

## **Cardinia Shire Council Annual Budget 2014/15 - Submission on behalf of Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association**

The following comment is provided for consideration regarding the 2014/15 draft Budget. We have not examined the Council Plan which was not available at the Special Meeting held to release the draft budget. However as reference to the Strategic Resource Plan is included in the budget document, any comment on the draft budget is considered relevant to the Strategic Resource Plan.

It is the assumption of many in the community that as more residents contribute rates to the Council, the greater should be the revenue to be spent, but this simple view is not the reality. Over each consecutive financial year, spending has been higher, additional debt has been incurred and rates have increased. This year's budget 2014/15 proposes 5.9% as a slight decrease in level of rates to be charged, and for years 2015 to 2018 forecast is for rates at 5.5% but there can be no certainty of this, due to possible changes in economic conditions. Council rates need to be capped at a relevant CPI level, spending limited to match revenue available, and more priority given to reduction of debt level.

External influences quoted in the budget draft include population growth in the municipality, increased cost of maintaining parks and gardens and the growth of the council organisation in line with service delivery needs and community expectation.

Therefore we are critical of Council funding directed towards what should be State and Federal government responsibilities, e.g. education, extended community health services, law and order (graffiti) and a range of programs which have been gradually passed on to local councils' financial responsibility. The need to consider asset renewal and maintenance (roads, bridges, drains etc.) should be prioritised above commitment of funding to a recreational sports facility at a new State government school in the central growth corridor.

There is considerable merit in the spending allocated for community and recreational facilities, roads and pathways, disability access works, playground renewals, and maintenance of swimming facilities, plus the support of library facilities and the mobile library service. These are the services for which ratepayers should be charged, and in a sound spending program should receive priority focus without being deprived of funding which is misdirected towards areas of government responsibility and where tax revenue should be allocated.

An opportunity to present a verbal submission is requested, when a list of questions regarding budget items will be presented.

Gloria O'Connor  
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14<sup>th</sup> May 2014.