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## Media Release



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Upper Hunter Shire Council will put its new three year Delivery Program and 2022-2023 Operational Plan (including the budget) on display for community feedback following its endorsement by Councillors at last night's meeting.

The budgets total operating revenue is \$70 million and features \$50 million worth of capital works.

The budget also assumes a general rate rise of 0.7 per cent for ratepayers following the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) recommendation for NSW Councils. Council had anticipated a rate peg level of 2 per cent based on last year's level, and this low rate peg will leave a \$162,000 deficit in the budget.

The Council also voted to apply for an Additional Special Variation of 1.3 per cent with IPART, which, if successful, will make the rate peg 2% and generate an additional \$151,563. The application to IPART will be submitted by this Friday.

Upper Hunter Shire Council mayor Maurice Collison said the rates increase was minimal. However, with the post-COVID CPI increasing conservatively to around 3 per cent, Council has sustained higher costs resulting in the deficit.

"Council prepared its 2022-2023 budget based on the IPART recommended general rate peg of 0.70%," he said.

"Due to the decline in the rate peg percentage, Council is currently running a deficit budget.

"To return this year to a balanced budget without the Additional Special variation, it will mean a reduction in services.

"When all rates, water, sewerage and waste management charges are combined, the extra cost adds up to \$1.17 per week for average household.

"By doing this we keep rates relatively low but also funding a range of important works that will improve the Shire."

Some of the major projects proposed in this year's budget include:

- Merriwa Footpath Extension
- Expansion of Aberdeen Waste Facility
- Scone CBD revitalisation
- Water Supply and Sewerage Services Upgrade
- Merriwa and Murrurundi Waste Transfer Station
- Barrington Forest Road and Moonan Brook Road upgrade
- Road Resealing and Gravel Resheeting program

The 2022-2023 Draft Budget will be placed on public display on Tuesday, May 3. Community members will have the chance to have their say online and in public forums in key locations across the Shire.

Council also endorsed the draft Upper Hunter 2032 Community Strategic Plan for community exhibition. It will be on display for 28 days and residents can view the plan online and in person at Council offices.

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Upper Hunter Shire Council

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