

Our Shire

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Shire Snippets

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7% Special Rate Variation

Council will apply to the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART) for a Section 508 (2) Special Rate Variation for the 2013/2014 financial year.

In June 2012, Corowa Shire Council completed all the requirements under Integrated Planning and Reporting which included a Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan as well as Resourcing Strategy consisting of a Long Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Strategies, Policies and a Workforce Management Plan.

As part of Council's Long Term Financial Plan a five year general rate rise of 7% was proposed commencing 2013/2014.

Following the September Council elections, the new Council is required to review and again adopt the Integrated Planning and Reporting Requirements by the end of June 2013.

In November 2012, IPART announced that the rate peg to apply in the 2013/14 financial year will be 3.4%. This would raise Council an additional \$140,333 of general rate income.

At the ordinary Council meeting held in December 2012, Council resolved to apply for a 3.6% special rate variation for one year. This will raise an additional \$148,588 of general rate income above the rate peg amount.

For the average residential property this may mean an annual increase in Council general rates of \$25.48 (Corowa), \$26.15 (Howlong) and \$43.60 (Mulwala). The average farmland rate increase is estimated at \$140.79. The general rate applies to the unimproved land value as assessed by the Valuer General each three years.

Corowa Shire Council also manages Water and Sewer services. Charges for these services are expected to rise but have not yet been determined. A long term savings plan is needed for a new Sewerage Treatment Plant in Corowa with an expected cost of more than \$20,000,000.

Additional income is needed for financial sustainability and infrastructure renewal pressures. Council has ageing infrastructure with current renewal needs costing as much as \$44,000,000 with a key need for road renewal.

Each year Council faces increasing cost pressures including an estimated 5% rise in insurance costs, 10% in energy/utility charges and increasing construction cost. Cost shifting other levels of Government and award increases are among a number of other factors that have placed added pressure.

Corowa Shire Council has one of the lowest general rates in the State. This is shown in a report produced by Division of Local Government titled 'Comparative Information of New South Wales Local Government Councils 2010/2011'.

http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/Comparatives/Comparatives_2010_11.pdf

The report shows Corowa Shire Council to have the lowest average general rate per residential assessment in its group of like Councils. It shows Corowa Shire's rates to be \$400 less than the State average and \$200 less than the group average.

The average rate per assessment for Corowa Shire farmland is \$400 less than the group average and less than the State average.

For the average business rate per assessment, Corowa Shire is less than a quarter of the State average and one of the lowest in its group.

If approval by Corowa Shire Council is obtained from IPART for the Special Variation, the forecasted general rate income for 2013/2014 would be \$4,427,683.

The following timetable has been set out by IPART in relation to the application process:

Guidelines released	November 2012
Rate peg announced by IPART	Early December 2012
Notification of council's intention to apply for s508(2) variation requested	14 December 2012
Applications for s508(2) single year variations due	11 March 2013
Applications determined	Mid June 2013

5 Day Outlook brought to you by Filter World

Yarrowonga & District Forecast

Sunrise 7:10am Rainfall for 7 days to 9am Tuesday 22nd May 0.2mm Sunset 5:15pm

WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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RATES

Rates up 3.6% with 7s to follow

BY RACHEAL WILLET

Mulwala residents will enjoy one more year of rate pegging with a 3.6% rate increase this financial year, before facing rolling 7% rate increases for the following five years.

Corowa Shire Council confirmed yesterday it has plans to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for rate increases in excess of rate pegging lim-

its from the 2013/2014 financial year.

After accepting a 3.6% increase for 2012/2013, the council will seek to implement 7% rate increases from 2013/2014 to 2017/2018.

However, the application for an additional rates increase will also have to be endorsed by the new council elected in September.

Aging infrastructure, increasing wage costs, an ageing population, more than \$700,000 in unpaid

rates and rising waste, energy and construction costs were cited as some of the challenges facing Corowa Shire Council at a special budget meeting on Monday.

"When it comes to general rates a 3.6% increase in accordance with rate pegging will generate an additional \$151,000 which won't cover increases in staff wages alone let alone address any other challenges," said Director of Corporate and Commu-

nity Services Kristy Kay. "Based on that the proposed 7% rate increase for the following year will generate an additional \$273,000 - the increase in waste costs alone will offset that rise."

Corowa Shire Council's \$30 million 2012/2013 operational plan is delivered under new NSW Government planning and reporting framework which requires councils to not only plan for the next financial year but im-

plement a Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy for the next 10 years.

The draft of the four year delivery program and 2012/2013 operational plan endorsed by council on Monday includes;

- more than \$6 million capital works on roads and drainage (2012/2013),
- \$50,000 annually for the implementation of the Corowa Riverfront Master Plan,

- \$2.6 million Corowa Saleyards redevelopment and expansion (2012/2013),
- \$4.6 million Corowa Swimming Pool (2015/2016), and

- ongoing tourism, community development and economic development resources and programs totally more than \$650,000.

Council will seek no new borrowings beyond the existing \$6.6million in the coming financial

year but will borrow \$1.5million for the saleyards in 2013/2014 and \$3.35 million for the Corowa Swimming Pool in 2015/2016.

The draft delivery and operational plans were adopted by council on Monday and will be on public display for 28 days with submissions to be received by June 20.

STATION

Hope remains for station as pledges fall short

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

art gallery, club meetings, tuition for education, craft, quilting, sewing, knitting, yoga, support group, exercise group - any use the community needs on a daily, weekly or monthly basis."

"The Yarrowonga Artist's Group has indicated their desire to return to the Railway Station on a Thursday using two rooms for approximately 6 hours. This is a good start and we need like-minded groups to occupy the station building on a regular basis."

Members of the community and community groups are asked to forward to PO Box 171, Yarrowonga, 3730 as soon as possible the following information -

(a) identified uses for either or all of the 4 rooms in the railway station building once refurbished (toilets available). Room sizes approximate

- 5.2m x 3.9m, 5.2m x 7.6m, 5.2m x 4.5m and 5.2m x 4.75m.

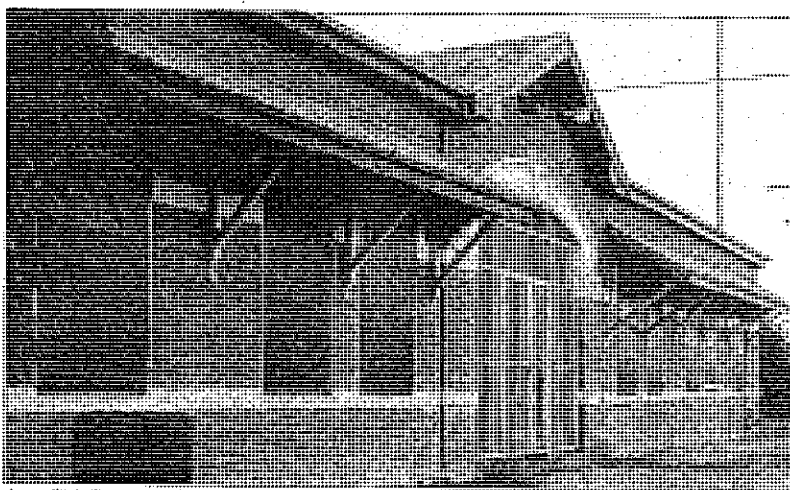
(b) Number and name of people supporting each suggestion,

(c) Length of time for activity and scheduled day, time of day and number of hours required,

(d) Submitter's name, address, contact number, and email address (if available).

The information will be summarised for an application to VicTrack which will determine which railway buildings across Victoria have demonstrated sufficient use with broad community support.

"The Save Our Station sub-committee of the Historical Society has been able to defer demolition of the railway station building thus far and now it is up to the local community to demonstrate that they need and will use the building if



A new State Government funding proposal could save the Yarrowonga Railway Station.

restored under this State Government program and thereby preserve this 1888 icon of Yar-

rawonga's history," Ms Price said.

"The announcement of this new State Govern-

ment Community Use of Vacant Rail Buildings Program to be managed by VicTrack, indicates an

extension of the 30 June 2012 deadline for council's decision on the application for demolition

of the Railway Station lodged by VicTrack in January 2011."

The SOS sub-committee notified Moira Shire on Friday, May 18 that insufficient financial pledges had been received from the community to fund the \$525,000 cost estimate supplied by VicTrack's consultant for restoration of the 1888 Yarrowonga Railway Station. A further request for access for an independent cost assessment and meeting with VicTrack to compare cost items and negotiate where savings could be made (inclusive of voluntary labour) did not eventuate before expiry of the 60 day period granted to us by Moira Shire Council on March 19.

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SEE PAGE 2

The Free Press

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SWEET CYCLE

A sweet success



Riders get into the spirit of The Sweet Cycle.

Rutherglen is known world wine for vintage wine, though for at least one weekend wine has had to share equal billing with vintage fashion and bicycles.

The inaugural running of The Sweet Cycle on May 19 attracted more than 60 cyclists to the region for what was billed as a day of cycling revelry in the glorious north east.

The event was staged over a

leisurely 25km with attendees enjoying regular stops to indulge in some of the region's finest food and wine. Tweed was the attire of choice for the majority of participants, with many completing the look with a vintage bicycle.

Event organiser Lennie Lister of Destination Rutherglen was equal parts thrilled and relieved come the end of the day.

"Running outdoor events in late autumn can be nerve wracking, but we were treated to perfect weather," Lennie said. "The event was

at capacity, people really got on-board with the vintage theme and feedback from attendees has been universally great. The majority are asking about next year and wanting to bring their friends.

"The day also ended with an engagement, so we can safely say that at least one couple will remember the event for the rest of their lives.

"In total we were able to showcase more than a dozen local producers through the event and also highlight what a great region we have for recreational cycling. We

see cycle tourism becoming increasingly important for the local economy, and it's important that we continue to strengthen our offering."

The Sweet Cycle formed part of the inaugural High Country Harvest - a collective of more than 40 events spread across ten days in North East Victoria. Rutherglen plays host to a number of other great events which can be viewed at www.highcountryharvest.com.au.

Rates up 3.6% with 7s to follow

By RACHEAL WILLET

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After accepting a 3.6% increase for 2012/2013, the council will seek to implement 7% rate increases from 2013/2014 to 2017/2018.

However, the application for an additional rates increase will also have to be endorsed by the new council elected in September.

Ageing infrastructure, increasing wage costs, an ageing population, more than \$700,000 in unpaid rates and rising waste, energy and construction costs were cited as some of the challenges facing Corowa Shire Council at a special budget meeting on Monday.

"When it comes to general rates a 3.6% increase in accordance with rate pegging will generate an additional \$151,000 which won't cover increases in staff wages alone let alone address any other challenges," said Director of Corporate and Community Services Kristy Kay. "Based on that the proposed 7% rate increase the following year will generate an additional \$273,000 - the increase in waste costs alone will offset that rise."

Corowa Shire Council's \$30 million 2012/2013 operational plan is delivered under new NSW Government planning and reporting framework which requires councils to not only plan for the next financial year but implement a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Start of the season

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Corowa & District Forecast

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WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON
Sunny Min 5°, Max 20°	Rain Developing Min 4°, Max 19°	Showers Min 5°, Max 14°	Possible Showers Min 5°, Max 15°	Possible Showers Min 5°, Max 14°	Frost then Sunny Min 2°, Max 16°

LAWN BOWLS

Rolling back the clock

Lawn bowls has returned to the Corowa RSL Club after an eight year hiatus.

The move follows a decision by the club that it would no longer financially support the Ball Park complex which was costing the RSL around \$200,000 per year.

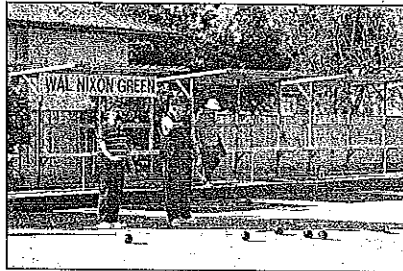
"We were all very sad that bowls could no longer continue down the bottom (at Ball Park)," said RSL President Dennis Ratcliff.

"But it was decided that for the longevity of lawn bowls in Corowa this was the best move."

The shift up to the Betterment Parade site has split the bowling fraternity in two with a group still pushing for the continuation of bowling at Ball Park.

On the other side, the return 'home' for some bowlers has been a dream come true.

As seen at the first day



that at present there is only one green in play which will be sufficient for the required use during the winter months and that it was planned that the second green would be available for the 2012/13 pennant season later in the year.

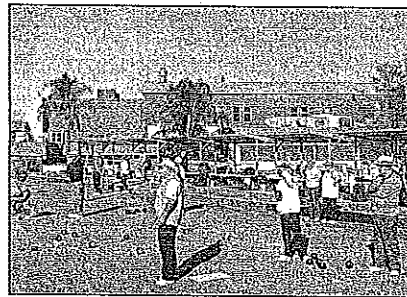
Stan McLarty was back at home on the Wat Nixon Green.

of bowling back at the RSL Club some bowlers were in their element.

The first social event held last Tuesday attracted 42 players who all tested out the newly constructed greens.

Mr Ratcliff thanked the Corowa RSL staff and Corowa Services Bowling Club members for their assistance and co-operation in making the facilities available for the relocation back to the Corowa RSL Club.

Mr Ratcliff confirmed



The greens were back in use at Betterment Parade.

POLICE BEAT



One of the vehicles that was damaged during the accident.

5 car collision

At 4pm on Friday, May 18 there was a 5-car collision on Redlands Road, near the Honour Avenue roundabout. As a result of the incident, three of the vehicles were towed from the scene.

One driver was issued with a traffic infringement notice for causing the collision.

Window smashed

Between 6pm on Wednesday, May 16 and 7am on Thursday, May 17 a window was smashed at the Corowa High School.

The cost for the damage is at \$250. If anyone has any information about who may have committed the damage is urged to contact Crime Stoppers or Corowa Police.

Car graffiti

Between 3.15pm and 6pm on Wednesday, May 16 a Blue Mitsubishi Outlander was parked and secured on Sanger Street in Corowa. Upon return the owner of the vehicle noticed the car had been covered with a blue graffiti. Anyone with any information is urged to contact crime stoppers or Corowa Police.

TAFE graffiti

Between 1pm on Friday, May 18 and 4pm on May 20 graffiti was found over the walls of the TAFE campus on Murray Street Corowa.

The estimated amount of damage is \$1,500. If anybody saw somebody on the grounds at that time or in possession of spraycans please contact Corowa Police or Crime Stoppers.

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COROWA RIVERFRONT & BIKING STREET, COROWA

Rates up 3.6% with 7s to follow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy for the next 10 years.

The draft of the four year delivery program and 2012/2013 operational plan endorsed by council on Monday includes;

more than \$6 million capital works on roads and drainage (2012/2013),

\$50,000 annually for

the implementation of the Corowa Riverfront Master Plan, \$2.6 million Corowa Saleyards redevelopment and expansion (2012/2013), \$4.6 million Corowa Swimming Pool (2015/2016), and ongoing tourism, community development and economic development resources and programs totaling more than \$650,000.

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The draft delivery and operational plans were adopted by council on Monday and will be on public display for 28 days with submissions to be received by June 20.

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OUR VIEW

Editorial

The Border Mail

Ads designed to 'snowball'

THERE are some mixed messages surrounding the new advertising campaign for the region's Alpine resorts which encourages people to "take a sneaky day off work" to go to the snow.

They are messages that have won both praise and criticism from local business leaders.

That's not surprising.

It seems somewhat irresponsible during a time of increasing pressure on labour markets to be suggesting employers deceive their employees by calling in sick in order to take a day off work.

Others have seen the campaign as a clever and innovative means of promoting the local region and, in particular the Alpine resorts, to those living in the city.

They have also welcomed the day off work and a trip to the snow as a means by which employers might reward their staff for a job well done.

Either way the campaign, which made its debut on our television screens last week, is certain to attract the attention of the viewing public and prompt some erstwhile discussion.

Of course that is no doubt the reason why it was created in the place and it certainly gives the resorts the chance to build on the falling business numbers it recorded last year.

Gloves come off over rates

COROWA, Howlong and Mulwala residents will start paying council rates more in line with other towns next year.

For years the council has treated its 11,000 citizens gently, avoiding increases above the NSW rate-pegged sum.

As a result, it hasn't been able to finance projects such as rebuilding the antiquated Corowa swim centre.

Roads swallow up the largest chunk of funds, though it's true the council gets big government grants for that.

Water and sewerage charges are relatively high but their cost has been balanced by charging low general rates.

Yesterday the council bowed to the inevitable and admitted it couldn't go on charging barely \$400 in average general rates for its 5000 households.

In future, 7 per cent a year will probably be the rule for several years.

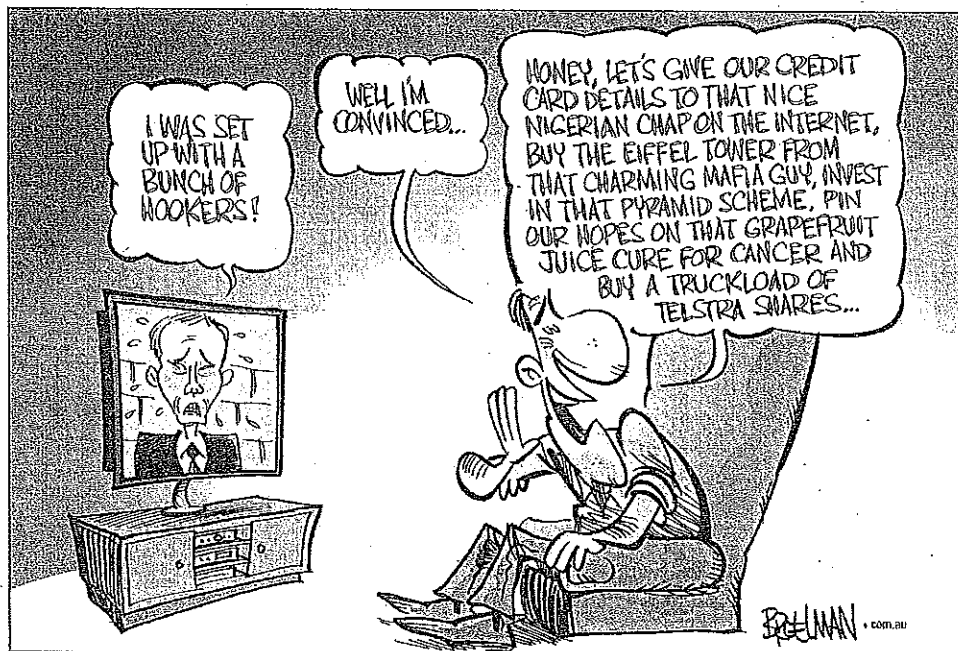
Like many small shires, Corowa isn't adequately financed by state and federal governments, so always struggles.

Its \$115 million "bank" of infrastructure is depreciating at an annual rate of \$7 million.

Apparently the whole lot would cost \$250 million to replace but the council is hard put just to fix urgent problems.

In that context, even 7 per cent rises will never be enough.

Published by The Border Morning Mail Ltd (A.C.N. 0000932298), at the registered office of the company, 2 McKay St, Wodonga 3680. Registered by Post Publication No. NAC1535. — The editor, Mr H. Harrison, accepts responsibility for electoral comment. — Vol XCV, No. 33,355



Right place at right time to see true community at work

IF there was one comment that used to irk me when I lived on the coast and did a bit of surfing it was: "You should have been here yesterday."

In other words, you have just turned up at your favourite spot, hanging out for a couple of hours of fun, find the water looking like a pancake and then some joker makes that dumb comment, just to rub it in.

Or fishing. Like when you turn up at your favourite spot and the only thing you catch is a cold and some smart alec tells you the fish were literally jumping into the boat the day before.

But sometimes you get it right, like last Friday night when, almost by accident, I ended up at the Albury Commercial Club for a fund-raiser in aid of the Cancer Services Trust Fund, an organisation which looks after obtaining the projected needs of the Albury-Wodonga Cancer Centre.

I was going to it and then I wasn't going but then I got a phone call from the chairman of the organisation, Eric Turner, wanting a minor bit of help on the



evening, so then I was going to go for half an hour or so and then on Friday morning I finally made up my mind to go.

Thank God I did, because there might have been better examples of members of the community coming together for a good cause — in fact, I'm sure there would have been events that have at least equalled the fund-raiser — it's just that I haven't experienced them.

It was a night of entertainment, with director of entertainment Steve Armati putting together a star-studded line-up, which included himself.

The DMB Dance and Performing Arts Centre performers were also on stage and showed there is a lot of young talent in this region and you can throw in some excellent talent from the Murray Conservatorium.

Steve Bowen was his usual eccentric self and kept the night ticking over while Peter Drummond did a huge job in reaping heaps of moolah from the auction.

Now I've always been a Hume Building Society or WAW Credit Union sort of bloke — which needs me to have the wisdom of Solomon on occasions — but I reckon I'll have to put the Bendigo Bank in there somewhere from now on.

The bank did a huge job, basically covering most of the costs of the event so that any money raised went straight to the foundation; and that might end up as much as \$40,000.

It would be remiss not to mention the Commercial Club for their great effort as the host of the event while Albury Sound and Lighting also deserve a big pat on the back.

There would have been heaps of other people who chipped in with assistance and goods but you can't mention them all and neither is it my job.

It's just that these organisations and people are examples of the vision Eric Turner had when he conceived the idea.

Perhaps the director of cancer services for the region, Craig Underhill, said it best when he told the audience the area had received a lot of government funding and the community now had the responsibility of finishing the job.

And maybe that wee slip of a kay-one-double-u-one lass Jenny Black and the member for Albury Greg Aplin really put the cream on the cake when Jenny read out a letter from Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Greg from the Opposition Leader Tony Abbott, congratulating the community of Albury-Wodonga and region on their efforts in securing the funding for the Albury-Wodonga Cancer Centre by pulling together.

Which was a fairly rare display of bipartisanship these days.

But I can't help thinking if Abbo and Big Jules were there they would have been thinking to themselves the Albury-Wodonga community and surrounding regions were a great example of what Australians should truly be about.

And if that little bloke from that series of sci-fi movies had been there he would surely have said, "Happy I am".

Today in history

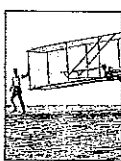
1840 — An official order is issued ending the practice of sending convicts from Britain to Australia. Effective in August, the last ship arrived in Australia in November.

1856 — First NSW Parliament formally opens.

1908 — Wright Brothers, pictured, patent their flying machine.

1969 — The lunar module of Apollo 10 flies to within 15 kilometres of the moon's surface in a dress rehearsal for the first lunar landing.

1972 — Ceylon becomes a republic within the Commonwealth under the name of Sri Lanka.



5 years ago

The Border Mail

CITIES IN BIG SPEND

Albury is \$89.4m RATES UP 3.4%

2007

ALBURY Council plans to spend a record \$89.4 million and will raise general rates 3.4 per cent. Wodonga outlined a spend of \$86.5 million, with rates to go up 4.25 per cent.

1 year ago

The Border Mail

How dare you

2011

THE mother of murdered Corowa beauty therapist Shana Wilkinson told a Supreme Court judge how her daughter's death had amounted to "a life sentence" on her family.

The Border Mail

Corowa to lose low rates

By HOWARD JONES

May 22, 2012, midnight

LOW council rates for Corowa, Howlong and Mulwala will soon be a thing of the past.

[See your ad here](#)

In a radical departure from long-standing policy, councillors yesterday ordered staff to prepare a case for five years of annual increases at 7 per cent a year from 2013.

The good news is that average households will pay only an extra 3.6 per cent more in general rates for the year starting July 1.

Even with rises in water, sewerage and garbage charges, the average home will pay only about \$90 more than in the current year.

Average combined residential rates for the shire's 5000 households, including water, sewerage and waste charges, will be \$1687, up from just under \$1600.

The comparable new rate for Albury is \$2074, up \$159 thanks partly to a 6.09 per cent rise in general rates.

Howlong residents pay an average extra \$171 as a town improvement rate.

Kristy Kay, presenting her first budget as director of corporate services, told councillors the policy of keeping to the rate-peg level set by the NSW government couldn't go on.

"Without this (several 7 per cent increases), a major reduction in service levels will be required," she said.

She said that next year's 3.6 per cent equated to only \$151,000, which wouldn't even pay for wage rises, while even 7 per cent would barely meet the increased waste disposal costs.

A change to 7 per cent increases will require approval from the new council to be elected in September and later by a state tribunal that examines requests to be exempted from rate-pegging.

Albury has already embarked on a series of increases of about 6 per cent a year and Greater Hume has a similar goal.

Ms Kay said the operating budget for 2012-13 would be \$30 million, plus \$11 million in capital works, but there would be no new borrowings beyond the present \$6.6 million during the year.

However, it was planned to borrow \$1.5 million for the Corowa saleyards upgrade in 2013-14 and \$3.35 million for a new Corowa swimming pool in 2015-16.

Only \$4.1 million will be raised in general rates across the shire's 5141 households, 673 farms and 483 businesses.

The council hopes to receive government grants of \$10.8 million for operating costs, plus more grants for capital works.

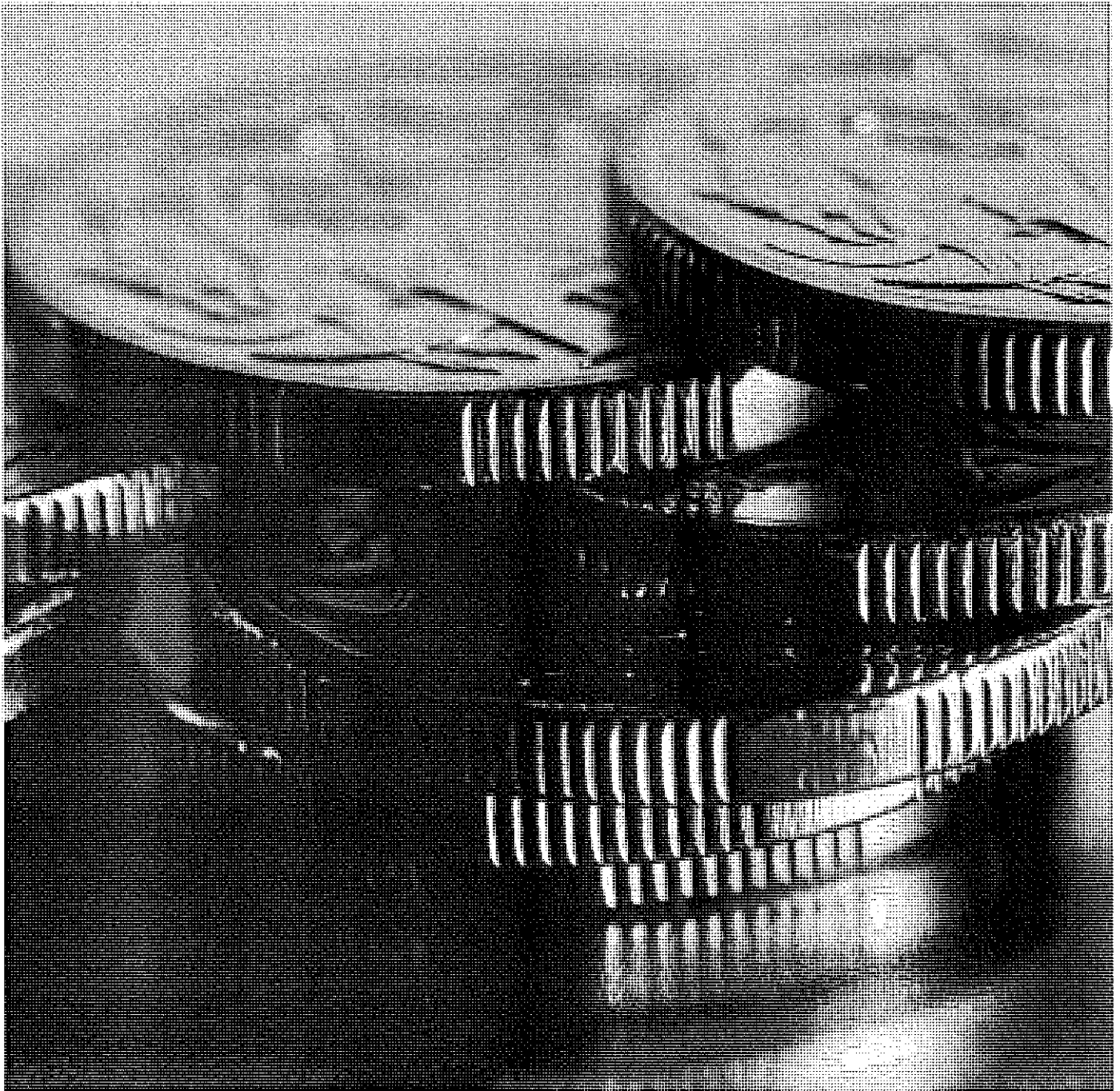
Annual staff costs are predicted to rise from \$6.8 million to \$7.3 million a year.

The Border Mail

Corowa rates on the rise

By DAVID JOHNSTON

Dec. 22, 2012, midnight



Corowa Council will add a little extra to its rates next financial year in a bid to improve its ageing infrastructure.

[See your ad here](#)

The council aims to raise \$300,000 more in rate revenue with a 7 per cent rate rise.

That will include a 3.6 per cent special rate variation.

Corowa's annual rate take is among the lowest in NSW — a little more than \$4 million will be collected this financial year.

The special rate application, subject to approval next year, equates to an annual rise in general rates of \$25.48 in Corowa, \$26.15 at Howlong and \$43.60 at Mulwala.

The average farmland rate increase across the shire is expected to be \$140.79.

Corowa shire's average annual residential rates bill is \$345.92 compared with the neighbouring Greater Hume Council where it is \$698.

The council also manages water and sewer services and these charges will also rise next financial year.

It also has the additional pressure of bankrolling a replacement sewerage treatment plant at Corowa that is expected to cost it more than \$20 million.

The council's corporate and community services director, Kristy Kay, said more income was needed for financial sustainability and infrastructure renewal.

"Council has ageing infrastructure," she said.

"Its renewal needs would cost as much as \$44 million.

"The key need is for road renewal."

"Each year, the council faces increasing cost pressures including an estimated 5 per cent rise in insurance costs, 10 per cent in energy and utility charges and increasing construction cost.

"Cost shifting other levels of government and award increases are among a number of other factors that have placed added pressure."

An extra \$148,588 of general rate income will be raised from the special rate on top of the \$140,333 in extra rate revenue from the mandatory rate peg figure of 3.4 per cent.

Corowa Council had to notify its intention to apply for the special rate by the middle of this month and now has to wait until June for approval. The application is made to the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal.

**ONE DAY
PALLET
SALE**
THURSDAY
20TH DEC

SUPA IGA

The Free Press

EST. 1875



Published Wednesday - Your Community Newspaper
WEDNESDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, 2012

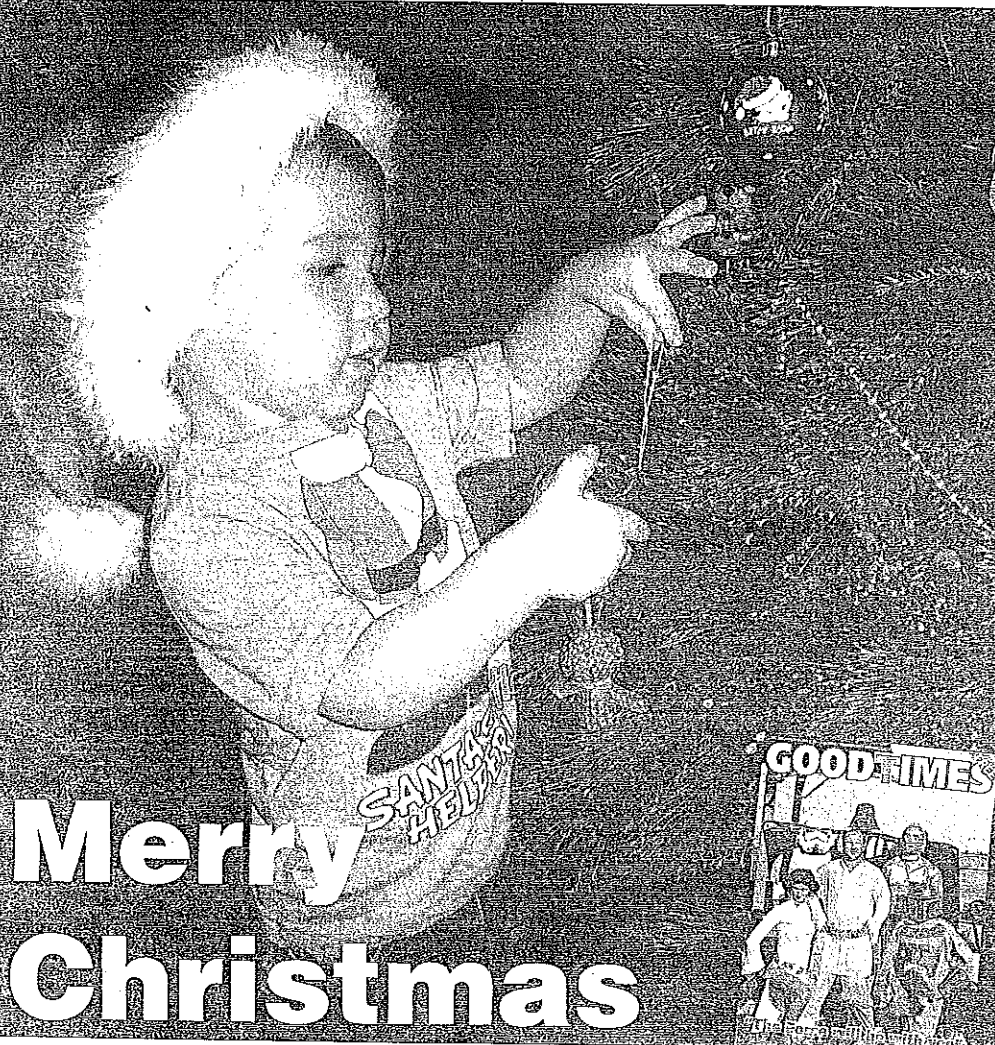


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2012
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TUEs Thursday, 20 DEC
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CHRISTMAS



Merry Christmas

Hudson Bilney was keen to help hang the Christmas decorations as he prepares for Santa to come.

COROWA SHIRE

Council asks for 7% rates increase

By RACHEAL WILLETT

Corowa Shire Council will seek an exemption from the rate-pegged limit of 3.4% to increase general rates by 7% in 2013/2014.

Councillors resolved to apply for a rates increase above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) rate-peg at a Policy and Resource Committee meeting on December 11 and endorsed the decision at the full council meeting on December 18.

Council will now proceed with the application process and await a determination from IPART.

In May this year council discussed the intention to apply for 7% increases for five financial years from 2013/2014 to 2017/2018 as part of their long-term financial plan.

However, a complicated integrated planning process coupled with the election of a new council in September made the possibility of applying for a multi-year variation untenable.

"Council decided to seek the increase for next year at this stage and should council decide to apply for further increases in coming years that would be subject to another application to IPART," said General Manager Bruce Corcoran. "The notification of intent is to be lodged immediately with the full submission due to go to IPART in March. After that we will wait for a decision, hopefully before June 30."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Free Press will be closed from 5pm on Thursday, December 20 to 8.30am on Friday, January 4, 2013.
The final issue of the Free Press for 2012 will be Wednesday, December 26.
The first Free Press for 2013 will be published on Wednesday, January 9.
Copy deadline for advertisements and news for this edition is Monday, January 7 at 1pm.
News, reports, photos and advertisements may be deposited in the Free Press letterbox during the New Year holiday period or emailed to admin@corowafreepress.com.au.

> Weather / page 2 | > CHRISTMAS GREETINGS / PAGE 22-26 | > Real Estate / page 18 | **GOODTIMES LIFTOUT** | > Sport / page 29/32

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W D Sunny Min 15°, Max 35°	T U Clearing Shower Min 12°, Max 28°	F R Sunny Min 12°, Max 31°
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S A T Sunny Min 14°, Max 35°	S U N Mostly Sunny Min 15°, Max 35°	M O N Possible Shower Min 20°, Max 40°
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POLICE

Police out in force

The message is loud and clear; police will be out in force this festive season.

Targeting road safety, unsocial behaviour and malicious crime, there will be no tolerance for those who choose to do the wrong thing.

"Drivers need to be aware," Senior Constable Darryl Hawes told the Free Press.

"We will be out and about at all times as we are looking to cut down the horrific road toll we see every year.

"We will be very proactive against crime."

Operation RAID will target road users once again with the double demerit penalties kicking in as of Friday, December 21.

"If you do the wrong thing, it is a very quick way to lose your licence, regardless of how minor



Senior Constable Darryl Hawes will be one of many police on patrol this festive season.

it may seem," Snr Con Hawes said.

"It is also the time to remind people that if

you leave your home for any period of time to be vigilant in locking doors, garages and windows.

"There is a considerable influx of people in town in this period and we all need to be alert."

WINERY

Tough times in wine industry

News that Bullers Winery in Rutherglen has gone into voluntary administration has rocked the community.

The popular winemaker has fallen victim to one of the toughest times in the industries history according to Winemakers of Rutherglen Executive Officer Judy Tanner Doyle.

Deleotte Touche Tomatsu were appointed as administrators to the family-owned winery on Thursday, December 13. "We are all impacted by this," Mrs Tanner Doyle told the Free Press.

"It is a difficult time in our industry which is why we all need to band together." A total of 20 wineries are a part of the Winemakers of Rutherglen, and each one of them is feeling for their compatriot.

"We are a pretty tight knit bunch here in Rutherglen," Mrs Tanner Doyle said.

"We will all stand behind Bullers and hope that it can be worked through."

The fourth generation winery is well known for its fortified varieties as well as its entertainment,

such as the 'Rock the Vines' festival.

It is uncertain if the Easter event will continue, but Mrs Tanner Doyle is confident that they will pull through.

"One of the strengths of this region is how we unite in tough times," she said.

"Although the wineries are in competition with each other, so to speak, they are very cooperative with each other.

"Everyone needs to be behind them now to lend some support."

COROWASHIRE

Council asks for 7% rates increase

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Council faces an uphill battle to maintain services, ageing infrastructure, and fund new projects with the rate-peg in place.

Mayor Fred Longmire said applying to IPART for the variation would allow council to move forward on two major projects.

"As a council we have to identify why we need

an increase in the rate-pegged limit and the two matters that were discussed were the swimming pool in Corowa and the new saleyards," Cr Longmire said. "Once the decision is finalised we will have to wait and see how we might be able to move forward with those projects."

Council received an additional \$151,000 in general rates income in 2012/2013 with a rate peg

increase of 3.6%. The new rate peg of 3.4% would generate \$133,000. An increase to 7% (including the rate peg of 3.4%) in 2013/2014 will generate around \$274,000 additional general rates income.

If council is unsuccessful with the 7% rate increase, application the general income would be \$141,000 less.

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 1500-1550 LINDA LLOYD

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THURSDAY 20TH DECEMBER
 10AM-10PM

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\$4.99	\$65.99	\$5.99
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COROWA SHIRE

Council to decide on rates hike

By Racheal Willett

Corowa Shire Council has until December 14 to apply for a projected five years of rolling 7% general rate increases.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) announced on November 26 NSW local councils would be able to increase their general rates income by up to 3.4% in 2013/2014.

Councils seeking approval to increase their general rate income by more than the rate peg for one year in 2013/2014 must apply to IPART by March 11, 2013.

However, councils

seeking multi-year variations must notify IPART by December 14, 2012.

Corowa Shire Council confirmed at a budget meeting in May plans to apply to IPART for rate increases in excess of rate pegging limits for five years beginning with the 2013/2014 financial year.

Council's financial plan called for 7% rate increases over five years to fight the ongoing uphill battle against ageing infrastructure, increasing wage costs, unpaid rates and rising waste, energy and construction costs.

Director of Corporate and Community Services Kristy Kay said

during budget discussions "when it comes to general rates increase a 3.6% in accordance with (2012/2013) rate pegging will generate an additional \$151,000 which won't cover increases in staff wages let alone address any other challenges. Based on that the proposed 7% rate increase the following year (2013/2014) will generate an additional \$273,000 - the increase in waste costs alone will offset that rise".

While the council of the day endorsed the financial plan in May, any plans to proceed with the application to IPART for the multi-year increase

have to be endorsed by the new council elected in September.

The IPART application was not discussed at the November council meeting and the December meeting falls outside the IPART deadline.

Corowa Shire Council has not confirmed if they intend to lodge an application for a multi-year variation of rate peg limits before December 14.

IPART Chairman Dr Peter Boxall said the 2013/2014 3.4% rate peg represented the increase in costs incurred by local government, a deduction for productivity improvements and a deduction of part of the carbon price

advance applied last year.

"In setting the rate peg, we have sought to strike a balance between ensuring that councils can meet the increased costs of delivering services while sharing the benefits of improved productivity with rate-payers," Dr Boxall said. "The rate peg applies to council's income, not to an individual's rate, but if a council decides to increase residential rates in line with the rate peg, it would mean an additional \$30 for the year, or less than \$1 per week, for the average household."

TOWN HALL

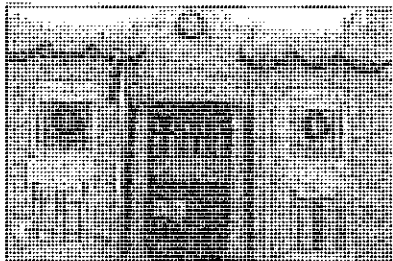
Town Hall Christmas makeover

Christmas in Yarrowonga this year is set to inspire thanks to local businesses and community groups.

Feedback received from the community about the lack of decorations in the streets and the variety displayed has prompted Moira Shire Council to act.

Community groups throughout the region were successful in their applications for festive decoration grants made available through the Economic Development Project Fund. The fund was introduced to assist community groups bring economic benefits to our shire through strategic projects aimed at increasing spending in stores and businesses.

Yarrowonga Mulwala Chamber of Commerce is celebrating their successful application for festive funding when they received \$5,200 to purchase commercial



The finished product - the Yarrowonga Town Hall proudly itself. The Town Hall decorations were a joint project by the Moira Shire and Yarrowonga Mulwala Chamber of Commerce.

grade decorations. The decorations were purchased from Melbourne and are of high quality long lasting materials.

The Chamber has been working closely with Moira Shires Business Development Officer Lonnie O'Dwyer on this project, who is thrilled to see the start of something bigger to come.

"It has been a joint

venture between Moira Shire, the businesses and the Chamber and it's only the beginning," Ms O'Dwyer said. "Each year we will all be working to add to the decorations to ensure we provide a festive atmosphere for our community and our visitors to town. It's one of our roles to encourage shoppers to stay longer and spend more

in our local communities and having atmosphere while you shop is vital. Some people may be of the opinion that festive decorations are not necessary but the feedback we've received from the community tells a different story. Christmas is sometimes the only time people see their families and we want our streets to reflect an image of warmth and spirit for them to enjoy and hopefully spend more with our retailers who really need our support. Keeping business local is our priority."

The Chamber and the Moira Shire Council have been discussing the best way to use the funds and decorating the Town Hall seemed the best placed to start. The Chamber's Christmas on Belmore Festival Co-ordinator Chris Gardner is pleased with the results so far and looks forward to building the variety of

decorations over future years.

"Rob Purdie from Purdie Electrical has kindly offered his time and expertise by taking on the difficult task of adorning the town hall with such large decorations. We thank Rob and his team as we couldn't have done this without his expertise and generosity," Ms O'Dwyer said. "We have more ideas in the pipeline and we encourage our retailers to decorate their shop windows to really lift the atmosphere in our streets. The Christmas on Belmore Parade is set to be one of the best, we also have banners to install and will have Christmas flags flying and our colourful bin covers to further enhance the shopping experience on offer."

For more information please contact Business Development Officer Lonnie O'Dwyer on (03) 58719 222 or email: lodwyer@moira.vic.gov.au.

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