

Mildura Rural City Council 2025-26 Draft Budget

Mildura Rural City Council's Draft Budget for the 2025-26 Financial Year focuses on continuing to deliver for our community. Our proposed Budget sets out approximately \$155.85 million in operational and capital expenditure. Much of this is committed to funding community services, facilities and infrastructure to support residents and regional growth.

At a glance

**\$155.85
million**

Total proposed
budget

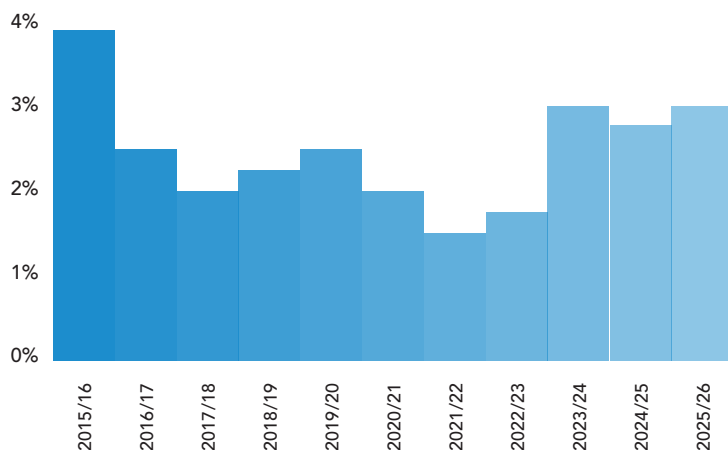
**\$41.49
million**

Capital Work
program to improve
and upgrade
community assets

Rates

In 2025-26 rates are proposed to increase by 3% in line with the State Government's Rate Capping policy. All of Victoria's 79 councils have been operating under rate caps since 1 July 2016.

Rating Increase History



November 2024 - May 2025

Draft Budget prepared based on feedback outlined in the 20-year Community Vision, and following feedback collected during development of the 2025-29 Draft Council Plan.

22 May 2025

Councillors endorsed the Draft Budget for public exhibition at the May Ordinary Council Meeting

23 May to 9 June 2025

2025-26 Draft Budget on public exhibition, feedback welcomed

Mid-June 2025

Feedback reviewed

26 June 2025

Final Budget presented to Council for adoption

Have your say

The community is invited to view and provide feedback on the 2025-26 Draft Budget online at yoursay.mildura.vic.gov.au/Budget25-26. Community feedback can be provided up until 5pm Monday 9 June.



Mildura Rural City Council

Budget Highlights

Our Draft Budget for the 2025/26 Financial Year aims to deliver several initiatives aimed at improving our region while delivering vital assets for our community aligning to our five Community Vision themes of Environment, Community, Place, Economy and Leadership. Check out some of the highlights.



Environment

- Expand PV Solar across Mildura Rural City Council sites
- Deliver the 'Cool It' Street Tree Program to increase tree canopy in residential areas
- Implement key actions in the Urban Forest Strategy
- Implement key actions in the Towards Zero Emissions Strategy
- Deliver key actions in the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy



Community

- Develop the Community Health & Wellbeing Plan
- Implement key actions in the Gender Equality and Preventing Family Violence Strategy
- Implement the Youth Engagement Strategy



Place

- Secure funding for, and deliver, the Riverfront Adventure Playground
- Develop the Stormwater Drainage Strategy
- Implement key actions from the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy



Economy

- Deliver the LightState projects – Trail of Lights and FOSO
- Develop an Economic Development Strategy
- Develop a Tourism Strategy
- Develop an Arts & Culture Strategy



Leadership

- Implement the Customer Experience Strategy
- Develop a Financial Sustainability Strategy
- Implement the Advocacy Framework
- Develop a 10-year Asset Plan

Key projects, services and initiatives

The Draft Budget outlines how Council will deliver 100+ different services, facilities and projects for our community. Below is just a snapshot of some of the capital works expenditure we have planned in 2025-26.



Road projects - \$ 16.23 m

- Bitumen resealing program
- Gravel resheeting program
- Shoulder works program
- Road reconstruction program
- Road safety program



Buildings and building improvements - \$5.87m

- Construction of Nichols Point Early Years Hub
- Murrayville kindergarten renewal and upgrade
- Sarah Oval social clubroom upgrade
- Red Cliffs bowls club roof and box gutter replacement
- New public toilet Robbins Wetland
- New public toilet Diablo Park



Drainage - \$8.71m

- Nichols Point drainage stage 2 and 3
- Spoon drain upgrade Wittman Avenue and Acacia Drive and Aldinga Drive and Acacia Drive
- Swale and pump drain upgrade between 527 Koorlong Avenue and corner Fourteenth Street
- Drainage upgrade stormwater pipe Massey Close



Recreation , leisure and community facilities \$1.7m

- Renewal of Underbool pool (subject to grant funding)
- Sunraysia Hockey pitch upgrade
- Kenny Park off leash dog park (subject to grant funding)

**Please note some of these projects may be subject to grant approval or contribution agreements.*

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Council doing to save costs and ensure services are delivered as efficiently as possible?

Council recognises that many residents, businesses, community and sporting groups are under increased financial pressure due to global factors including high cost of living and high interest rates. Council is not immune from these impacts.

This year alone we anticipate general insurance, public liability and Workcover costs to increase by \$800,000. We have also seen additional cost shifting from Federal and State Governments onto local government, estimated to impact our operating position by \$5 million in the next Financial Year.

Thanks to sound financial management, Council has been able to forecast an operating surplus of \$0.07 million for the 2025-26 financial year, while still ensuring our services are delivered to levels expected by our community.

In the coming 12 months Council will undergo further reviews of service levels to ensure our long-term financial sustainability.

Examples of where we have found savings in this year's Draft Budget include:

- \$100,000 savings in fleet maintenance
- \$65,000 due to improvement in service delivery and result of cemetery operations
- \$200,000 reduction in passenger fleet vehicles due to the implementation of fleet booking systems, including pool vehicles, leading to a reduction in total number of passenger vehicles.
- \$230,000 savings in not outsourcing architecture work
- \$800,000 in electricity savings

What is the impact on this year's budget due to cost-shifting from State and Federal governments onto local government?

A further challenge impacting Council's financial sustainability is the impact of cost-shifting from Commonwealth and State Governments.

A concern that Australian Local Government Association has advocated with the Commonwealth Government over a long period is the significant impact that cost-shifting has had, and is having, on the financial sustainability of local government, which is threatening councils' ability to provide essential services that enable the liveability of local communities.

Here are some examples where cost-shifting has significantly impacted Council's financial sustainability, estimated to impact our operating position by \$5 million annually:

- Environmental protection and waste levy (increased by 90% in the past five years)
- Libraries (no longer a 50/50 share funding arrangement with the State. Specifically for Mildura Rural City Council – the State Government grant now is approximately 16% of the Library Service Total

Operating Income.

State average is 17% across all Victoria Councils)

- School crossing supervision
- Early years infrastructure
- Building services
- Statutory planning (fees and charges only covers part of costs)
- State contracts for services performed by Council without sufficient recognition of cost
- State infrastructure projects (these may include scenarios where the State Government complete projects with reduced scope, leaving the project to be completed in full by Council. Examples include construction of major roundabouts with no landscaping inside the roundabout, leaving the Council to complete the landscaping.)

What was Council's overall tourism/marketing spend last year, specifically the Tropical North Victoria campaign?

The overall budget was \$600,000, which included \$390,000 spent on the Tropical North Victoria campaign. This campaign proved enormously successful in terms of reach and penetration across social and mainstream media, generating media exposure that was the equivalent to \$2.5 million in public relations value (a 641% return on investment).

What has been the overall visitor spend for the last 12 months?

Tourism and Entertainment spend in our region was \$35.5 million (up 1.1% locally). This trend was similar to what is occurring in Regional Victoria, which saw a 1.4% increase over the past 12 months. Our overnight spend was \$82.9 million during this time (up 1.4%), while the day spend was \$31.1 million (for people who travelled more than 25km and stayed for more than hours on a single day).

How much does Council invest back into the local community through its annual budget?

Council predominantly uses local suppliers, and over the last 12 months has spent \$66 million on local suppliers. This includes national suppliers who may be locally based but have a shop front and employ local residents. This local spend also includes spend from operational and capital grants.

Additionally, Council employs 645 permanent, part-time and casual staff who live locally with a total take home salary of \$35 million. As these staff live locally, they reinvest a large portion of their salaries back into our local economy. Many also volunteer and contribute to their community in a wide variety of ways.

How much will Council collect in rates and charges in the 2025-26 Financial Year?

Council will collect \$93 million in rates and charges.

What is the value in Council supporting events?

Council has supported 64 events, to the value of \$453,825 through our Community Event Grants this financial year to date. Many of these events wouldn't proceed without the support Council provides. This support isn't just purely financial, as Council officers also provide advice and assistance to event organisers and community groups.

As a result, visitation numbers resulting from these events include:

- Day trippers: 58,273 people
- Visitor nights: 106,677 people

The total economic impact from these events is estimated at \$51 million, comprising \$31 million in direct impact, \$11 million in supply chain effects, and \$9 million in consumption effects, supporting approximately 211 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

What does the rate increase mean for me?

This below graph highlights the effect of the rate cap increase of 3% will have on individual property types, in line with changes introduced following the adoption of the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029.

Differential Rating Category	Median rate effort increase/decrease
Residential	+\$74
Business	+\$271
Dryland Farm	-\$782
Irrigated Farm	-\$6
Cultural and Recreational	+\$2

Is Council's spending audited regularly? If so by who?

Yes, Mildura Rural City Council is required to undergo an external audit annually. This independent audit is conducted by the Victorian Auditor General. The purpose is to ensure transparency and accountability in how public funds are managed and spent.

Also, to help ensure effective governance Mildura Rural City Council has an Audit and Risk Committee which includes four independent panel members. To aid the Audit and Risk Committee an independent auditor is appointed to conduct audits on Council processes and report back to the committee. This is done to help maintain a robust governance framework.

What impact will the Victorian Government's new Emergency Service and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) levy have on Council?

The ESVF replaces the Fire Services Levy and is an annual charge imposed by the Victorian government on all Victorian properties. Victorian Councils are bound to collect this levy on behalf of the government, which is reflected in the rates notices property-owners receive. This new fund will take \$12.4 million out of our community each year, a staggering increase of more than \$4 million over the previous Fire Services Levy. Council has added its voice to widespread condemnation of the levy at the recent Municipal Association of Victoria State Conference and has vowed to fight it. Essentially, the new levy is \$4 million of additional tax revenue that the Government requires Council to collect on behalf of the State Revenue Office.