



Thursday, 24 June 2021

Further COVID-19 support in Port Phillip Council's 2021-22 Budget

A new COVID-19 relief package and rates waivers worth an estimated \$825,000 for those hardest hit by the pandemic, funding for arts organisations and an extended Food Organic Green Organic (FOGO) trial are all part of Port Phillip Council's Budget 2021/22.

The Council Plan 2021/31, including a ten-year Community Vision, and the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan were also adopted at last night's Special Council Meeting. Mayor Louise Crawford said the final Budget reflected community feedback after the draft Budget and Council Plan were released for comment.

"We have tried to balance our ability to respond to current and future challenges, such as rising waste management costs, with targeting support to those who need it most," Cr Crawford said.

This includes increasing the pensioner rates rebate from \$175 to a maximum of \$200 and lifting the hardship rates waiver from \$1200 to \$1500, including for those who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 (only for 2021/22 and subject to eligibility in both cases).

"Many members of our community, including traders and creatives, have been hard hit by the pandemic. This Budget is about assisting the most vulnerable, and our local economy, as we deal with the lingering hardship of the pandemic. This includes an additional \$200,000 for business support and economic development."

A rates rise of 1.5 per cent, in line with the Victorian Government's rates cap, will be used to deliver a range of services, respond to rising waste management and recycling costs and to retire debt. The Budget includes \$2.3 million in efficiency savings, on top of the \$12.6 million of savings delivered over the previous four Budgets

Cr Crawford said the Council Plan, informed by community consultation, will provide a roadmap for Council to innovate, create and deliver a raft of programs and services over the next few years.

The Budget 2021/22 includes:

A \$311,600 economic and cultural recovery package, including rent relief for tenants in Council owned properties and the South Melbourne Market. This follows a \$2.8 million COVID-19 package in 2019/20 and \$7.58 million in 2020/21.

Continuing the FOGO trial for Elwood for another two financial years (\$225,000) and residents' free access to the Rippon Lea gardens (\$50,000). There is also one year's extra support for six arts organisations whose triennial funding had ended (\$180,000). During 2021/22, Council will undertake a competitive process for the next round of triennial funding (2022/23 – 2024/25).

Project investment of \$53.8 million to maintain, grow and improve services and infrastructure. This includes \$36.7 million of capital investment in community assets including roads, footpaths, drains and stormwater pipes, parks and foreshore, sport fields and facilities and community facilities.