

Cardinia Shire Council Special Budget Submission Meeting 12th June 2012.

In addition to a written submission sent to Cardinia Shire Council regarding the 2012/13 Budget and forecast spending plan, the following comment is considered relevant.

It seems we go through this process each year and nothing changes. (Rather like the antique movie "Dinner for One" which is shown on television each New Year eve ?? However, if you haven't seen the film the joke will be lost to you in this reference).

A rates increase to 6.4% will impact on those who can least afford it, but as I have said repeatedly Council no longer responds realistically to the basic needs of the ratepayers who fund the spending program, but rather responds to the policies of State and Federal governments which require more and more revenue to fund more and more infrastructure and services.

Prevailing economic theory has been that when there are more us, everything will cost less but that is not proving to be the reality. Costs of goods and services are increasing continuously including Council rates.

One obvious solution would be to slow down growth projects and consolidate on current undertakings, get back to basics and balance the Budget to a more acceptable level. Shock and horror might be the first Meeting reaction, but would the economy really fall in a heap? We will never find out, because economic and administrative 'experts' will insist that you try to outpace the population growth, continue to borrow, extend the urban boundaries, compromise environmental priorities, create more and more precinct structure plans and growth strategies and rely on the ratepayers and taxpayers to pay the resulting and ever increasing costs that can never be covered by developer contributions.

This Budget has a small percentage of allocated funding to commence some long awaited and hard fought for projects for certain locations in the community. However, high priority is directed to new growth corridor sports facilities and recreation ovals while residents in some rural towns have to walk along the edge of busy roads to reach schools, kindergartens, community facilities and other daily needs. The obvious disparity in funding for urgently needed walking paths in comparison with major project recreation and sports ovals clearly needs attention.

It is noted that this year's Budget document has been easier to look at for those who bother to do so. Many ratepayers never look at it anyway. However, some detail is lacking in several areas including the major project listing which has been identified for clarification, please.

Currently a copy of the Council Budget is available at several Shire library facilities and Council headquarters. It is suggested that the Budget should also be more accessible at other locations such as U3A, LLINC and local community house or town community centres to provide more opportunity for interested or curious ratepayers to access. Council administration no longer conducts public budget information sessions, however future ward councillors should consider adopting the practice of holding a budget information session with local township committees and associations for their interest. It is important that ratepayers be informed about their right to request a review of their rates calculation and also that there are flexible arrangements to be accessed for anyone struggling to meet rates payment.

,Finally, a suggestion is offered for consideration in future Council Budgeting. The amount of revenue that can be collected from ratepayers based on the CPI for Councils could be calculated firstly. The estimated costs of basic services, wages and administrative costs, asset maintenance costs and all priority considered projects could be calculated after which all costs identified and estimated to be generated by the government required growth infrastructure and service provision could be deducted and provided as a statement to State government as their funding responsibility. It would then be interesting to note the reaction from taxpayers who would be liable to contribute further to finance the progressive State and Federal government growth policies.

The reality is we are being taxed via our municipal rates due to government cost shifting practices.

Gloria O'Connor

President, Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc. 12th June 2012.