

Cardinia Shire Council Draft Budget 2016/17 Draft amended Council Plan

Submission from Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association

Since examining the 2016/17 Council draft budget and amended Council plan, the following comment is considered relevant.

Firstly, this coming financial year for local Councils in Victoria will be regarded as a milestone in the view of most ratepayers as the rate capping policy is activated and a fairer and more reasonable approach to financial management of council administration becomes a reality. While costs to Councils in earlier times of lower population growth were based on more simple and individual requirements, now that government policy has designated certain municipalities as areas to accommodate rapid and exponential growth of population, the pressure on affected councils to pay for increased infrastructure and services has reached an unmanageable level and a more equitable and practical financial administration strategy is now required. In this regard it is therefore satisfactory to note in Council budgetary principles - "Number 6 Any further cost shifting by either state or federal government is to be rejected - Performance indicator: all cost shifting to be reported quarterly via council meetings."

The following points are raised for consideration and response, please.

The Big Budget Brainstorm has been emphasised as a reliable means of assessing community response to the implementation of rate capping. Compared to the total number of Cardinia Shire ratepayers, the low number of respondents at the local meetings plus an on-line forum could hardly be judged representative of the entire community. If this pre-budget consultation process is to continue in 2017/18, will it be conducted more seriously? Could you please advise why the title "Big Budget" Brainstorm was considered appropriate? Future consultation process should include community input about possible means of reducing Council costs and lowering expenditure.

More transparency is expected, particularly concerning the continuing process of carry over of funding for non-completed projects.

Sale of Council assets has been proposed to assist budget funding, where in the draft budget is the estimated financial return from sale of assets?

Sporting ovals and facilities are continuing to be requested at a rapid rate. What is the total of funds allocated in 2015/16 and 2015/17 budget?

Regarding rural unsealed road maintenance, what monitoring of the roads grading service is carried out? Frequent complaints about ineffective grading methods indicate that Council money is being wasted on road grading that is not satisfactory.

There is common ratepayer opinion that Council employee costs are too high and should be reduced or at least stabilised, when compared with the number of consultants being paid.

Regarding reference to “Staffing changes as a result of the organisation dealing with Rate Capping” requires explanation, please.

A general attitude of Council negativity concerning the capping of rates increase has been evident during the presentation of the draft budget and amended Council Plan. However, there should be a more positive attitude towards the changes required including acknowledgement of the need to bring the pace of spending to a more realistic and affordable level while keeping commitment to equitable allocation of funding for both urban and rural community needs.

As 2016 is a property revaluation year, Rate Notices should include that information and also separate details regarding the Garbage charges and Fire Services Levy.

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