the council will need its allocation across three years as follows.

2023-2024

- Original Budget: $100,000 capital expenditure ($150,000 to be carried forward from 22/23)
- Change required: Increase capital expenditure $750,000 and increase income $500,000

2024-2025

- Original Budget: $2,950,000 capital expenditure
- Change required: Increase capital expenditure $50,000 and increase income $1,500,000

2025-2026

- Original Budget: $0 capital expenditure
- Change required: increase capital expenditure $1,000,000 and increase income $500,000

2027-2028

- Original Budget: $1,500,000 capital expenditure
- Change required: Decrease Capital Expenditure $1,500,000

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

Financial Assistance Grants are provided by the Commonwealth Government to local government. The grant comprises of general purpose grants and local roads funding.

The council has been advised of an increase to estimated finding for the 2023 – 2024 Financial Year as follows.

General Purpose Grants 2023-2024

- Original Budget: $5,595,788 grant income
- Change required:$5,882,812 grant income - increase of $287,024 to grant income

Local Road Funding 2023-2024

- Original Budget: $966,535 grant income
- Change required:$1,011,070 grant income - increase of $44,535 to grant income

WORKCOVER AND INSURANCE

The council has received the estimated premium, previously not available when preparing the budget, for Workcover for the 2023-2024 financial year. The the premium has increased higher than anticipated from $500,000 to $836,000.

- Change required: additional $336,000 expenditure

The council has been advised that there will be approximately a 30% increase to premiums, which is higher than anticipated when preparing the budget. The council is still waiting on the premium to be issued, which is due mid-June. The current estimate included in the budget is $623,400. It is anticipated this will need to be increased to $810,420.

- Change required: additional $187,020 expenditure



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ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

QUESTIONS RAISED

QUESTION	ANSWER
Why is $732,000 still in the budget for the capital works on the Wodonga Racecourse Grandstand despite the Council's recent decision not to spend it?	The council has sought the consent of the grandstand asset owner to make a determination on whether to demolish the grandstand. Should this permission not be provided, the council will need to consider what capital works could be required. As such this budget item is required.
I request further details regarding the Exhibition Centre Redevelopment, for which $300,000 has been allocated in the budget. It would greatly assist in evaluating this project if the council could provide a comprehensive overview of the redevelopment plans and the expected benefits it will bring to the community.	The redevelopment of the Wodonga Exhibition Centre received $1.9 million in federal funding for the project. The upgrade of the existing infrastructure that currently has no heating or cooling will provide a large, accessible, multi-functional Emergency Relief and Event centre with supporting amenities. This project will be completed in the 2022-2023 year.
Initially when WAVES was planned there was going to be a medium pool and water slide, when is this going to be completed?	A review into Wodonga's aquatics facility was presented to the May 2023 council meeting with a resolution to consider planning and design works associated with a second body of water at Wodonga Aquatics Venue and Event Space (WAVES), for the purpose of additional community programming space and investigate future development options for the WSLC, including the future opportunities of the expansion of WAVES.
Capital works: Cube replacement of courtyard big screen - How many people attend? Do we need it?	The current position of the screen in the Cube Courtyard is not ideal given the direction of the sun which creates glare on the screen, rendering it unusable in summer until after 9pm. Further, the screen components are starting to fail as it nears the end of its life. The screen provides the opportunity for increased use for community events and standing room only concerts within the venue, which leads to both economic and social benefit.
Building Renewal Capital Budget of $2596k... which council buildings have been identified for this proposed spend?	There are various council building renewal projects included in the Building Renewal Capital Works Budget including the Wodonga Sports and Leisure Centre ($1.2m – heating and cooling and upgrade of toilets) and 80% of the remainder goes to programmed renewal work and 20% for day-to-day maintenance over range of council's facilities.

QUESTIONS RAISED

QUESTION	ANSWER
Plant replacement: Does council replace plant and lease plant?	Yes. Council purchases and leases plant, based on a number of factors. There is less financial commitment in leasing, however, there may be restrictions on how council can use the plant depending on the contract. Over time plant that is owned may break down which disrupts our ability to deliver services and projects for the community. In some cases the plant can be repaired and at other times plant requires replacement as the ongoing costs of breakdowns are greater than the cost of replacing the plant outright.
Lease liabilities - what is the other?	This relates to information technology equipment for all council services.
2021/2022 Actual cash surplus funds of $3,511,381 (October 17, 2022 council meeting). Where/how have these funds been utilised in the 2023/24 budget?	As detailed in the report to council on October 17, 2022, the surplus funds were retained to be used for priority projects in 2022-2023. These funds have been utilised to offset increasing costs for the Baranduda Fields project in the current financial year.
During 2022/23 unbudgeted land sales totaling $7,176K have been completed..... Where have these funds been utilised during the current financial year, or in the draft budget?	These funds have been utilised for capital projects including Roche Drive and the Logic Detention Basin.
I request information regarding the number of weekly visitors to the Library, the Gallery, Cube, and Bonegilla Migrant Centre to better assess the utilisation and value for money of these facilities.	Visitor numbers for various venues are listed below. Detailed explanations of each service can be found in the operating budget by business unit. • Hyphen (library-gallery): More than 83,000 people in 2021-2022, forecast 110,000 visitors in 2022-2023 • The Cube Wodonga: More than 246 events with more than 11,800 registered participants with more than 52,000 people through the venue across the year for 2022-2023 to date • Bonegilla Migrant Experience: In 2022 BME hosted 13,740 visitors through the Welcome Centre, 129 tours and 31 school groups as well as held its 75th anniversary event.
Economic development: Investment attraction support for business development - What net gain did we gain in 22/23?	The Economic Development team work across several areas providing business support following the COVID-19 pandemic, advising of funding opportunities and providing promotion opportunties. The team has responded to acute issues through the facilitation of infrastructure installation with government funding and support of local job expos. The team also facilitates inquiry for business attraction, Logic and commercial and industrial land across the city. A detailed explanation of this service can be found in the Operating Budget by Business Unit pages 94 – 95 and page 120.

QUESTIONS RAISED

QUESTION	ANSWER
Events program: Coordinate the events program - Why is this so expensive?	Community events and activities have attracted more than 25,400 in person and a further 5500 online. The Event Attraction Program supported five events in 2022-2023 to date, with the estimated total direct and indirect effect of $8.3 million to the Albury Wodonga economy. A detailed explanation of this service can be found in the Operating Budget by Business Unit from pages 41 - 45.
Event attraction: Attraction of major events to the region - What events did we attract over and above 21/22?	
Tourism - How many extra tourists above 21/22?	The recently released 2022 Visitor Economy Trends showed The total economic impact of tourism to the Albury Wodonga economy was $1.157 billion in 2022, an increase of 96% on the previous year and a 15% increase from 2019. Domestic overnight visitors to Albury Wodonga increased by 106%, representing an almost $505 million injection into the local economy – a $323.5 million boost on the previous year. Domestic day visitors also increased by 20% compared to the previous year, representing a $140 million positive impact to the economy.
Bonegilla Migrant Experience: Operation of Bonegilla Migrant Experience - Increase of 43k from 22/23. This is extravagant expenditure for little return.	In 2022 BME hosted 13,740 visitors through the Welcome Centre, hosted 129 tours and 31 school groups and the 75th anniversary event. A detailed explanation of this service can be found in the Operating Budget by Business Unit from pages 41 - 45.
Arts development - Operation of Council's arts program - How many people visited the arts centre?	Arts and cultural development foster the development of a holistic community that is inclusive of and encourages a range of diverse art and cultural experiences that are participatory, entertaining, intellectual and educational. Hyphen (library-gallery) had more than 83,000 people in 2021-2022, forecast 110,000 visitors in 2022-2023. There are more than 12,000 library members of the service. A detailed explanation of these services can be found in the Operating Budget by Business Unit from pages 41 - 45.
Gallery: Operation of Hyphen Gallery services - Increase of 39k from 22/23. How many people actually came to visit the art gallery?	
Library: Operations of Hyphen Library services -How many people attended the library?	
The Cube: Management and operation of The Cube - How many attended the Cube for functions?	In 2022-23 to date, The Cube Wodonga has hosted more than 240 events with more than 11,800 registered participants and more than 52,000 people through the venue across the year. A detailed explanation of this service can be found in the Operating Budget by Business Unit pages 41 – 45.

QUESTIONS RAISED

QUESTION	ANSWER
Marketing: Promotion of the city - Why spend 286K on Tourism and 852K on Marketing/Promoting City? Double dip.	The tourism allocation is for the MOU with AlburyCity for the management of the Visit Albury Wodonga brand and activities. The marketing budget covers corporate information distribution, advertising costs (newspaper notices and positions vacant) and the marketing allocations for council-run venues.
Community relations: Informing the community of council activities and related feedback - Why is this so expensive?	The area includes several business units responsible for the functions of communicating with and engaging our community across a range of mediums and touchpoints. This includes the areas of communications, community engagement and volunteer co-ordination.

*** The formal submissions have been paraphrased for legibility. The submissions are included in full in the provided engagement snapshot.**

Submission summary*	Staff recommendation
Clare Parslow Supports changes to the community grants program and that council funds should be primarily allocated towards providing essential services to residents and maintaining council assets. Concerns raised about additional borrowings of $5 million and believe the council should be reducing borrowings. Objects to allocation towards grandstand.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. There is a provision for $5 million of new borrowings, should the option to purchase strategic land and building assets be exercised or if the requirement for funds to be utilised as bridging finance because of the timing of when funds are received from land sales. The council has sought the consent of the grandstand asset owner to make a determination on whether to demolish the grandstand. Should this permission not be provided, the council will need to consider what capital works could be required. As such this budget item is required. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Brenton Ford Calls for a thorough examination of all areas of expenditure to identify opportunities for cost savings and ensure the allocation of resources is optimised. Recommends channels for engaging and communicating the community and allowing community to raise concerns.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The Local Government Act 2020 addresses planning and financial management through the Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework. The legislative requirements include the development of strategic planning, budgeting and annual reporting documents. The council has recently undertaken an organisational strategic review and developed a roadmap to deliver efficiency gains and consideration on how to best provide services for our community in a financially sustainable way. The council has a variety of ways in which it informs the community including social media, newsletters, websites, newspaper notices, advertising and media. The community can engage with the council through its consultation portal Make Wodonga Yours, through in-person consultation opportunities. They can also provide feedback and find out information through the customer service centre in person or by phone, websites and social media.

	Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget
Brenton Ford Supports changes to the community grants program and that council funds should be primarily allocated towards providing essential services to residents and maintaining council assets. Questioned the use of arts and cultural venues and programs and their utilisation. Concerns raised about additional borrowings of $5 million and believe the council should be reducing borrowings. Questioned allocations towards Cube Courtyard big screen and racecourse grandstand. Requested details regarding $300,000 in funding for the exhibition centre redevelopment.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. Visitor numbers for various venues are listed below. Detailed explanations of each service can be found in the operating budget by business unit. • Hyphen (library-gallery): More than 83,000 people in 2021-2022, forecast 110,000 visitors in 2022-2023 • The Cube Wodonga: More than 246 events with more than 11,800 registered participants with more than 52,000 people through the venue across the year for 2022-2023 to date • Bonegilla Migrant Experience: In 2022 BME hosted 13,740 visitors through the Welcome Centre, 129 tours and 31 school groups as well as held its 75th anniversary event. There is a provision for $5 million of new borrowings, should the option to purchase strategic land and building assets be exercised or if the requirement for funds to be utilised as bridging finance because of the timing of when funds are received from land sales. The current position of the screen in the Cube Courtyard is not ideal given the direction of the sun which creates glare on the screen, rendering it unusable in summer until after 9pm. Further, the screen components are starting to fail as it nears the end of its life. The screen provides the opportunity for increased use for community events and standing room only concerts within the venue, which leads to both economic and social benefit. The council has sought the consent of the grandstand asset owner to make a determination on whether to demolish the grandstand. Should this permission not be provided, the council will need to consider what capital works could be required. As such this budget item is required. The redevelopment of the Wodonga Exhibition Centre received $1.9 million in federal funding for the project. The upgrade of the existing infrastructure that currently has no heating or cooling will provide a large, accessible, multi-functional Emergency Relief and Event centre with supporting amenities. This

	project will be completed in the 2022-2023 year. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Michelle Cowan Commends council seeking opportunities to adopt a lower rate increase of 2%, than the rate cap of 3.5%. Raised concern about funding not being available for community grants and the loss of such grants for volunteer groups, particularly post-pandemic. Cited as a challenging and serious concern of the increasing deficit in the draft 10-year financial plan and the lack of explanation for the longer term impacts on the financial sustainability of council. Calls for the draft budget to be rejected, reviewed and restored to a sustainable position.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The council actively reviewed the operating costs proposed in the 2023-2024 budget process whilst balancing the requirements of maintaining the current level of service to the community. It was resolved at its May meeting to consolidate the grant process with the annual budget submission process. A further report on the governance framework for that process will be presented to a future council meeting. The council is financially sustainable in the short-term and acknowledges that due to the current economic environment, there are many financial challenges over the long term which need to be addressed. The Council has recently undertaken an organisational strategic review and developed a roadmap to deliver efficiency gains and consideration on how to best provide services for our community in a financially sustainable way in the longer term. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Heinz (Harry) Apitz Consider draft budget fair and reasonable considering the current financial constraints.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Robert Peffer Request to duplicate Yarralumla Drive from Pearce St to Huon Creek Road with a roundabout at Yarralumla Road and Clarendon Avenue	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. This is a VicRoads managed road and there are no plans for duplication. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Chris Phillips Call for the council needs to consider the services which provide the most value for money.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The council has recently undertaken an organisational strategic review and developed a roadmap to deliver efficiency

	gains and consideration on how to best provide services for our community in a financially sustainable way in the longer term. Included as part of the Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework and strategy roadmap is business and service planning, service reviews and continuous improvement initiatives. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Dale Query regarding for second body of water – medium pool – and water slide at WAVES that was part of initital planning. Request it be built to water polo standards for funding opportunities from Waterpolo Australia.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. A review into Wodonga's aquatics facility was presented to the May 2023 council meeting with a resolution to consider planning and design works associated with a second body of water at Wodonga Aquatics Venue and Event Space (WAVES), for the purpose of additional community programming space and investigate future development options for the WSLC, including the future opportunities of the expansion of WAVES. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Kathy Gilchrist Query around funds for the youth cafe at the Woodland Grove .	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The building has been bought by Junction Support Services and refurbishment and future plans for the site are being undertaken by that organisation with no requests of assistance from the council. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Dan Fewster Query around removal of community grants and applications being rolled into an annual budget review with concerns around negative impact of change on the community.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The council resolved at its May meeting to consolidate the grant process with the annual budget submission process. A further report on the governance framework for that process will be presented to a future council meeting. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Wendy McInnes Concerns if the rate increase is not more than 2% there will be larger impact or rate rise in the future and seeks to keep a balanced approach.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. Council officers considered the effects of a rate rise below the Rate Cap on the long-term financial position of the council and

Expressed concerns about cuts to services, the future negative impact and what will be cut to make a judgement on a rate rise. Asked for the true costs for the removal of the pine trees in Lawrence St and associated works. Asked for all buildings owned by the city. Supported rates going to community groups and the grants process for their work in the community. Requested a copy of the motion regarding the budget.	presented this at the council meeting held on May 15, 2023. While the reduced rate increase still presents a short-term sustainable position, officers acknowledged that due to the current economic environment, there are many financial challenges over the long term which need to be addressed. The council has recently undertaken an organisational strategic review and developed a roadmap to deliver efficiency gains and consideration on how to best provide services for our community in a financially sustainable way in the longer term. The pine tree removal project is detailed elsewhere in this report. Council has a detailed Building Asset Management Plan which identifies the buildings owned by council and outlines the proposed 10-year renewal plan. All agendas and minutes from the council meetings can be found on the council's website. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Graham Jenkin Called for the community grants to be reinstated in the budget for the benefit of the city and the community and to support community groups.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. The council resolved at its May meeting to consolidate the grant process with the annual budget submission process. A further report on the governance framework for that process will be presented to a future council meeting. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Christopher Cox Planning and funding considerations for a level 1 community centre with an idea put forward to fund such projects through a Future Infrastructure Fund.	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback. Council has a 10-year Asset Plan which aims to facilitate more informed community engagement and a mutual understanding of the best use of Council infrastructure assets for which council is the custodian for the community. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**
Mike Fraser	The council thanks the submitter for their feedback.

Concerns that the budget doesn't look to investment in the community's future and doesn't include income to maintain the present situation. Query around borrowings and what they would be used for and how they will be repaid. Concerns around cash holdings moving to a deficit position in future years and with a lack of explanation. On rate increases, raises concerns around short-term relief at the expense of future sustainability.	There is a provision for $5 million of new borrowings, should the option to purchase strategic land and building assets be exercised or if the requirement for funds to be utilised as bridging finance because of the timing of when funds are received from land sales. The Council has recently undertaken an organisational strategic review and developed a roadmap to deliver efficiency gains and consideration on how to best provide services for our community in a financially sustainable way in the longer term. **Officers recommend no change to proposed 2023-2024 budget**