

MINUTES

Special Council Meeting

Tuesday 17 June 2025



Minutes of the City of Mount Gambier Special Council Meeting held at:

Time: 5:00 pm

Date: Tuesday 17 June 2025

Location: City Hall

Cave Gardens/Thugi, Mount Gambier

PRESENT: Mayor Lynette Martin (OAM)
Cr Max Bruins
Cr Paul Jenner
Cr Josh Lynagh
Cr Sonya Meziniec
Cr Frank Morello
Cr Jason Virgo

OFFICERS IN	Chief Executive Officer	- Mrs S Philpott
ATTENDANCE:	General Manager City Infrastructure	- Ms B Cernovskis
	General Manager Corporate and Regulatory Services	- Mrs J Fetherstonhaugh
	General Manager People, Place and Liveability	- Mr C White
	Manager Governance and Property	- Ms B Shelton
	Manager Financial Services	- Ms K Rolton
	Manager Development Services	- Mrs T Tzioutziouklaris
	Manager Engineering, Design and Assets	- Mr A Mahmud
	Media and Communications Coordinator	- Ms S McLean
	Strategic Development and Engagement Coordinator	- Mr B Kilsby
	Executive Administrator	- Miss T Chant
	Executive Administrator	- Mrs S Spears

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

RESOLUTION SCM 2025/1

Moved: Cr Paul Jenner

Seconded: Cr Max Bruins

That the apology from Cr Mark Lovett be received.

CARRIED

3 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil

4 COUNCIL REPORTS

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

The Mayor sought the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present at the meeting to suspend meeting procedures:

Purpose of the suspension: to discuss the public submissions and allow verbal submissions.

Carried by more than two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

Meeting Procedures were suspended at 5:04 pm.

Council received a verbal submission from Sophie Bouchier, representing Substance Misuse Limestone Coast at 5:06 pm.

Council received a verbal submission from Peter Braithwaite at 5:16pm.

Council received a further verbal submission from Di Ind, President of the Mount Gambier and District Resident and Ratepayers Association at 5:26 pm.

Questions from the public were asked and answered.

The Mayor determined that the period of suspension should be brought to an end;

Carried by more than two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

The Period of Suspension came to an end and Meeting Procedures resumed at 5:43 pm.

Pursuant to Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1999, Cr Max Bruins disclosed a general conflict of interest in Item 4.1 2025/2026 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget - Community Consultation Feedback

In accordance with Section 75B Cr Max Bruins informed the meeting:

Nature of Interest:

My partner is a board member on the volunteer board of Substance Misuse Limestone Coast.

Intention to Participate:

No specific action required, there is no personal benefit and item is part of the greater budget that benefits entire community.

Reason for Participating:

No personal gain - item part of greater budget which benefits entire community.

In accordance with Section 75B of the Local Government Act 1999 Cr Max Bruins remained in the meeting for Item 4.1.

Having participated in the meeting for item 4.1 Cr Max Bruins voted in favour of the motion.

RESOLUTION SCM 2025/2

Moved: Cr Paul Jenner

Seconded: Cr Max Bruins



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.

CARRIED

The Mayor sought the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present at the meeting to suspend meeting procedures:

Purpose of the suspension: noting that discussion and public submissions has concluded, however the session must be held for a period of at least 1 hour in accordance with section 123(4)(a)(i)(B) of the Local Government Act 1999.

Carried by more than two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

Meeting Procedures were suspended at 5:52 pm.

The Mayor determined that the period of suspension should be brought to an end;
Carried by more than two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

The Period of Suspension came to an end and Meeting Procedures resumed at 5:59 pm.

5 MEETING CLOSE

The meeting closed at 6:00 pm.

The minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 15 July 2025.

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MAYOR

TABLED DOCUMENT



Tabled Document 6.1

Summary Public Consultation Feedback

Annual Plan and Budget and LTFP
2025/2026



Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
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>The proposed rates increase is 8.18% plus 0.5% growth.</p> <p>Separately to this the proposed waste service charge increase is 10.61%.</p> <p>These are both below estimated increases in the long term financial plan (LTFP).</p> <p>The nature and underlying baseline amount of rates versus the waste service charge are very different and therefore the increases cannot be added together to state a 19% increase. Further, there are other influences on rates such as capital value and number of properties which affect the rate in the dollar and ultimately what each individual ratepayer pays per assessment. The 8.18% refers to the increase in total revenue and is not always a reflection of the increase to individual ratepayers pending some of the influences mentioned prior.</p> <p>Wulanda is a significant civic asset that has already seen excellent outcomes in terms of attendance and significant events improving community outcomes across social, tourism and economic benefits. The infrastructure upgrade included in the budget refers to increases audio visual capacity and the ability to provide even greater benefits to the community through the facilitation of live music events. The amount budgeted for FY25/26 is \$156k.</p> <p>If you are experiencing issues with your footpath and kerb, please email or call your concerns in so that they can be formally logged and we have a channel to assess your concerns.</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>	<p>Taken as feedback</p> <p>Any ratepayer experiencing difficulties in meeting rates payments or experiencing hardship will be able to access payment plans tailored to meet their particular circumstances. All arrangements will be strictly confidential.</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>	<p>Taken as feedback</p> <p>Any ratepayer experiencing difficulties in meeting rates payments or experiencing hardship will be able to access payment plans tailored to meet their particular circumstances. All arrangements will be strictly confidential.</p>
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 llast 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>	<p>06/06/2025 - AR25/38821 Documents emailed to Mr Walkom and made available on the public website</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>	<p>Council invests in tourism through both the visitor information centre and has recently taken over operation of a number of key sites for visitor experience. Council has also recently invested in a tourism website and attraction and investment website to showcase Mount Gambier to visitors and investors. The State is also underway with a regional tourism review.</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>	<p>Councils Long Term Financial Plan takes a balanced approach to rate increases, with a focus on long-term stability. While initial increases are necessary to return to sustainability, the additional 2% margin for sustainability reduces progressively over the life of the plan. By the end of the 10-year period, rate increases are limited to CPI, reflecting improved financial health and community affordability considerations.</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>	<p>Thank you for this feedback. It is not included as part of the 2025/2026 budget. We will consider it as part of our Asset Management Planning for future years.</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>	<p>The Shared Path Masterplan refers to connecting the primary paths routes from east to west across the city. The Plan specifically refers to Wireless Road connections, however due to constraint of the land proposed at this location to complete the primary route loop "P2" the rail trail extension to O'Leary Road is the next viable option to achieve the same outcome. This has also been identified in the plan for the Springview Estate Connection "F3". Please refer to page 42 of the Shared Path Masterplan.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
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>	<p>CEO responded to this noting that access to documents would be provided (documents subsequently made available on website and provided). The response also noted that the consultation would not be extended as it relates to the current annual business plan and budget and long term financial plan, and that an opportunity to address council was also available.</p>
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>	<p>Taken as feedback.</p> <p>All 47 answers to questions from Mr Walkom were tabled in the Special Council Agenda of 18th June 2024. Thank you for your feedback on this years documents</p> <p>The Strategic Plan directly correlates to the Community vision, Mount Gambier 2035. These strategic documents were considered as part of the budget and long term planning process. As part of this process it was identified that a number of strategic projects listed did not require additional financial resource as they could be achieved within existing resources, for example, advocacy items. Strategic objectives that do not require additional resourcing have not been separately tabled in the Annual Business Plan and Budget.</p>
O Le Roux	<p>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.</p>	<p>Noted and email received containing 19 questions.</p>
O Le Roux	<p>Questions for the City of Mount Gambier Budget and Plan: Strategic Alignment and Community Vision 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? 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? Financial Sustainability and Efficiency 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? 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? Capital Works and Asset Management 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? 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? Economic Development and Growth Risks 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? 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>	<p>1. The draft Budget and Annual Business Plan are underpinned by the strategic priorities in Mount Gambier 2035. Our investment focus this year reflects the key themes of sustainable growth, community wellbeing, environmental leadership, and smart infrastructure. Key alignment can be seen in initiatives such as the CBD Masterplan, Wulanda activation, and Unlocking Projects that directly enable service delivery aligned with strategic goals.</p> <p>2. Community consultation has influenced priority setting across the Plan. Feedback from last year's consultation, including the call for improved service visibility and capital investment transparency, directly shaped areas such as shared path upgrades, public toilet renewals, building maintenance and renewal, improved roads and planning for upgrades to open space and recreation facilities.</p> <p>3. Council has returned to a balanced budget ahead of schedule without cutting essential services or deferring critical infrastructure. This outcome is the result of a deliberate, staged program of financial reform that includes improved planning, tighter controls on spending, better procurement, and a shift in focus toward long-term sustainability. Our Long Term Financial Plan forecasts these improvements to be sustainable over the long term. The LTFP also applies prudent revenue forecasting and prioritises renewal over expansion. These strategies are designed for long-term sustainability, not just short-term surplus.</p> <p>4. A range of initiatives have already been implemented or are underway to contain costs and improve service value. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Revised visitor servicing models •Improved procurement and contract management •Digital transformation and automation •Workforce planning and restructure •More robust asset management systems <p>These actions are embedded in the Long-Term Financial Plan and Annual Business Plan and will be reviewed and reported on annually.</p> <p>5. Council is progressively improving the accuracy of its asset forecasts and long-term renewal needs. Key steps already taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Updated revaluation and depreciation assumptions •Increased focus on condition assessments •Realignment of capital works with renewal priorities •Better integration of asset planning with financial modelling <p>These changes ensure that our investments are targeted, sustainable, and deliver the best outcomes for the community.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
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>	<p>6. Council has made a deliberate choice to prioritise renewals to ensure long-term asset sustainability. The revised Making Better Places program now spans three years and limits annual new capital spend, ensuring that maintenance of existing assets takes precedence. Growth infrastructure, while desirable, is being paced realistically in line with our capacity. Our approach reflects both community feedback and ESCOSA's direction on responsible investment.</p> <p>7. Council has raised serious concerns about the capacity of Mount Gambier's water and sewer infrastructure and its impact on current and future development</p> <p>Key advocacy actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Formal letters to SA Water's CEO and key State Government Ministers, questioning their poor infrastructure planning, and seeking urgent clarification on how this will be addressed. •Comprehensive correspondence to the Premier and nine State Ministers highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oConcerns that current water and sewer infrastructure cannot support existing or future development. oThe need for SA Water to be actively involved in regional planning. oRequests for transparency around network capacity, infrastructure asset planning, and alternative service schemes. <p>Council is advocating strongly for solutions, improved planning coordination, and clear information to ensure growth is not stalled by infrastructure limitations.</p> <p>8. Council can adjust capital delivery or operating programs in response to unexpected slowdowns or revenue changes, with regular budget reviews providing flexibility and oversight.</p> <p>9. The waste service charge increase reflects genuine cost pressures, including management of the Caroline landfill, collection, and disposal fees and is significantly lower than forecast last.</p> <p>10. Council's current differential rating structure has been in place for a significant amount of time and in prior years was identified as an area requiring strategic review. Differential rating structures are based on land use, equity/capacity to pay (limited measures available for local government) and services used. Council has begun work on a strategic Rating Review with a number of workshops held with Elected Members already. This review will be consulted on in 2025/2026 and will further examine whether councils differentials remain appropriate, fair, and transparent.</p>
O Le Roux	<p>Community Facilities and Projects</p> <p>16. Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>What specific actions or timeframes has Council committed to publicly responding to each ESCOSA recommendation, ensuring community accountability?</p>	<p>11. Emerging financial risks such as landfill remediation and potential changes to superannuation have been identified but are not yet budgeted as they remain uncertain. We do however have provisions for both the Caroline Landfill future restoration and cell capping. An accrual has been brought in 2024/2025 for the anticipated superannuation payments for independent members of council committees, however actual payments will not be made pending release of an income tax ruling from the Australian Taxation Office.</p> <p>12. The 2025/2026 budget includes contingency for Enterprise Bargaining outcomes, based on benchmarking against recent LG sector agreements CPI and the Wage Price Index.</p> <p>13. Council is investing in smarter systems to streamline service delivery, automate manual processes, and increase efficiency. The Civica cloud system rollout, records upgrades, and IT governance reforms will reduce duplication and improve data quality. A register of savings – both in dollar terms and efficiency gains is being developed to capture these improvements and will be included in future performance reporting as savings are recognised.</p> <p>14. The upcoming Waste and Resource Recovery Master Plan will set targets for landfill diversion, contamination, and community participation. LED lighting upgrades and renewable energy initiatives are also progressing, in line with our Mount Gambier 2035 environmental goals.</p> <p>15. The new electricity contracts (zero indexation and 100% green energy inclusion) are expected to reduce costs and greenhouse emissions. While Council does not have a formal sustainability target, Strategic Priority 1 in Council's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan commits to demonstrating leadership in sustainability through resource efficiency and climate adaptation.</p>
O Le Roux		<p>16. Operational costs at Wulanda are being closely monitored. A targeted review of energy usage has been undertaken and continues to be monitored. We continue to work with Belgravia to pursue revenue growth through expanded programming, partnerships, and regional event attraction. Additionally, the AV upgrades planned for 2025/2026 are intended to increase hireability. The facility's long-term value to health and economic outcomes remains a priority.</p> <p>17. Council's revised approach to visitor servicing is being trialled through new site models and event integration. A review of the Hub and Spoke model will be undertaken in September 2025 with a focus on reach, cost-efficiency, and tourism outcomes.</p> <p>18. Council has strengthened its public reporting through clearer LTFP and ABP documentation. Financial assumptions, service reviews, and project outcomes are increasingly visible to the community, and improvements will continue.</p> <p>19. Council has carefully considered all of ESCOSA's recommendations and is committed to implementing them in a meaningful and transparent way. While the scheme is advisory and not mandatory, Council has already commenced multiple actions aligned with the advice. These are embedded across the LTFP and ABP, and progress will be reviewed and reported publicly each year. This is a four-year process and Council will continue to assess, implement, and communicate improvements over time.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
G Walkom	<p>Q3 from WALKOM on LTFP consultation SUBJECT: ESCOSA report on City of Mt Gambier 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 adopting 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</p>	<p>1. Council has received and noted the independent ESCOSA Advice as written. 2. Council will progressively work toward addressing the recommendations as advised by ESCOSA. A completion date has not yet been determined. 3. As per question 1, Council has received and noted the independent ESCOSA Advice as written. 4. The ESCOSA Advice found Council's historical, current and projected financial performance mostly sustainable. There was no reference to poor financial management within the advice provided. The ESCOSA Advice recommended for Council to "Review its approach to addressing financial sustainability risks, in consultation with its community, with a view to limited future increases in rates and improving affordability for ratepayers". 5. Council has carefully considered all of ESCOSA's recommendations and is committed to implementing them in a meaningful and transparent way. While the scheme is advisory and not mandatory, Council has already commenced multiple actions aligned with the advice. These are embedded across the LTFP and ABP, and progress will be reviewed and reported publicly each year. 6. Council has reviewed the ESCOSA recommendations and already commenced multiple actions aligned with the advice. Due to the structure of Council's fixed loans, recommendation 3 to "review planned pace of repayment of debt, balancing rate increases, financial costs and intergenerational equity" requires careful strategy and negotiation with the Local Government Financing Authority. It is the only recommendation that Council has not been able to immediately address, but will continue to work towards. 7. Council has chosen to engage constructively with ESCOSA's advice and has already commenced a number of cost-saving and efficiency-focused initiatives. These include revised visitor servicing models, improved procurement practices, renegotiated contracts, workforce planning, and the implementation of our Business Systems improvements and asset management transformation work. These initiatives are embedded across our planning framework and align with the broader intent of the ESCOSA recommendations. While the LTFP may not include a standalone document titled "cost saving plan," it clearly reflects the direction Council is taking to deliver efficiencies, contain cost growth, and improve long-term financial sustainability. It is also worth noting that Council received ESCOSA's report in late February, by which point the 2024/25 draft Budget and Annual Business Plan were already well advanced. Even so, we have acted quickly to align our forward planning with ESCOSA's recommendations. Importantly, this is an ongoing process. Council will review, measure, and publicly report on progress annually through both the Long-Term Financial Plan and the Annual Business Plan, as part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.</p>
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 Act 1999 (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>	<p>8. Discussions with the auditors in relation to the raising of purchase orders were agreeable of the practice currently undertaken as they related to items that were already under contractual agreement. The Policy will be updated to reflect the actual process undertaken. To be clear, there was no suggestion in the auditors findings of maladministration. 9. refer to answer to Q8. 10. Council will include reference to a link to the ESCOSA report which is available on their website. Noting that the advice has been published already by council and considered and referenced in a public agenda for the audit and risk committee. 11. Refer answers to Q's 4,5,6,7 above. Council is required to meet LGFA covenants by 2026/2027 which require financial sustainability ratio's to be met at certain levels. Council is aware that stepped increases across 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 are ensuring these covenants can be met and increasing the future sustainability of Council. 12. We take this as comment on past budgets – each year the budget will be determined based on the expenses and income required to provide the services for the community. Each budget has been formed with appropriate consideration by Council and consultation with the community. Over the years referenced rates have been at times above CPI and at others below, and the basis of rating has also changed over time with the introduction of the waste service charge offsetting against rates. 13. Council takes it's financial responsibilities seriously and balances the needs of the community with long term financial sustainable.</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>	<p>14. Financial Training is a mandatory requirement for Elected Members and is regularly maintained. To clarify the statements made in relation to the external audit finding, the auditors noted the operating surplus ratio has trended adversely in prior 3 year period but also noted this had been addressed in the LTFP. Costs for individual service areas can be located within the budget document. Council is also underway with a service review and workforce planning project which will continue to refine services in accordance with community expectations and outcome measures.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
G Walkom	<p>Q15 Will you include this missing information in the Business Plan and LTFFP? If not why not? 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. To get some balance here, The definition endorsed at the National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra, November 2006. "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." It is services, services services that council must get a handle on. Theme C How council is providing and ratepayers are receiving value for our I.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. *(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 . Q16 To get a handle on costs: has council considered a sunset clause on all discretionary services to be reviewed every 3 years?</p>	<p>15. Council's Strategic Plan includes 3 unlocking projects, one of which relates to workforce planning. As part of this unlocking project Council is reviewing its services. This is currently underway and has recently been workshopped with Council. The ABP includes an increased level of detail this financial year and will continue to be updated in line with progress made on the workforce planning unlocking project. To further clarify on commentary made, members are not the only indicator of use and visitation to Wulanda. Attendances YTD April 2025 exceeded 141k people, members refer only to those paying a membership fee via contracted operators Belgravia. Note that the \$5m quoted is a combination of depreciation, interest and operating costs. Regarding purchase orders, to be clear there no suggestion of maladministration. Please see response above to Q8. 16. Refer feedback to the Unlocking project and future community consultation regarding services.</p>
G Walkom	<p>Community Consultations on Business Pan and LTFFP Strategic Plan appears to be uncoded (yes there are some of the SP's items that have been costed for this year's BP but essentially it is not costed.) Under the 6 category groups included in the S.P. there are a total of 69 actions... Q17 What estimates have been effected for each of these actions and what years will they be actioned in the LTFFP? (I note that 22 SP actions are included in the 25/26 BP and that 16 have indicative costings - that leaves 47) 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!) 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? 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>	<p>17. Estimated operating and capital costs for the Strategic Plan have been included across the LTFFP. 18. The Strategic Plan is a guiding document lead by the community vision, Mount Gambier 2035. Progress towards the plan is reviewed and reported on quarterly. 19. The overarching community vision, Mount Gambier 2035, is a 10 year document. The more pointed Strategic Plan outlines the overarching goals for the next four years, guiding resource allocation and provides a mechanism to measure and report against.</p>
G Walkom	<p>Community Consultations - Business Plan and LTFFP Kerbside waste -61% The LTFFP states council intends reducing Kerbside waste by 61%! Q20 Will there be a commensurate rate reduction? Q21 What will ratepayers be expected to do with their rubbish? 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? I note the existing waste services are efficient and effective. Amazing is it not, that some fool wants to stuff the service up. Q23 How many people will put in de facto incinerators and what costs will council incur controlling that misadventure? Service Review Framework Q24 What is this exactly? Does it include the 19 Discretionary Services that council might be currently undertaking? Q24 What can we expect in cost savings from this review if the expected outcomes are recommended and adopted - a budget for expected savings 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. 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? 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>	<p>20. The achievement of the target and outcomes of achieving this target are not yet known. The waste service charge is reflective of actual costs of kerbside collection not the cost of waste reduction. 21.Ratepayers are already encouraged to utilise the Recycling and FOGO bins available. Previously Council has further supported ratepayers with compost bin subsidised offers and green waste caddy bins to assist reduce green, food and recycling materials from taking up space in general waste bins and ultimately landfill. 22. Reducing waste to landfill is important to our community, particularly the redirection of FOGO which has highest detrimental impact to the environment by the production of methane and contribution to PFAS and leach. Sustainability was a key principle evident throughout consultation for the Mount Gambier 2035 community vision. "We demonstrate leadership and consider infrastructure that supports a circular economy and reduces waste to landfill". 23. This question refers to an unknown state which may not eventuate and is unable to be answered reliably. 24. The Service Review Framework will define, catalogue and apply metrics to each service identified. It will include both mandatory and value added services. 25. Thank you. The State definition of essential services may relate to state based services however we will consider changing the wording in the final document. 26. In this context the term key has been used to identify the main services provided in this portfolio.</p>
G Walkom	<p>Total rates trend - Community consultation on Finance documents Total rates percentage increases since separation of waste services into a separate council business. I note that Property Rates and Kerbside Waste collection rates are listed separately since they were separated a fw years back. Q27. In what year were they separated? Q28. Over the past eight (8) years what is the yearly combined rates increase (property and waste) ? (I am wanting to clearly determine the % increase in Mt Gambier City council rates year on year up to the current draft business plan.) I note the current waste and reuse budget is \$8.27million. Q29. Has council sought expressions of interest to contract this out?</p>	<p>27. The Waste Service Charge was implemented in FY 2022. 28. In response to your previous question Council has made documents available via email and on the website for the prior years. The general rates increase for the 2025/2026 year is 8.18% plus 0.5% growth. The Waste Service Charge increase is 10.61% for 2025/2026 year. Both these increases are less than what was predicted for the LTFFP and form part of this consultation. 29. Council contracts out part of its waste services including recycling of materials collected from kerbside recycling collection and similarly with material collected from FOGO kerbside collection. Council has not sought expression of interest to contract out all of its waste and reuse service(s).</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
G Walkom	<p>Total rates trend - Risks and ratepayer surpses - Community consultation on Finance documents 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 could not repurpose the basic grant funds used for the Blue Blob to another purpose?</p>	<p>31. Council is currently finalising (to close) contracts for the construction of Wulanda. There will be ongoing maintenance as required with all Council buildings.</p> <p>32. Subjectivity still exists around the costs of finalising the capping on Cell 3C. A provision has been created for this of \$1.2m and will need review once the EPA approved designs have gone through a tender process. Due to this cell being overfilled in the current and prior financial year(s), and not all the overfilled capacity requiring shifting to the newly built cell there is actually a gain for Council in reduced depreciation and potential for increased conceptual height across the landfill site, which may result in increased capacity per cell moving forward. However, this does mean that actual depreciation is under budget in FY 2024/2025 and an increase in depreciation will be experienced, but not to the full extent, in FY2025/2026 due to timing.</p> <p>33. The LTFP uses the AMP's as a baseline and further includes estimates for indexation of assets and operating expenditure every 4 years for the revaluation of asset classes. This version of the LTFP appropriately includes amounts identified in the AMP for building maintenance starting from FY 2027.</p> <p>34. Cast in Blue, Beacon Art Project has a budget of \$136,250. This project is not part of the community consultation FY2025/2026.</p> <p>35. This is not part of the community consultation for the FY2025/2026 budget. However, council has considered community feedback on the beacon art project and made a determination to continue with the project.</p> <p>36. This is not part of the community consultation for the FY2025/2026 budget, however, Council resolved to allocate funding for a Beacon Art Project.</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 council meeting. Participants received no other "response".</p> <p>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>	<p>37. This is not part of the community consultation for the FY2025/2026 budget. However, council has considered community feedback on the beacon art project and made a determination to continue with the project.</p> <p>38. Council will provide answers to questions submitted through the public consultation process at the special meeting 17 June 2025. Given the volume of feedback, staff prepare responses as quickly as possible under the short time frame.</p>
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.</p> <p>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>	<p>39. Thank you for your feedback on the document. Council has received other positive feedback on the document and at this stage has no intention of removing the photos and graphics. These photos and graphics are included to create a more engaging document for our ratepayers.</p> <p>It is also worth noting that Mount Gambier 2035 reflects the vision of the community and was formed by extensive consultation and written by a panel of community members. It is important to respect and value the input of community members through these processes. It provides a long term 10 year community led vision and reflects what community value about the city, and their aspirations for the future. Council's strategic plan takes those aspirations and reflects them as council's contribution by providing assets and services to create a liveable city.</p>
G Walkom	<p>Q40. p8 Draft LTFP 26-35</p> <p>General Rates – Council's rating strategy has been reviewed, where Council Staff and Elected Members worked together to determine a balance between community expectations, the achievement of financial targets and the capacity required to deliver this LTFP (refer to rating section).</p> <p>specifically how have the "community expectations" been qualified and quantified? and what specifically are those qualifications and quantifications as a measure of our 27,888 population.</p> <p>In other words are there more than 28 persons (0.1% of community) voting for any given discretionary service or project that have resulted in a service or project being determined?</p> <p>Q41. p10 Draft BP&Budget 25/26</p> <p>Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre</p> <p>Continued operation and activation of the Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre. This will increase the ability for Mount Gambier to host major sporting competitions, conferences, events and performances providing significant social and recreational benefits and broader economic opportunities for local business. Council has resolved to include capital improvements to audio visual technologies to enable increased activation.</p> <p>Specifically what "increased activation" will result and what specific financial Return on Investment will result?</p> <p>Q42. p7 Draft BP&Budget 25/26</p> <p>Council has not increased its budget to reflect community growth and the rising cost of existing services in prior years. The step-increase included in the 2024/2025 budget and additional proposed step-increase for 2025/2026 addresses this.</p> <p>How can this be a valid statement? Community growth generates its own increase in rates by nature of the additional rated properties.</p>	<p>40. Council has started working with an external consultant in regard to a rating review. This work has been postponed at the request of Elected Members to 2025/2026. Public consultation will occur on the rating review, however its focus is not on the provision of services as there is another unlocking project which encompasses this. The focus of the rating review is on the structure and composition of the types of rates levied and considers the impact on all ratepayers.</p> <p>41. Council is working alongside Belgravia to enhance user experience for live music and other large scale events at Wulanda. One large scale event alone will deliver multiple direct and indirect benefits to the community which will offset the investment of \$156k included in the 2025/2026 budget.</p> <p>42. Council, alongside its Audit and Risk Committee has recently started to review its application of growth in rateable properties. The following extract is available in the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Report as part of the Council Agenda for June 2025.</p> <p>"The Committee raised questions around rating growth and best practice treatment. At present Council has built in 0.5% growth (on average 0.76% over last 7 years) with anything outside of the 0.5% being absorbed/discounting other ratepayers. Key discussion points arising from this question included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disservice if growth is absorbed as it is future money that should be banked for the provision of service growth. Would strongly support banking additional growth. • Growth can be used to go into an open space fund, to help fund increase services in the future. • Rating Review would be the optimum place in the context of broader policy position to make a change to the treatment of growth." <p>Community growth only generates its own form of revenue if it is not fully absorbed. The portion of growth in rateable properties that has previously been absorbed effectively reduces the rate in the dollar and does not increase the overall quantum of rates raised.</p>

Member of Public	Public Comments/Feedback/Questions	Administration comments/responses
Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC)	the following is an extract from the letter received from SMLC. "consider our request for funding to address a budget shortfall of \$20,000 for the upcoming financial year 2025 to 2026 to assist in covering the wages for SMLC's Admin Support Officer".	The full letter will be tabled at the Special Meeting and has been sent to Elected Members in advance of the Meeting. The SMLC is a valuable service organisation. It is worth noting that under Councils Grant and Sponsorship guidelines operating costs such as wages would not be eligible for funding.
Local Government Financing Authority (LGFA)	LGFA have provided verbal feedback that they are comfortable where the City of Mount Gambier are heading and ratio's in the updated Long Term Financial Plan.	Taken as comments.
G Walkom	With a 1 hour meeting (required I believe) if there are 6 speakers would there not be circa 9-10 minutes per speaker? I understand last year council did not comply with legislated requirements when it shut off the meeting discussion to runout the meeting time to "comply" with requirements. SURELY council has more respect for its community than to do this again.	For the information of the Community, here is the relevant section of the legislation. Local Government Act 1999 123—Annual business plans and budgets (3) Before a council adopts an annual business plan, the council must— (a) prepare a draft annual business plan; and (b) follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy, taking into account the requirements of subsection (4). (4) For the purposes of subsection (3)(b), a public consultation policy must at least provide for the following: (a) the publication in a newspaper circulating within the area of the council and on a website determined by the chief executive officer of a notice informing the public of the preparation of the draft annual business plan and inviting interested persons— (i) to attend— (A) a public meeting in relation to the matter to be held on a date (which must be at least 21 days after the publication of the notice) stated in the notice; or (B) a meeting of the council to be held on a date stated in the notice at which members of the public may ask questions, and make submissions, in relation to the matter for a period of at least 1 hour,(on the basis that the council determines which kind of meeting is to be held under this subparagraph); or (ii) to make written submissions in relation to the matter within a period (which must be at least 21 days) stated in the notice; and (b) the council to make arrangements for a meeting contemplated by paragraph (a)(i) and the consideration by the council of any submissions made at that meeting or in response to the invitation under paragraph (a)(ii). (5) The council must ensure that copies of the draft annual business plan are available at the meeting under subsection (4)(a)(i), and for inspection (without charge) and purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by the council) at the principal office of the council and on the website at least 21 days before the date of that meeting. (5a) The council must ensure that provision is made for— (a) a facility for asking and answering questions; and (b) the receipt of submissions, on its website during the public consultation period. (6) A council may then, after considering— (a) any submission made to the council during the public consultation period; and (b) any new or revised information in the possession of the council that is relevant to the material contained in the draft annual business plan; and (c) such other materials or information as the council thinks fit, adopt its annual business plan (with or without amendment). Last year Council complied with legislative requirements. Five minute allocations per speaker ensure that all who wish to, have time to speak, and that there is also time for anyone in attendance to ask questions. The Presiding Member may give latitude for longer or for a further verbal submission, if time permits during that one hour meeting. The Presiding Member also has the capacity to adjourn the Special meeting, open and then adjourn the Ordinary meeting, and provide more time for the Special Meeting.
various	General commentary from members of the public at the information briefing sessions held at the Library 10 and 11th June 2025. - transparency about response to ESCOSA and setting a plan that includes cost savings targets - Does Council have a Carbon net zero plan? - concerns raised regarding Caroline Landfill and the costs of shifting waste from an overfilled cell - Wayfinding signage at the Lakes precinct for tourists - dangerous embankment at the valley lakes boat ramp and grass area - concerns about SA Water and nitrate levels and viability of drinking water in to the future - Animal welfare and the handling of deceased or injured animals policy/procedure - Disability Access and Inclusion Plan - concerns raised about the Council's excess allocation of water and if we are nearing limits - has Council considered turning off street lights for a period of time - State Government road funding, concerns about pot-holes and condition of State roads - traffic congestion and flow at certain times at the main corner intersection including consideration of pedestrian only crossing - return on investment of AV at Wulanda - Flooding on Crouch Street and near Commodore, what are Council doing with Department of Infrastructure and Transport - Sign review master plan - non-porous flooring in public toilets for health regulation standards - check the levelling of footpaths, specifically Ibis Street has a 5 inch fall - advocacy with state highways and the grading of the road edge to prevent water damage - improvement to Carinya Gardens Cemetery TV and Audio - Frew Park directional arrows at entry - "Have your Say" website is a nightmare to use, would like more opportunities for Elected Members to engage with community, for eg "coffee with a cop" - improved communication around the "Blue Blob" - cost of living concerns - reduce grants and funding allocations, everyone needs to tighten their belts	

Tabled Document 6.2

Verbal Submission

Substance Misuse
Limestone Coast





Global Problems, Local Solutions

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11th June 2025

The Mayor
Lynette Martin OAM
City of Mount Gambier
Watson Terrace
Mount Gambier SA 5290

city@mountgambier.sa.gov.au

Re: Submission for Funding Substance Misuse Limestone Coast 2025/2026

Dear Madam Mayor,

Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) is writing a submission to you and your elected representatives to consider our request for funding to address a budget shortfall of \$20,000 for the upcoming financial year 2025 to 2026 to assist in covering the wages for SMLC's Admin Support Officer.

SMLC has operated as a not-for-profit organisation since 2017, evolving from a working party with project-based funding to an incorporated entity in 2020 with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health. This ongoing funding demonstrates the importance of continuity in operations and the necessity of a strategic view of regional needs. SMLC receives \$185,000 annually, including GST. This current funding agreement concludes on September 30, 2026, and SMLC's Board is optimistic that funding from the Federal Government will continue following this agreement.

SMLC provides leadership, education, training, and advocacy in the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) landscape for Mount Gambier and the wider region, acting as a focal point for initiatives that work across agencies. SMLC collaborates with the community to understand and promote place-based solutions using the best national and international practice resources.

SMLC Strategic Objectives

- Facilitate the establishment of a community-based collaborative AOD treatment model to address the needs of AOD issues in Mount Gambier and the Limestone Coast region.
- Use harm reduction and evidence-based best practices to inform action.
- Secure continuing funding for SMLC.
- Maintain and build partnerships with key stakeholders across the region, State, and Australia.
- Reduce the impact and harm of alcohol and other drug use in Mount Gambier and the wider region.
- Reduce stigma related to the use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Build awareness of emerging trends in the alcohol and other drug sector.



**Substance
Misuse**
Limestone
Coast Inc.

Global Problems, Local Solutions

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SMLC's Recent Project Work

Since 2020, SMLC has

- Facilitated 500+ training opportunities for local AOD and allied health professionals in Mount Gambier. Local Agencies, on their own, cannot bring best practice training for their workforce; their funding does not allow for locally presented professional development. These training days also allow for networking opportunities that would not normally occur.
- Supported Mount Gambier families who are supporting someone with a substance use disorder in accessing therapeutic education by bringing Family Drug Support to Mount Gambier. Family Drug Support is Australia's peak organisation delivering evidence-informed interventions for families. Family Drug Support now comes to Mount Gambier every month and is committed to continuing its support for local families.
- Delivered evidence-based AOD secondary school education to Mount Gambier and Limestone Coast schools, and up to now, approximately 1,200 secondary students have undertaken OurFutures www.ourfutures.org.au
- Designed and delivered the biennial Limestone Coast AOD Regional Summit, bringing Government and non-Government agencies together to interrogate the gaps in AOD services in the region. The 2021 Summit resulted in the State funding of detox beds in the Mount Gambier Hospital.
- Facilitated community education on the harms of alcohol, supported by corporate business.
- Forged cross-border partnerships with interstate Health agencies.
- Developed SMLC's website that details AOD services for Mount Gambier and South Australia and has educational tools for parents and caregivers on teenage AOD issues. The SMLC website has over 200 visits per month.

Aims for the Coming Financial Year

SMLC's Strategic Plan for 2025 – 2026 is to continue our work in delivering evidence-based services to reduce harm and improve individual and community well-being. This includes undertaking strong advocacy for the establishment of a stand-alone community-based collaborative AOD treatment model to address the needs of AOD issues in Mount Gambier, which already has the support of the City of Mount Gambier.

Other objectives for SMLC are summarized in the below table. Project funding from other funding sources will be sought for these projects to be undertaken;

Project	What	Budget
Facilitate best-practice training for the local AOD sector twice a year.	Bring evidence-informed training to Mount Gambier for local AOD and Allied Health Sectors	\$15,000 + Project Manager and Admin Support wages
Health Promotion, Website, and Communications Plan.	Contract Communications specialist and website	\$16,000 + Project Manager & Admin Support wages.



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Global Problems, Local Solutions

	designer to implement and assist SMLC Project Manager.	
Limestone Coast AOD Regional Summit	Attract high profile presenters and attendees to attend. Research topics relevant to Mount Gambier	\$30,000 + Project Manager and Admin support wages.
School Education	Deliver and support schools in the delivery of evidence-informed AOD education.	Incorporated in the Project Manager's wage.
Health Promotion to Families of Teenage Children	Deliver evidence-informed educational tools regarding AOD to support parents in transitioning their children from Primary to Secondary School.	\$20,000 + Project Manager & Admin Support Wages.

SMLC's Budget 2025 – 2026

Income	
Commonwealth Dept Health	\$185,000
Contract work Sporting Clubs	\$4,029
Total	\$189,029
Operating Expenses	
Wages Project Manager & Admin Support	\$148,240
Communications & Website	\$16,000
Rent & Utilities	\$17,353
Insurance	\$3,599
Fees & subscriptions	\$7,628
Travel	\$3,345
Projects	\$81,000
Office & Admin	16,692
Total Operating Expenses	\$293,857

As shown SMLC's operating expenses do not align with SMLC's total income. SMLC actively sources funding for the evidence-based projects we undertake in supporting the Mount Gambier community and has plans to charge fees for people to attend future community events and training to cover the rising costs of delivering projects.

SMLC seeks \$20,000 in funding from the City of Mount Gambier to assist in covering our shortfall in operating expenses.



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SMLC's objectives align with the City of Mount Gambier's objectives

SMLC's objectives are interconnected with the City of Mount Gambier's objectives by focusing on the key areas of need for our community and reducing harm that can arise from AOD use. SMLC's strategic objectives are outlined in our Strategic Plan 2025 – 2026 and are underpinned by our values of respect, compassion, progress, and integrity.

SMLC's strategic objectives are to facilitate a high-quality, community-based collaborative model health service in Mount Gambier, as an accessible hub for people to feel connected and outline a path for treatment and recovery.

As the leader of AOD advocacy and health promotion in Mount Gambier and the wider region, SMLC already has a strong relationship with the City of Mount Gambier, built on trust, partnership, and collaboration, delivering evidence-based primary prevention work by establishing Planet Youth in our community.

SMLC thanks the City of Mount Gambier for considering this submission to assist with our future activities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Thomson'.

Sue Thomson
SMLC Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SBouchier'.

Sophie Bouchier
SMLC Project Manager

Tabled Document 6.3

Verbal Submission

Mount Gambier and District
Resident and Ratepayers Association



PRESENTATION FOR COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO PROPOSED 2025/6 BUDGET

at
Special Council Meeting
City Hall
17 June 2025

By way of introduction to the Associations concerns with this Budget I would like to briefly recap our concerns that we outlined at last years Budget consultation.

Due to the time allocated to presentations we deferred to other presenters, with infinitely more accounting and financial experience, to talk about the fine detail with regards to the 2024/5 Budget.

What we focused on was the community's widespread concerns about meaningful communication from Council. Our concerns remain the same today.

In fact, if anything the concerns of the community have grown louder over the last year, and, rightly or wrongly, there is a significant general lack of faith, trust and support for the Council in the community.

At last year's meeting many people spent time and effort to engage in the consultation process that Council required.

It was disturbing to say the least that following these submissions and presentations it was reported to us that when the Councillors retired to the Chamber they referred to people as "whingers" and "uneducated".

These comments are not "robust debate". Such comments are highly derogatory and offensive to members of the community, and we call on the Mayor as the Presiding Member to control these inappropriate comments in the chamber in the future.

In regard to this years proposed budget we will again leave discussion of fine detail to those with more experience however we do have 3 specific concerns which we would like to address;

1. Rates an increase of 8.18%

We appreciate that costs go up every year and that increases are a fact of life.

The community disquiet that we receive is a perceived lack of Council's financial restraint around discretionary spending.

Never before have we seen such community anger as was demonstrated with the sculpture "Cast in Blue". We believe that this was flash-point for the community reflecting the slowly simmering and growing anxiety about Council spending and lack of meaningful consultation.

We believe the genesis for this was the secrecy around the building costs of Wulanda and the ongoing yearly financial burden on ratepayers (>\$5million including depreciation) for the current management and operation of the facility. This secrecy appears to be ongoing.

There are many other examples such as the purchase of a fleet(7) of high end 4WD's for staff personal use at ratepayers expense.

We could go on with many other examples but as time is limited we can summarize our concerns thus - "it is easy to produce a balanced budget by simply asking for more money for the budget".

We do not accept vague justifications about increases based on other unnamed Councils.

Each Council has its own specific needs which dictate their financial requirements. Comparison of apples and oranges is not valid justification for rate increases. However it is apparently useful "spin" in Council documents.

2. Waste Service Charge an increase of 10.61%

We acknowledge that management and disposal of waste is an ever-increasing financial burden on Council.

The problem is compounded by ever increasing regulation and associated costs.

What we do not accept is the statements put forward at the community meeting on Tuesday the 10th of June.

It was stated that as charges were going up only 10% this was a saving of 10%.

This is patently absurd as any 1st year student of Economics or Accounting would easily refute.

The current charge is actual cost recovery for the service. Although the LTFP last year “guessed” that it would go up 20%, just because it only went up 10% does not represent an actual saving. To imply that it does, and is an example of savings by Council, is meaningless spin and factually incorrect based on a hypothetical assumption that has subsequently proven to be wrong.

This type of statement further compounds the community's concern about the accuracy of Councils information. The charge has gone up 10%. There is no saving.

3. ESCOSA

As a final point, we would again like to draw attention to the ESCOSA report and comments made at the meeting of Tuesday the 10th of June.

We are deeply concerned about the dismissive attitude that was displayed by some members of Council to this report.

The statements that “they are advisory”, “we don't have to act on what they say” and “We don't have to do anything for 4 years” is truly alarming.

ESCOSA is an independent body which has statewide perspective across all Councils. To dismiss their advice out of hand is unprofessional, dangerous and unacceptable to the community.

We ask for complete formal implementation of Recommendation 2 by Council to help restore community faith and support of Councils financial decisions.

In our opinion this is the minimum the community deserves.

4. Conclusion

We acknowledge complex and hard work by Council Officers to prepare this Budget for consideration

We acknowledge that it is unlikely that the Budget will be changed at this late stage.

However, we request that;

a. Council review its discretionary spending and;

b: A formal plan is developed in line with Recommendation 2 of the independent ESCOSA report, which is available to the community, to sit alongside the Budget and to be reported on quarterly to Council, with the target of reduction of Council expenditure of 2% in this financial year.

Thank you for allowing us to present to you this evening.