

Reference: AR25/32506
Enquiries to: Mrs Sarah Philpott

MEMBERS

NOTICE is hereby given that the Mayor has called a Special Meeting of the Council to be held at the City Hall - Cave Gardens/Thugi, Mount Gambier on the following date and time:

**Tuesday 17 June 2025 - City Hall - Cave Gardens/Thugi, Mount Gambier
(commencing at 5:00 pm)**

For the purpose of:

1. 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget - Community Consultation Feedback

Please find Agenda attached.



Sarah PHILPOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

13 June 2025

AGENDA

Special Council Meeting

Tuesday 17 June 2025

I hereby give notice that an Special Meeting of Council will be held on:

Time: 5:00 pm
Date: Tuesday 17 June 2025
Location: City Hall
Cave Gardens/Thugi, Mount Gambier



Sarah Philpott
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
17 June 2025

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1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE BOANDIK PEOPLES AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND WHERE WE MEET TODAY. WE RESPECT THEIR SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAND AND RECOGNISE THE DEEP FEELINGS OF ATTACHMENT OUR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES HAVE WITH THE LAND.

2 APOLOGIES

Nil

3 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil

4 COUNCIL REPORTS

4.1 2025/2026 DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Author: Kahli Rolton, Manager Financial Services

Authoriser: Jane Fetherstonhaugh, General Manager Corporate and Regulatory Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council report titled '2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget - Community Consultation Feedback' as presented on Tuesday 17 June 2025 be noted.
2. That Council notes the written submissions and questions received on the 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget and Draft Long Term Financial Plan as attached to this report.
3. That Council thanks the organisations and individuals for their verbal submissions as presented at the Special Council Meeting on 17 June 2025.
4. That any significant changes to the 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget arising from the community consultation process be reported at the special meeting 24 June 2025 as part of considering the adoption of the final 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget.
5. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make minor textual changes to the 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget to correct typos and errors of fact and to update the Mayoral Message if required in consultation with the Mayor.

PURPOSE

To provide Council with comments, feedback and questions arising from the public consultation for the 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget and Draft Long Term Financial Plan.

BACKGROUND / OPTIONS

Key Documents - Council's Annual Business Plan and Budget (ABP) was formulated within the guiding principles detailed in its suite of Strategic Management Plans, including the City

of Mount Gambier Strategic Plan 2024-2028, Asset Management Plans (AMPs) and Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP). The Asset Management Plans, LTFP and Annual Business Plan and Budget were reviewed at the same time to ensure alignment and are intended to be reviewed together annually in future years. For noting, due to only minor updates to the AMPs for 2025/2026 to incorporate an additional year for 2035, these plans were not included as part of public consultation. The next formal review and adoption of AMPs will occur after development of the next iteration of the AMP/LTFP starting December 2025.

Public Consultation - at the Council meeting on 20 May 2025, Council endorsed the Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget for the purposes of public consultation in accordance with Council Policy P195 Community Consultation and Engagement and section 123 (4) of the Local Government Act.

Notification during the consultation period was provided through the following avenues:

Media Release - was issued on 22 May 2025 through Council's Newsroom to all local media outlets.

Media coverage

Date	Method	Media
20/05/2025	News Article	The SE Voice
21/05/2025	News Story	ABC South East (radio)
22/05/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (Mayor's Council meeting outcomes)
22/05/2025	Radio Interviews	ABC South East and Triple M
22/05/2025	News Article	The SE Voice
23/05/2025	News Article	The Border Watch
23/05/2025	News Article	The Mount Gambier Times
29/05/2025	Advertisement	The SE Voice
29/05/2025	Advertisement	The Mount Gambier Times
29/05/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (budget consultation open for feedback)
30/05/2025	Advertisement	The Border Watch
03/06/2025	News Article	The SE Voice
04/06/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (promotion information sessions and Special Council Meeting)
09/06/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (reminder information sessions reminder of close of written submissions)
05/06/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (reminder information sessions)
09/06/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Facebook (reminder information sessions)
09/06/2025	Social Media	City of Mount Gambier Instagram (story)



12/06/2025	Advertisement	The Mount Gambier Times (promote change of venue)
12/06/2025	Advertisement	The SE Voice (promote change of venue)

Have Your Say Website - the City of Mount Gambier Council's Have Your Say website provided links to the full Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget document, Draft Long Term Financial Plan, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and the submission form. The online Have Your Say City of Mount Gambier site was used as the primary method of consultation by Council to provide ease of access to the community and engagement statistics to be analysed by Council staff.

Council's Main Offices - the full Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget document and Draft Long Term Financial Plan was available for viewing at the following locations:

- Council's Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Watson Terrace and
- Library, Watson Terrace

Information Sessions – Two information sessions were held to allow members of the public to ask questions and provide feedback on the Draft ABP and LTFP. Printed versions of the documents were also made available to the public during these sessions.

- Session 1: 10 June 2025, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Mount Gambier Library.
- Session 2: 11 June 2025, 5:30pm-6:30pm, Mount Gambier Library.

Special Council Meeting - a special council meeting has been arranged pursuant with Section 123(4) (a) & (b) of the Act on 17 June 2025 to enable the public to make verbal submissions and ask questions regarding the Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

FEEDBACK AND COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Have Your Say website consultation statistics – the site provided the opportunity for the community to consult on the Draft ABP and Draft LTFP. The statistics show that the community engaged in the following way:

- Aware participants: 115 – who visited at least one page
- Informed participants: 68 – who downloaded a document or visited multiple pages
- Engaged participants: 6 – who provided a digital submission.

Further details of the engagement statistics with the have your say website are attached to this Report.

Email correspondence - 13 emails were received from 5 individual community members. The email correspondence included comments, general feedback and comprised a number of questions. Direct email correspondence received in relation to the budget has been tabled in an attachment to this report. At the time of writing this report, responses to questions were still being compiled and will be provided as a late attachment to the Agenda.

Information Sessions – A total of 20 members of the public attended across the two information sessions provided. This allowed an opportunity for direct questioning and feedback with elected members and members of Council's executive and management personnel.



- Session 1: 15 community members attended; 7 Elected Members (including Mayor) attended.
- Session 2: 5 community members attended; 3 Elected Members (including Mayor) attended.

Request for verbal submissions – at the time of writing this report, Council has received indication from 2 members of the public of their intent to present a verbal submission at the special meeting scheduled. Request for verbal submissions remain open until 12pm Tuesday, 17 June 2025. The 2 members of public who have requested verbal submissions are:

- Brendon Agpasa
- Graham Walkom.

Summary of Submissions/Attendances

Information Sessions	Have Your Say Website	Email	Verbal Submission
20 attendances	6 submissions	13 submissions	2* requests

*request for verbal submissions remain open until 12pm Tuesday 17 June 2025.

The public consultation process generated 19 submissions overall from 9 individual members of the public (refer Attachment) on the Draft Annual Business Plan and Draft Long Term Financial Plan. All submissions have been included in the attachment to this report to ensure transparency. For noting a number of questions have been raised though the consultation process with 2 members of the public submitting 58 questions between them.

Submission Responses - Due to time constraints and the number of questions requiring response, these will be tabled at the special meeting, and therefore included in the minutes of the special meeting.

Submission Key Themes - The following themes are apparent from the submissions received:

- Rate Increase - Concerns raised about the quantum of the general rate increase and ratepayer ability to pay.
- ESCOSA Advice – Questions raised about Council’s commitment and intention to publicly respond to each recommendation.
- Cost Saving Measures – concerns raised about Council spending and accountability for achieving cost savings.
- Strategic Plan – alignment with financial plans and capacity to deliver on strategic plans
- Service Provision – review of services, especially discretionary services.

Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations

At the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 4 June 2025, the Committee reviewed the Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget and Draft Long Term Financial Plan. The Audit and Risk Committee’s recommendation is tabled below for ease of review and consideration as part of the entire feedback process.

Annual Business Plan and Budget

1. *That the Audit and Risk Committee report titled ‘Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget’ as presented on Wednesday 4 June 2025 be noted.*



2. *That the Audit and Risk Committee feedback on Council's Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget and/or the associated processes and risks, as follows:*
 - *Notes the achievement of a balanced budget for 25/26 and the positive trend in the other financial indicators;*
 - *The Annual Business Plan and Budget final to include the financial ratios;*
 - *Consideration for the next draft Annual Business Plan and Budget to include the rate in the dollar and average rate increase and the final then to demonstrate the degree of change since the draft, if practicable;*
 - *Congratulations to the Council and Administration on the new structure of the document; and*
 - *Notes the response to the ESCOSA recommendations contained across both the Annual Business Plan and Budget and the Long Term Financial Plan;*

be incorporated with the public consultation feedback to be presented to the Special Council meeting to be held on the 17 June 2025 for consideration of the adoption of the Draft 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

Long Term Financial Plan

1. *That the Audit and Risk Committee report titled 'Draft Long Term Financial Plan for Public Consultation' as presented on Wednesday 4 June 2025 be noted.*
2. *That the Audit and Risk Committee feedback on Council's Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2026-2035 and/or the associated processes and risks, as follows:*
 - *Financial sustainability in the longer term demonstrates careful debt management, surplus budgets and positive asset renewal funding for the term of the plan;*
 - *Consideration during the Rating Review about how growth is treated in future iterations of the budget and long term financial plan;*
 - *Next iteration of the Long Term Financial Plan to consider the application of accumulated cash to either offset the sustainability margin or offset asset management plan requirements;*
 - *Notes the response to the ESCOSA recommendations contained across both the Annual Business Plan and Budget and the Long Term Financial Plan;*
 - *Notes that the Waste management costs increases are predicated on the current waste financial models, and final outcomes will be dependant on design of future cells and capping, and other issues including, but not limited to leachate;*
 - *Notes that the Long Term Financial Plan is giving a more accurate projection of the longer term, informed by work on asset management, depreciation analysis, waste financial modelling and other inputs; and*
 - *Congratulations to the Council and Administration on the new structure of the document;*

be incorporated with the public consultation feedback to be presented to the Special Council meeting to be held on the 17 June 2025 for consideration of the adoption of the Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2026-2035.

IMPLICATIONS TO CONSIDER

Legal	Legislation - Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires Council to have an Annual Business Plan and Budget. The Plan is Council's statement of its intended programs and outcomes for the year and the required contents of the document are laid out in Section 123 and the Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 2011.
Financial and Budget	The Draft budget is consistent with the Long Term Financial Plan and provides for sustainable service delivery.



Community Consultation and Engagement	The community consultation timelines and approach was aligned with that defined in the Local Government Act and Council's Policy P195 Community Consultation and Engagement Policy defines community consultation as being "part of community engagement and means a planned process by which the Council formally invites its constituents and stakeholders to comment about matters upon which Elected members are to deliberate."
Other Resources	Preparation of the draft Annual Business Plan and Budget has involved significant input from the Finance team, Media and Communications team and Executive Leadership Team. Additional staff resources have been allocated to facilitate consultation, respond to enquiries, and compile feedback for Council's consideration.

APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

This report aligns to the following strategic objectives(s):

Priority 6: Excellence in Leadership and Governance

6.4 Review and continually update the Long -Term Financial Plan to ensure ongoing financial sustainability to community expectations and legislative requirements.

This report contributes to delivery of the following key strategic project(s):

N/A

RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICY

[Asset Accounting](#)
[Asset Management - A900](#)
[Budget Policy - B300](#)
[Community Consultation and Engagement - P195](#)
[Procurement](#)
[Rates - Rate Rebate - R155](#)
[Rates - Rating - R105](#)
[Treasury Management - T150](#)

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

1. Responses to questions will be prepared and attached as a late agenda item.
2. Special Council Meeting 17 June 2025 to review public feedback, hear verbal submissions and allow question time.
3. Special Council Meeting 24 June 2025 for the purpose of adopting the 2025/2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget and Long Term Financial Plan.

CONCLUSION

Following a series of workshops Council endorsed the 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget for the purposes of public consultation.

A total of 19 submissions were received via the Have Your Say Website and email and are included in/attached to this report for Elected Member consideration.

At the time of writing this report, 2 intentions to make verbal submissions at the special meeting 17 had been received.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2025 2026 Annual Business Plan and Budget - Have Your Say - Summary Participation Report [**4.1.1** - 6 pages]
2. Summary Public Consultation Annual ~ Plan and Budget and LTFP 2025 2026 [**4.1.2** - 13 pages]



Summary Report

21 May 2025 - 12 June 2025

Have Your Say Mount Gambier

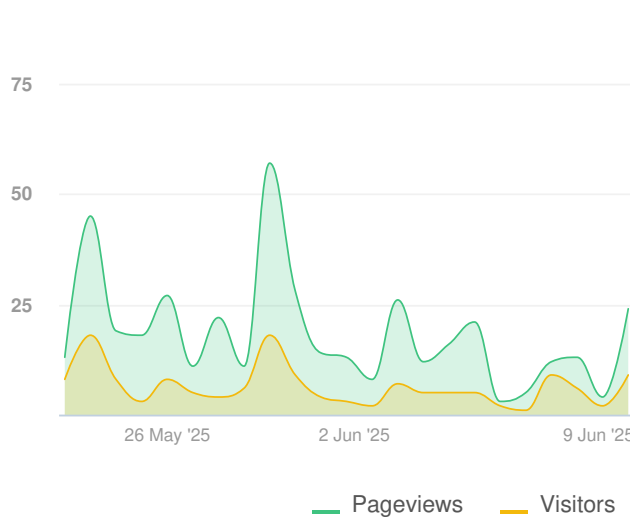
PROJECTS SELECTED: 1

Draft 2025/2026 Business Plan and Budget, Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2026-2035

FULL LIST AT THE END OF THE REPORT



Visitors Summary



Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	178	MAX VISITORS PER DAY	18
NEW REGISTRATIONS	0		
ENGAGED VISITORS	6	INFORMED VISITORS	68
		AWARE VISITORS	115

Have Your Say Mount Gambier : Summary Report for 21 May 2025 to 12 June 2025

PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

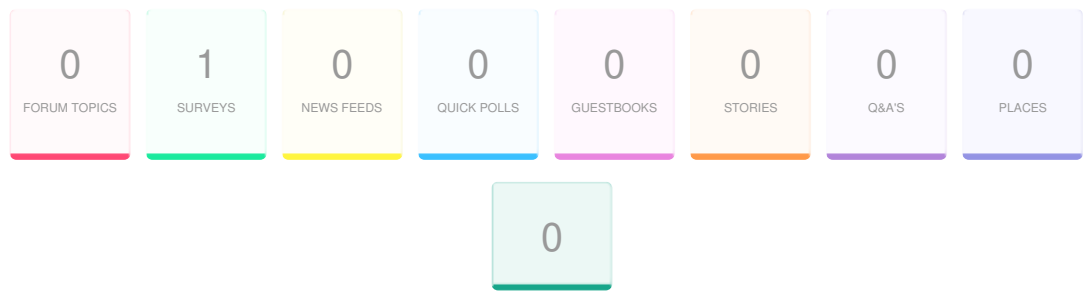
ENGAGED	6 ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS				(%)
		Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	
INFORMED	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0	Draft 2025/2026 Business P... 6 (5.2%)
	Participated in Surveys	0	0	6	
	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0	
	Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0	
	Posted on Guestbooks	0	0	0	
AWARE	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0	
	Asked Questions	0	0	0	
	Placed Pins on Places	0	0	0	
	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0	
	* A single engaged participant can perform multiple actions				

ENGAGED	68 INFORMED PARTICIPANTS				(%)	
		Participants				
INFORMED	Viewed a video	0			Draft 2025/2026 Business P... 68 (59.1%)	
	Viewed a photo	0				
	Downloaded a document	55				
	Visited the Key Dates page	0				
	Visited an FAQ list Page	18				
AWARE	Visited Instagram Page	0				
	Visited Multiple Project Pages	65				
	Contributed to a tool (engaged)	6				
	* A single informed participant can perform multiple actions					* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project

ENGAGED	115 AWARE PARTICIPANTS					
		Participants				
INFORMED	Visited at least one Page	115			Draft 2025/2026 Business P... 115	
AWARE						* Total list of unique visitors to the project
* Aware user could have also performed an Informed or Engaged Action						

Have Your Say Mount Gambier : Summary Report for 21 May 2025 to 12 June 2025

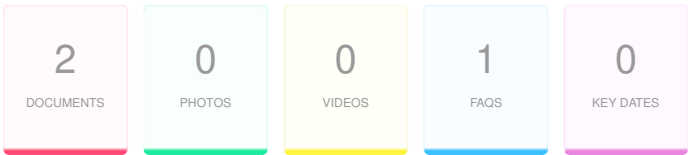
ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



SURVEYS SUMMARY	TOP 3 SURVEYS BASED ON CONTRIBUTORS
<div>1</div> <div>Surveys</div>	<div>6</div> <div>Contributors to</div> <div>Your Submission</div>
<div>6</div> <div>Contributors</div>	
<div>6</div> <div>Submissions</div>	

Have Your Say Mount Gambier : Summary Report for 21 May 2025 to 12 June 2025

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



DOCUMENTS	
2	Documents
55	Visitors
85	Downloads

TOP 3 DOCUMENTS BASED ON DOWNLOADS	
57	28
Downloads	Downloads
DRAFT 2025 2026 Business Plan and Budget	Draft Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) 2026-2035

FAQS	
1	Faqs
18	Visitors
21	Views

TOP 3 FAQS BASED ON VIEWS	
21	
Views	
Draft 2025/2026 Business Plan and Budget, Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2026-2035	

Have Your Say Mount Gambier : Summary Report for 21 May 2025 to 12 June 2025

TRAFFIC SOURCES OVERVIEW

REFERRER URL	Visits
www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au	24
m.facebook.com	12
www.google.com	12
statics.teams.cdn.office.net	7
www.bing.com	7
duckduckgo.com	4
l.facebook.com	4
lm.facebook.com	2
www.facebook.com	2
www.google.com.au	2
app.docsontap.com.au	1

Have Your Say Mount Gambier : Summary Report for 21 May 2025 to 12 June 2025

SELECTED PROJECTS - FULL LIST

PROJECT TITLE	AWARE	INFORMED	ENGAGED
Draft 2025/2026 Business Plan and Budget, Draft Long Term Financial P...	115	68	6

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
D McPherson	<p>Please forward to all concerned.</p> <p>I have never nominated for council so feel maybe I'm not the one to criticise council spending. However as a rate payer I maybe qualified to have my say. Please be aware that an increase of 19% in rates is unacceptable. I understand there may be outside influence to cost increases but internal influences are unacceptable.</p> <p>The current poor services delivered by council do not permit a cause for rate increases.</p> <p>Of course when Wulanda was perceived it was guaranteed this would not cause rate increases.</p> <p>This has proven to be a falsehood. Apart from budget blowouts I note that it already requires infrastructure upgrade. Refer Councils current budget.</p> <p>Once rates have been increased will my footpath and kerb be repaired.</p> <p>There are numerous other issue that I haven't time to list.</p> <p>Please rethink your decision</p>
P Halleday	<p>I am very concerned about the proposed rate rise.</p> <p>People are struggling to make ends meet now, this is going to make it Harder than ever to make ends meet.</p> <p>This would put more strain on families, potential to cause marriage Breakdowns or even SUICIDES, do you want this on your shoulders??</p> <p>Rate rises should be in line with CPI, not to service a BAD DEPT.</p> <p>Please have a BIG LOOK at this before it is implemented.</p>
M Esam	<p>Rate increase was not meant to happen. GIVE households a green waste bin!. 2 years to fix the lift in the gallery, why so bloody hard???. Stop making unnecessary Gallery jobs and spend money on fixing it. Oh but didn't the gallery head want a new purpose built gallery?? Is that the plan?.</p> <p>When doing the lights around the "Blue Lake" Get the footpaths assessed on the western side of the lake as they are getting a lean to them with separation happening away from the gutter, or just wait until it gives way which is what will happen. Label the trees in the so called arboretum, it's a fricken disgrace, dead trees look awesome!. I emailed re footpath trees being watered, the reply was we still water them...no one has watered our tree for months. Spend some money on training in honesty...in all departments. I'm sure this is a pointless feedback session. Council doesn't give a shit.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>I am attempting to put comment on the "have your say" website/submissions but cannot as your records appear incomplete.</p> <p>Whilst your FINANCIAL information includes the last 12 years or so for Budgets, Business Plans, there is only the current draft plans for Assets and LTFP.</p> <p>I need LTFPs and AMPs for the past 6 years please.</p> <p>Either add them to the website or post them email to me please.</p>
B Agpasa	<p>The better future of regional economy to have more local tourism, the service industries, and it's key areas of local business, as well as NDIS support for Travel to south-east South Australia and Mount Gambier, including the South East Field Days (held annually in Lucindale from March each year), overnight stay at accommodation and more, alongside radio stations (ABC Radio stations, RadioTAB, Faith FM, Vision Christian Radio, Triple M, Hit FM, 5GTR FM, Lime FM, 5THE FM, 5TCB FM Bordertown), newspaper (The Border Watch with 1861 to 2020 issues digitised to Trove), national TV stations (ABC TV, SBS TV), commercial TV stations (Channel 7, Channel 10, Channel 9, Sky News Regional), digital radio services (DAB+, DRM) and new local community TV service.</p> <p>The local council, State Government of South Australia, and Australian Federal Government will co-fund the better future of regional economy to see more local tourism, the service industries, and it's key areas of local business, the funding allocated was \$32,000.</p>
T Warren	<p>I was just informed that you intend to raise the rates this year by 8.18%</p> <p>Last year you increased rates by over 10%.</p> <p>Currently inflation is running below 3%.</p> <p>How can this expenditure be justified?</p> <p>How long can you continue to raise rates, by this amount?</p> <p>You need to look after your rate payers, become budget savvy and start spending within your means.</p>
F McGregor	<p>I could not see anything regarding a car park at Don McDonnell Reserve. I feel it is unsafe at the moment with families having to cross a busy road or park on a road that has bike lanes. I don't necessarily think it's safe for cyclists either, there is a risk of someone opening their car door on a cyclist as there is no where else to park but the road. Families should be able to park safely in a designated car park on the reserve. The reserves mentioned as part of a master plan project already have car parking which I believe is essential at Don McDonnell reserve.</p>
E Boisvert	<p>Despite what the budget documents say, extending the rail trail to O'Leary Road is not included in the Shared Paths Master Plan. The money should go instead to a useful part of the plan like building a bike path along Suttontown Road and Sutton Avenue.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>The CEO, Mount Gambier Council,</p> <p>Council has a clear legislated requirement to consult its community on the proposed ABP and associated plans for this next year.</p> <p>It is more than 2 clear days since i requested access to council documents to facilitate my submission, and making it clear I was intending on lodging a submission. I did note the required information request as URGENT.</p> <p>Does council intend extending the community consultation time with this delay?</p> <p>I expect that facilitating relevant community questions by providing information would be a part of the mandated community consultation.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Last year council gave a very similar assurance in requesting submissions on the 2024/25 ABP and financial documents... "The City of Mount Gambier is committed to listening and responding to the concerns and ideas of the community and encourages all individuals to share their views." I submitted 47 questions about a very poorly prepared set of documents and did not receive a single response to any of those questions. This year the documents are much more professional and I congratulate council for that. They are still excessive and could be cut back from a BP and Budget of circa 50 pages to circa 30 but never-the-less are far more reader friendly for any ratepayer interested in understanding them...e.g. the Strategic Plan could be linked rather than re-interpreted and duplicated. This question is specifically about how the Strategic Plan items have been included in the estimates for the LTFP. The SP contains 69 actions for its 4 year life: what preliminary (or other) estimated costs has council determined and allocated to the 10 year LTFP individual years for these actions in terms of \$CapEx and/or \$OpEx for each ? I note the 25/26 B.P. and budget includes 22 of the 69 of which 16 of those 22 are costed. I seek to establish that council has determined and developed the projected rate increases objectively.</p> <p>I question the qualification and quantification in developing the projected annual rate increases: they seem far to smooth and optimistic to be realistic and valid. My question above in the Business Plan and budget questions the linking/connection to the accurate development of the LTFP I similarly question the justification used for council's discretionary services apparently funded without variation or amendment over 11 years, including the lack of justification for the referenced "community requirements" for those services whether that is increasing or decreasing the services. It is far too glib and unconvincing to keep saying the community demand them when they are then not justified and user numbers of those services never stated. Council has an obligation to manage those services and when financial restrictions are needed, services could contribute with small to moderate budget cuts to help balance the books. It is far too easy for council to take the easy action to put rates up rather than responsibly managing the freebies.</p>
O Le Roux	Please see the separate written submission for the specific questions I required answers to. A copy was emailed to the City of Mount Gambier on 9 June 2025.

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
O Le Roux	<p>Questions for the City of Mount Gambier Budget and Plan:</p> <p>Strategic Alignment and Community Vision</p> <p>1. Strategic Consistency: How effectively do the planned expenditures align with the community vision outlined in "Mount Gambier 2035"? Are there any notable discrepancies or areas lacking sufficient investment?</p> <p>2. Community Input and Impact: How has community consultation informed specific project priorities, and can the feedback loops be more clearly communicated to residents to enhance transparency?</p> <p>Financial Sustainability and Efficiency</p> <p>3. Operating Surplus Ratio: The plan indicates achieving a balanced budget ahead of schedule (2025/2026). What structural efficiencies or revenue changes made this early achievement possible, and are these sustainable over the long term?</p> <p>4. Cost-Saving Measures: Given ESCOSA's recommendations for cost control, can specific examples of successful cost-saving measures from previous years be detailed further? How robust is the accountability mechanism for achieving these savings?</p> <p>Capital Works and Asset Management</p> <p>5. Asset Management Plans: How will Council ensure the accuracy and reliability of asset depreciation and renewal schedules, given ESCOSA's concerns about asset valuation and depreciation methods?</p> <p>6. Infrastructure Renewal vs. New Capital: Considering a large portion (82%) of the capital budget is allocated to renewals, how does Council balance necessary infrastructure upgrades against expanding service demands from community growth?</p> <p>Economic Development and Growth Risks</p> <p>7. Infrastructure Constraints: Given significant infrastructure concerns (water, sewer) potentially impacting city growth, what specific strategies and advocacy measures is the Council deploying to mitigate these risks?</p> <p>8. Economic Risks and Development Slowdown: How robust is the Council's contingency planning if regional infrastructure issues significantly impede planned development and related revenue streams?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
O Le Roux	<p>9. Waste Service Charges: With a notable 10.61% increase in the Waste Service Charge, how is the Council transparently communicating this necessity and managing community expectations regarding waste management costs?</p> <p>10. Differential Rating Justification: Can the Council clearly justify the differential rates in the dollar applied to different land-use categories, demonstrating fairness, economic rationale, and transparency?</p> <p>Risk and Contingency Management</p> <p>11. Risks Noted Without Budgeting: Several identified risks, such as superannuation liabilities and Caroline Landfill remediation, are acknowledged but not quantified in the budget. What plans or thresholds have been set to address these potential financial impacts?</p> <p>12. Enterprise Bargaining Agreements</p> <p>Given the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations set to commence mid-year, how robustly has the budget prepared for potential wage increases or staffing cost adjustments?</p> <p>Technology and Operational Efficiency</p> <p>13. Technology Investments</p> <p>With the significant budget allocation toward the Civica Authority Altitude system and other technology upgrades, what are the expected efficiency gains, and how will these be measured and reported?</p> <p>Sustainability and Environmental Goals</p> <p>14. Environmental Commitments</p> <p>What specific metrics or benchmarks is Council using to track the effectiveness of its sustainability and waste reduction initiatives? Are targets ambitious enough given regional environmental challenges?</p> <p>15. Electricity Contract and Renewable Energy</p> <p>How will the newly negotiated electricity contracts, which integrate green energy, specifically contribute to Council's sustainability objectives, and are there clear, measurable targets established?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
O Le Roux	<p>Community Facilities and Projects</p> <p>16. Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre Given substantial ongoing operational deficits and high depreciation costs associated with Wulanda, how is Council planning to increase revenue streams or optimise operational costs long-term?</p> <p>17. Visitor Servicing Model What are the initial performance metrics from the recently transitioned visitor servicing model, and how will these inform the future master planning for visitor-focused infrastructure and services?</p> <p>Transparency, Governance, and Reporting</p> <p>18. Governance and Accountability How does Council plan to increase the transparency of its decision-making processes, particularly regarding significant financial decisions or rate increases?</p> <p>19. ESCOSA Recommendations What specific actions or timeframes has Council committed to publicly responding to each ESCOSA recommendation, ensuring community accountability?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Q3 from WALKOM on LTFP consultation</p> <p>SUBJECT: ESCOSA report on City of Mt Gambier</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does council accept the ESCOSA report as it was received? 2. If so, What is council's timeline for implementation all 6 key recommendations? 3. Does council acknowledge ESCOSA identifies risks to council's sustainability as either LOW, MEDIUM or HIGH with council scoring 4 x LOW, 8 x MEDIUM, and 3 x HIGH risk flags? 4. Is council concerned that it received such a detrimental report indicating poor financial management and the burden on ratepayers that results.? 5. Does council propose to follow all the recommendations of ESCOSA at the earliest opportunity starting with inclusion where possible of the recommendations within the current financial documents we are considering? 6. If council intends not to implement some aspects what are they? 7. Under Item 5 of the LTFP council fails to state or agree it will "Develop a Plan to achieve cost saving measures and targets..." but lists possible minor cost saving measures likely from earlier decisions. Does council realise that adoptng the plan required by ESCOSA will result in ongoing reviews that will result in ongoing savings and cost reductions for ratepayers, or does council not care about saving costs for ratepayers? 8. When referring to council's ongoing adherence to strong procurement practices that emphasise competitive processes and value for money, would that include addressing maladministration issues such as the auditor's concerns (4 June 2025) regarding council's purchase order practices? viz 9. Key audit issues as outlined below: <u>Purchase Orders</u> Outside of the list of goods and services categories listed in section 4.5 of Council's Overarching Administrative Framework (linked to Councils Procurement Policy), Purchase Orders are required to be raised for all purchases. Sample testing of supplier invoices identified a high number of instances where a Purchase Order was raised after the supplier invoice was received. From our observations, it appears that the use of the Purchase Orders were for the purposes of complying with the Policy requirements rather than acting as an actual procurement control mechanism given the procurement activity

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Q 10 -13- from WAKOM on LTFP community consultation SUBJECT: ESCOSA report on City of Mt Gambier Q10. At today's community budget information session councillors and administration were adamant that council did not need to action the ESCOSA report - that it is voluntary, True. But the point I was making was that ESCOSA states at section 2.1 that: "The council is obliged under the Local Government Act1999 (LG Act) to publish this advice and its response, if applicable, in its 2025-26 Annual Business Plan (including any draft ABP) and in subsequent plans until the next cycle of the scheme. The Council is not compelled under the LG Act to follow the advice." That is perfectly clear to me but council has not included the advice in either the Draft Business Plan or Draft LTFP. Will council be adjusting these plans to include the full ESCOSA advice as required? Q11. As a casual observer of this council it is apparent that council does not accept there are serious opportunities to stop spending like a drunken sailor and reduce the historical and current rates growth trend which is well above CPI and to better manage finances. Does council agree with ESCOSA and this ratepayer that its "Financial sustainability is dependent upon rates growth well above CPI? and that "Constraint in the level of operating expertise is needed to ensure affordability risks are minimised"? Q12. Does council appreciate that the last 8 Business Plans and Budgets have exceeded CPI over the same period by 77%? Q13. Does council accept that this excess (77%) above CPI to this indicates poor fiscal management and the opportunity to keep rates lower?</p>
G Walkom	<p>SUBJECT: Community Consultation BP and LTFMP As a casual observer of council's financial plans I note three persistent themes throughout the documents. Theme A. Council's efforts and achievements to be financially sustainable and how they meet (or will soon meet) those targets. •Council added to this myth in formal meeting by waxing lyrical about their own audit committee's "self assessment" giving themselves a maximum score. Did council's auditor agree? Apparently not, advising that same audit and risk committee on 2 April 2025 "the Operating Surplus Ratio has trended adversely in the 3 year period..." Now auditors are very conservative, want the well paid gig to keep rolling and seldom criticise like that so we can assume the issue is serious. •last year in my questions to council I advised the financial ratios were often going the wrong way. Having asked for community comments on the Business Plan council's response in formal meeting was to retaliate with nasty and intemperate comment about those who responded. I expect the same this year! •But were the disregarded ratepayer's messages validated? Yes. refer to the ESCOSA report -100% so. Council has been given a significant wake up call to address its drunken sailor spending. •In summary, council maintains it is a great manager of its finances whereas its auditor, ESCOSA and ratepayers do not agree. Q14 Is it agreed that councillors appear to need training in practical financial management, it being a major part of their role? Theme B Council repeatedly contends that this community demands a "hidden" suite of discretionary services and how you will continue to provide them again - at our expense...But you refuse to list them, refuse to provide costs for them or advise how many residents avail themselves of those services or their value added to the community.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Q15 Will you include this missing information in the Business Plan and LTFP? If not why not?</p> <p>I note and commend council's planning and detail on AMP's and would rate them a 9 in usability, but council's management and planning around discretionary services would struggle to score a 2 on the same rating chart.</p> <p>To get some balance here,</p> <p>The definition endorsed at the National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra, November 2006.</p> <p>"A Council's long-term financial performance and position is sustainable where planned long-term service and infrastructure levels and standards are met without unplanned increases in rates or disruptive cuts to services."</p> <p>It is services, services services that council must get a handle on.</p> <p>Theme C How council is providing and ratepayers are receiving value for our l.g. tax \$ with never any evidence to support this claim. Quite the contrary - the evidence says the opposite. \$5m for Wulanda OpEx? - a service with only 2000 members of 28,000 community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •(Refer latest audit report on your misadventures with purchase orders. - hardly value for money. Much near to the OPI's Maladministration guidelines.) •(And the average rate increases being 77% more than average CPI over last 8 years indicate poor financial management.) •(And your own auditors advice that the OSR is trending adversely over 3 years . <p>Q16 To get a handle on costs: has council considered a sunset clause on all discretionary services to be reviewed every 3 years?</p>
G Walkom	<p>Community Consultations on Business Pan and LTFP</p> <p>Strategic Plan appears to be uncoded (yes there are some of the SP's items that have been coded for this year's BP but essentially it is not coded.)</p> <p>Under the 6 category groups included in the S.P. there are a total of 69 actions...</p> <p>Q17 What estimates have been effected for each of these actions and what years will they will be actioned in the LTFP?</p> <p>(I note that 22 SP actions are included in the 25/26 BP and that 16 have indicative costings - that leaves 47)</p> <p>I also note that the Strategic Plan is very optimistic and high cost for some very low value objectives and was completed before council was reviewed by ESCOSA. - back (hopefully back when council spent like a drunken sailor!)</p> <p>Q18 In view of the established need for better financial control, it appears essential the SP should be reviewed? Can council see the wisdom in this for the updated financial situation?</p> <p>Q19 The Strategic Plan is billed as a 4 year plan but all other plans AMP's, LTMP, and presumably 2035 are 10 year plans. has council considered extending the SP from 4 years to 10 - the reduction in annual costs would be significant and wold provide CapEx and OpEx flexibility?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Community Consultations - Business Plan and LTFP</p> <p>Kerbside waste -61%</p> <p>The LTFP states council intends reducing Kerbside waste by 61%!</p> <p>Q20 Will there be a commensurate rate reduction?</p> <p>Q21 What will ratepayers be expected to do with their rubbish?</p> <p>Q22 Will this have a material effect on climate issues or is it a token gesture for the planet and a significant inconvenience for ratepayers?</p> <p>I note the existing waste services are efficient and effective. Amazing is it not, that some fool wants to stuff the service up.</p> <p>Q23 How many people will put in de facto incinerators and what costs will council incur controlling that misadventure?</p> <p>Service Review Framework</p> <p>Q24 What is this exactly? Does it include the 19 Discretionary Services that council might be currently undertaking?</p> <p>Q24 What can we expect in cost savings from this review if the expected outcomes are recommended and adopted - a budget for expected savings</p> <p>Q25 On p27 of the Business Plan there are 14 "essential services"undertaken and staffed with c78 staff for an administrative cost to ratepayers of \$23million. The state essential services lists the services designated as "essential" and they do not include but two of these.</p> <p>I understand that people like to feel important but in this situation it would be best not to confuse things. Can these services be renamed to avoid confusion with the state classifications?</p> <p>Q26 On p28 under "People, Place and Liveability" there are service funcions designated as "key". Some 39 staff consume \$15.2million. of ratepayers funds. What is the difference between a "key" service function and a non key service function? and what are the listings for each group and their budgets?</p>
G Walkom	<p>Total rates trend - Community consultation on Finance documents</p> <p>Total rates percentage increases since separation of waste services into a separate council business.</p> <p>I note that Property Rates and Kerbside Waste collection rates are listed separately since they were separated a fw years back.</p> <p>Q27. In what year were they separated?</p> <p>Q28. Over the past eight (8) years what is the yearly combined rates increase (property and waste) ?</p> <p>(I am wanting to clearly determine the % increase in Mt Gambier City council rates year on year up to the current draft business plan.)</p> <p>I note the current waste and reuse budget is \$8.27million.</p> <p>Q29. Has council sought expressions of interest to contract this out?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Total rates trend - Risks and ratepayer surpses - Community consultation on Finance documents</p> <p>Budget and BP risks - undisclosed material costs.</p> <p>In community discussions, rumours indicate that ratepayers could be whacked with significant extra OpEx and/or CapEx costs from a number of items not fully disclosed in the Draft Business Plan: some also indicated in very recent auditor reports to council.</p> <p>Q31. What potential currently unbudgeted costs (not in the draft business plan estimates) may eventuate for Wulanda additional to the current \$62.5 million total to date. Ongoing ontract legal and litigation fees, roofing issues, floor issues etc? If you advise none that is reassuring.</p> <p>Q32. What potential currently unbudgeted costs (not in the draft business plan estimates) may eventuate for Caroline Landfill such as design fees and contract fees or CapEx or OpEx generally additional to the Draft Business Pan stated OpEx and CapEx? If you advise none that is reassuring.</p> <p>Q33. What variations (up or down) has council allowed for revised AMP valuations that could result in revised OpEx or CapEx costings/depreciation for near-term (2years) and mid-term 3-7 years) Infrastructure and assets variation changes not included/costed in the draft Business Plan or LTFP?</p> <p>Q34. What are the total costs for all works - design, professional and administration costs, infrastructure and reserves modifications, temporary and permanent safety barriers, signage, supply and delivery, installation, parking modifications - indeed a fully inclusive tender stage estimate for the Blue Blob on a ZBB basis?</p> <p>Please include any works or suspected works for any deferred (stage 2 and stage 3 costs) but relevant future associated works.</p> <p>Q35. Does council consider its community consultations on the Blue Blob and its decisions from those consultations with an overwhelming number of residents opposed strongly to have met council's procedures and practices for community consultation?</p> <p>Q36. Was the community accurately and honestly informed by the mayor when they were told council cold not repurpose the basic grant funds used for the Blue Blob to another purpose?</p>
G Walkom	<p>Q37. Is council aware and supportive of a groundswell of community opinion that this Blue Blob included in the Draft Business Plan should be seen as a monument representing and dedicated to council's performance over the last 5 years; giving us the Wulanda White Elephant, and council's disregard and indifference to liaising with individuals and groups such as The Ratepayers Association?</p> <p>Q38. Council has encouraged input to the draft finance plans by assuring residents each question will be answered... objectively. Last year this was honoured by disclosing those answers only at and to a special concil meeting. Participants received no other "response". The analogy I think of here is a discussion between two people where one asks a question and the other goes into a sound proof room alone and answers it, then claiming to have provided an answer.</p> <p>Could those lodging questions this year be given the courtesy of an email response to their questions and advice of the special council meeting prior to that meeting?</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions
G Walkom	<p>Form and presentation of Business Plan - Community consultation on Finance documents</p> <p>I would like to close out these comments with my suggestion on the form and presentation of the Business Plan itself. But first as I may have already said, it is in written style vastly improved on last year. Congratulations.</p> <p>However it is a technical financial document and the excess of irrelevant pictures both distracts from the report itself and increases printing time and costs. For a good example of this type of document please refer to the recent ESCOSA report. The reproduction of the Strat Plan graphics - ugh!</p> <p>For a moment there I thought of suggesting that the hierarchy of documents bit in the BP could be impressively and meaningfully graphiced by using mini photos of all the relevant documents in a pyramid formation:. this may help with identifying the other docs. But then there is scant value in the SP or 2035 docs to council's current mission to better efficiency and effectiveness - they are more like kids wishlish in their letters to santa.</p> <p>I apologise for the typos and misnumbered questions, my PC is like me old and grumpy and its keyboard "u" and "l" are problematic.</p> <p>Q39 Could the document be reviewed to edit out redundant photos and graphics and make it into a more serious looking "Business Plan"?</p>

5 MEETING CLOSE

