



MEDIA STATEMENT

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL WEDNESDAY JULY 22

Delivering key services and major projects without rates hike

22 July 2009

The City of Geraldton-Greenough will keep rates low while delivering numerous critical projects to the community in 2009/10, despite one of the most challenging environments for delivering its budget for years.

In a climate of unprecedented growth, rising State Government utility costs and a shell-shocked global economy, the City has reined back costs to deliver rate rises expected to be among the lowest of regional centres around WA. It has also budgeted a surplus of \$517,000.

In addition to completing major projects such as the Foreshore Redevelopment and Library Relocation, the City will also embark on major new initiatives, including studies to determine the City's future (the Sustainable City Future Vision project) and several pioneering projects aimed at mitigating climate change.

These will be delivered while maintaining a high standard of services in town planning, works, commercial services, corporate enterprises, community development, environmental health and sustainability, economic development and marketing, and community law and safety.

Chief executive officer Tony Brun said efficiency measures and an organisational review had been put in place to allow the City to meet the significant challenges facing the budget this year without introducing excessive rate increases.

"We have kept residential rate increases at 3.75%, which compares very favourably to expected increases at other LGAs around WA," Mr Brun said. "We are mindful that families have been under a lot of financial pressure in the past year.

"Despite the challenge of keeping a lid on rates increases, the City will deliver on key projects in the next 12 months, and start many new ones, which will be the envy of WA's other regional centres."

The budget sets out a rates increase of 3.75% for residential GRVs – compared to equivalent expected rises in Bunbury of 3.9%, Mandurah of 5.3% and Albany of 9%.

Rates for non-residential (commercial) GRVs will increase by 4.5%. This is the first year of a differential rate between residential and non-residential properties, aimed at better reflecting the variations between land zonings.

In addition, a specified area rates increase of 5.5% will be applied to commercial properties only within the City Centre, Marine Mixed Use precinct and additional use City Centre zones. The increase will offset the cost of increasing parking space within these areas.

Among the major projects to be completed in the 2009/10 financial year are:

- Library relocation
- Priming for recycling start-up in 2010
- Airport security upgrade
- New sustainability initiatives
- Completion of Foreshore redevelopment
- CCTV implementation

In total, the 2009/10 budget sets out total expenditure of \$88.9 million (including operating expenditure of \$49.3 million and capital expenditure of \$39.7 million). Reserves expenditure is budgeted at \$12.67 million, total grant funding contributes \$16.4 million and new Council loan funds represent another \$7.27 million.

Mr Brun said the 2009/10 budget would see the City building on the successes achieved through an organisational restructure put in place last year, which was aimed at the City expanding its services beyond 'roads, rates and rubbish'.

"The new focus on economic development, tourism and environmental management is helping Geraldton-Greenough take control of its own destiny and use the opportunities coming our way for the betterment of all residents and ratepayers," he said.

"I am confident this organisation will create many more successes for our city in the year ahead."

ENDS:

Contact: Mr Tony Brun

PH: 9956 6602

www.cgg.wa.gov.au
