



# Media Release

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Tuesday 25th June 2019

## **Media Release – 2019/20 Rates, Fees and Charges**

Balranald Shire Council placed the Draft Operational Plan (inclusive of the Rates, Fees and Charges) and Budget on Public Display on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The Local Government Act 1993 requires that Council enters into a period of Public Consultation for 28 days prior to the adoption of the Operational Plan and Budget. Council advertised the proposed Operational Plan and Budget through the use of Councils Website, the Guardian and Sentinel Newspapers, on Councils Facebook page, through Live Broadcast on Facebook and through Radio advertising with 3SH. In addition, letters and contact was made with individual rate payers and businesses to highlight any significant changes to the proposed fees and charges or rating category for the impacted assessments.

As a result of this significant effort in public notification Council has received 11 written submissions. The largest response received to date has been in relation to the pedestal charge which was adopted in the 2018/19 Budget. Due to the rating review Council was only positioned to partly implement these charges during the current financial year and has proposed the completion of the implementation over the 2019/20 financial year. Significant feedback has been received by the businesses that will be impacted by the implementation of the pedestal charge, with these businesses objecting to the charges.

As part of the Performance Improvement Order, Council was directed to conduct a full rating review on a user pays basis. This review identified several areas of deficiencies in core infrastructure funding, including the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the sewerage network within our townships. As such, Council identified the main users of the infrastructure to ensure that the impact of operations were being shared equitably across all connected rateable assessments. This process indicated that the current fixed price connection for dwellings with commercial purposes was disadvantaging residential rate payers. To rectify this issue and to ensure that the sewer fund (councils reserve fund for sewerage maintenance) is resourced to meet the current and future demands of our community; a pedestal charge was introduced in 2018/19 where each additional pedestal is subject to a \$200 fee for commercial facilities.

Moving forward, the elected Councillors will consider the written submissions in a workshop on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> June with the final decision for the adoption of the Operational Plan and Budget occurring at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council that evening. Although the operational team within council propose the draft budget, fees and charges; the decision making process is at the complete discretion of the elected Governing Body (Councillors).

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