



MEDIA RELEASE

31 May 2021

Shire of Irwin Differential Rates

Each year, the Shire of Irwin advises the public of its use of differential rates, as required by legislation, before the annual budget can be approved. Differential rates are applied to all rural properties to achieve equity across the community. The Shire differentiates mining from other rural land uses such as farming. This considers the shorter-term tenure of mining and its greater land use intensity.

The proposed rates in cents in the dollar for 2021/22 have increased by 3.96% for all rating categories. What this means is for each property owner the basic rates increase is 3.96% compared to last year. However, in the case of rural land this is complicated further due to Landgate property revaluations. A full explanation of how differential rates are applied can be found on the Council's website www.irwin.wa.gov.au.

The proposed rate increase will result in an overall 4.9% increase in the Shire's 2020/21 budget revenue. Shire President Mike Smith said the reasons behind the rate increase were complex, including last year's freeze on rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a 1.9% increase to fund the Medical Centre.

"The Shire of Irwin received a clear mandate from the community that they wanted Council to purchase the Medical Centre to ensure the continuation of this essential service, and as such a 1.9% rate rise was required," he said.

"Because of the pandemic the Council was unable to apply this increase to the community last year and absorbed the costs, this increase is now being applied."

Mr Smith said the further 3% rise is due to an anomaly with the State Government Grants Commission distribution of the Federal Assistance Grant program that results in the Shire of Irwin being underfunded by approximately one million dollars per annum.

It is the Grants Commission position shortfall that the Shire must recover by levying higher rates.

"This revenue is vital to manage all the services, facilities and community infrastructure that contribute to the liveability of the Shire of Irwin," Mr Smith explained.

"Current rates are not sufficient to cover the gaps and our assets are declining. A three percent increase this year will allow the Shire to continue providing services for the community at the current standard without going backwards."

"The rate increase will, for example, allow the Shire to accept \$310,000 in Blackspot funding from the Regional Road program to address safety concerns regarding ambulance entry into the local Hospital's Emergency Department from Blenheim Road, because we can meet our requirement to contribute \$103,000 to the project."

Mr Smith said Council is strongly pressing for the Grants Commission to address the funding anomaly.

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