

# PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET 2020-21

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What does Council spend money on?**

Although in the midst of the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this is a budget that will continue to deliver more than 100 vital community services and capital works improvements across Hobsons Bay, while also tailored to support the community and local business through the recovery phase of the pandemic.

This budget will allow the Council to generally maintain existing service levels while continuing our focus on renewing the city's existing infrastructure. Maintaining and upgrading our existing infrastructure will be critical to accommodating future growth in Hobsons Bay. Funding for capital works provides for vital infrastructure such as buildings, roads, drainage and footpaths.

This year's proposed budget also focuses heavily on supporting the community and local business through the recovery phase of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 includes Council's third Community Support Package.

### **What is Council doing in this budget to help the community through COVID-19?**

Council's third Community Support Package, proposed in the budget, invests \$943,000 into community and local business recovery and includes: a program to support local connections (\$100,000); and incentives to use Council venues including the Williamstown Town Hall and Altona Theatre (\$132,000); waiver of summer sports ground rentals (\$72,000); strategic planning support for sports clubs to resume training and competition (\$60,000); sports pavilion cleaning program (\$20,000); and 'loan to own' iPads program at the libraries (\$60,000).

Additionally, a COVID-19 Recovery Grants program worth \$500,000 has been added to our existing \$850,000 Annual Community Grants Programs, to enable flexible and responsive support to the community over the coming year as it is required. This totals in excess of \$1.2 million.

Community grants, as part of the proposed budget, will be rolled out in intervals to meet the emerging needs of our community groups, organisations and clubs. Grants can provide support with normal and new needs to deliver diverse programs and projects in our community. In addition to the COVID-19 Recovery Grants as part of Council's Annual Community Grants Program, the Art Apart Rapid Response Grants aim to generate creative and innovative content to engage the diverse Hobsons Bay community at this challenging time.

### **What is Council doing in this budget to support the local economy during the recovery phase of the pandemic?**

The proposed Community Support Package also provides significant financial relief for businesses. As part of our third package, almost \$2 million will be dedicated to business and economic recovery, including rebates for the 2020-21 food registration (\$595,000), public health fees (\$63,000) and footpath trading permit fees (\$150,000), extending the waiver of paid parking in Nelson Place until 31 December 2020 (customers of businesses

# PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET 2020-21

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

located at Williamstown Beach will also be provided dedicated permits for free parking during this period) (\$520,000), rent relief in Council owned property (\$210,000), town planning rebates (\$177,000), and rolling out a business precinct support campaign (\$250,000).

During the pandemic, Council also moved ahead with delivering on-the-ground infrastructure projects to a level never before seen, which provided a boost for local jobs, and ensured our city and economy kept a sense of momentum, remaining well positioned for success as restrictions eased with each phase.

### **What has Council previously done to support the community and local businesses during COVID-19?**

Throughout the pandemic, Council has remained committed to providing essential services and supporting our community and local businesses, while conforming to requirements from the state and federal governments.

In times of crisis, community demand and expectations for council services increase. There was an increase in demand for immunisations, Meals on Wheels services, youth counselling, waste services, online library services and support for local businesses.

Previously, Council released two community support packages. The first and second support packages, worth approximately \$3 million combined, focused on immediate needs, with financial assistance and support funding being derived from a reprioritisation of funds in the 2019-20 financial year. These packages did not include any funds that may be required from the Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 year.

### **What are Council's responsibilities in maintaining infrastructure?**

Councils are entrusted with the maintenance of more than 30 per cent of all of Australian public assets including roads, bridges, parks, footpaths and public buildings. This means that a large proportion of Council's income must be allocated to the upkeep and replacement of these valuable community assets to ensure the quality of public infrastructure is maintained at the level the community expects and deserves. This is why Council's infrastructure spend is so crucial.

### **What proportion of the government tax pool goes to local government?**

Councils across Australia raise approximately 3.5% of the total taxation collected by all levels of government in Australia. Alarming, for every \$100 in taxes paid by Victorian residents, rates make up approximately \$3.60. The other \$96.40 goes to the state and federal governments.

### **Is there a rate increase?**

To keep delivering essential services and projects that benefit our community, Hobsons Bay has increased rates in accordance with the Victorian State Government's Fair Go Rates System. This reflects an average general increase of less than \$1 per week across all property types in Hobsons Bay.

# PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET 2020-21

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Will all properties' rate increase by two per cent?**

No, the two per cent rate increase is applied to the total amount collected from rateable properties across the municipality and is not applied equally to individual properties. All properties are revalued each year by a state government appointed independent valuer with the revaluation process attempting to ensure rates are fairly redistributed across all properties in the city.

For this reason, rates are distributed amongst each property in Hobsons Bay based on the valuation of that individual property.

### **What if I can't pay my rates?**

In addition to these support packages, to support residents and businesses impacted by the pandemic, Council has also reviewed and refreshed the Financial Hardship Policy making it accessible to a broader audience and with various options available for rate deferral through to waivers depending on the financial circumstances of the individual or business. Residents and businesses are encouraged to apply for financial hardship relief should they be experiencing difficulties during this time of need.

### **How were the community consulted with developing the budget?**

The Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 has been developed with the community and their views at its centre. Despite the challenges encountered in a unique pandemic environment, the Hobsons Bay community, once again, played an important role in shaping the Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 through Council's Pitch Your Idea consultation process and additionally through input that enabled development of the proposed COVID-19 Community Support Package in response to the pandemic.

Through the 'Pitch Your Idea' consultation process, residents, local groups and organisations submitted budget ideas for consideration.

Two drop in sessions were held with community members able to ask questions and receive assistance in an informal setting. Submitters also had the opportunity to present their idea to Councillors and Council officers at the Speed Dialogue Session in December 2019.

A variety of submissions were received from across the city, and the majority have been included in the Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21. Community members also played a significant role in developing the third Community Support Package, which is embedded in the Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21, and represents tangible outcomes to assist the community and businesses to recover from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, returning a minimum of \$3 million back to our community directly.

Our engagement included the following:

- We held nine pre-budget Coronavirus recovery ideas sessions in May 2020 with our Portfolio Advisory Committee members, Interagency members, young people and the newly established Hobsons Bay Business Roundtable.

# PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET 2020-21

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- The Mayor contacted community groups and sporting clubs across the municipality to seek their views on the potential support needs for community and/or the services and functions they provide to their members.
- During the announcement of the first and second Community Support Packages, Council also invited the community to submit general ideas on how we can respond during, and in the future recovery phase, of the pandemic.

This engagement ensured Council's proposed response and expenditure in the budget was targeted to enable us to be agile and responsive to the community's needs, as seen by them, and provide the most effective and lasting support services for our residents.

The Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 was released for public exhibition by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 23 June 2020. The proposed 2020-21 budget is being made available for inspection and comment until 24 July 2020 via our online community engagement platform Participate Hobsons Bay [participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au](https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au).

### **What was achieved through the community consultation?**

As a result of community consultation, Council applied a direct approach to support the most impacted community members by COVID-19 and those residents that are truly in need of help, rather than providing rate cuts for all residents, some of who may not have been financially impacted as significantly.

The Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 includes our third Community Support Package. This package is worth at least \$3 million and returns 150 per cent of the rate increase directly back to the community in various forms of financial relief.

### **What are the proposed budget highlights?**

The proposed budget was developed with the community in mind. The third Community Support Package represents tangible outcomes for the community and businesses to recover from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, returning approximately \$3 million back to our community directly.

In line with Council's policy, the majority of Council's asset management focuses on asset renewal, such as fixing the roads and buildings, as well as on new facilities like drains and footpaths.

The 2020-21 budget contains the highest spend Council has ever committed for capital works projects and aims to boost our local economy in the recovery phase of the Coronavirus pandemic. The total Capital Works Program is proposed to be \$67.866 million. Highlights of the 2020-21 budget include:

- roads and drains (\$15.605 million) – including the road rehabilitation program (\$6.307 million), road resurfacing program (\$2 million), local area movement plans (\$1.23 million) Black Spot funding program (\$1.488 million), the drainage renewal program (\$1.03 million) and new/upgraded drainage program (\$530,000)
- footpaths and cycle ways (\$1.515 million) – including the footpath renewal program (\$1.07 million), new footpaths (\$150,000) and the shared trails upgrade program (\$100,000)

# PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET 2020-21

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- recreation and open space (\$16.333 million) – including parks, open space and streetscapes (\$7.982 million), recreational, leisure and community facilities (\$8.001 million), off street carparks (\$195,000) and bridges (\$155,000)
- buildings (\$29.958 million) – including sporting and recreational facilities (\$21.4 million), civic and community facilities (\$4.96 million), building renewal program (\$1.39 million), greenhouse strategy (\$1 million) and the public toilet program (\$275,000)

### **What is the budget bottom line?**

The Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 includes an operational surplus of \$25.3 million for the year. This may seem like a significant windfall for Council but does not represent cash in the bank. Council surpluses are provided to partly fund Council's capital works program and without it, Council would not be able to close the gap on ageing assets and keep up with community demand for new infrastructure.

### **What are the services that Council provides?**

In addition to the more obvious services such as waste and recycling collection and planning, Council funds over 100 core services that have a genuine benefit to the community including libraries, meals on wheels, disability services, children and youth services, immunisation sessions, cultural events, sport and recreation, parks and gardens and local business development, just to name a few.

We know that our services are relied upon and valued by those who use them. The rates our residents pay are directly connected to and help deliver the vital services and infrastructure across the city.

### **Does Council ask for more money from other levels of government?**

Council continues its advocacy work towards state and federal governments to identify future funding opportunities that will assist Council in delivering an ongoing high standard of services and infrastructure for local residents, workforce and visitors.

### **Why is Council's budget being considered later than previous years?**

Hobsons Bay City Council's Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 has been developed and released in unprecedented times.

The Victorian Government gave a two month extension for all councils to complete their 2020-21 Budgets. Hobsons Bay City Council took up this extension.

With this additional time, Council has reshaped the Proposed Annual Budget 2020-21 to ensure it delivers programs that support our community in remaining resilient during the pandemic and in the recovery phase. Council was relieved to have this additional two months to proactively work with our community to source meaningful ways on how to best assist both residential and business community members hardest hit by the pandemic.