

23 September 2020

Mr Andrew Marston
Bass Coast Ratepayer and Residents Association



Dear Andrew

BCRRA 2020 Survey

We acknowledge and thank you for the feedback from your recent ratepayer survey.

Council is continuously focused on improving transparency and community engagement and we believe there have been some significant improvements made.

We often highlight the community engagement for various projects and decisions, such as the Smiths Beach Town Plan, Climate Change Action Plan 2020-2030, our Live Facebook Q&A sessions, off-leash beach areas and the Bass Coast Living Young Plan 2020-24, as examples of meaningful engagement with the community. In addition to this, our Community Engagement Policy will be reviewed in the next 12 months.

Council participates in an annual Community Satisfaction Survey, which has now been released and is available on our website. Council also reports against the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework each year with the results made public on the State Government's Know Your Council website. For example, in the 2020 results, Council's most improved measure was in consultation and engagement with a score of 53, a two-point improvement from the previous year.

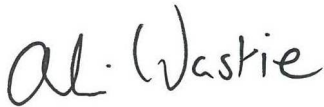
Our advocacy work has proven to be very successful, with millions of dollars coming into the Shire. Already this year we have successfully secured grant funding to deliver the Guide Park Redevelopment and Dalyston Netball Court and Pavilion projects and to establish the Bass Coast University Centre. We continue to advocate strongly to all levels of government on erosion mitigation and climate change adaptation, as well as for other important community projects, as highlighted in our [Advocacy Priority document](#).

Council delivers over 100 services to the community and while we acknowledge that we can always improve on our processes, it can be challenging when there are divided views on a particular topic or issue.

In relation to the value for money provided by Bass Coast Shire Council to its ratepayers we would like to highlight:

1. The average residential rate assessment of \$1,771 in Bass Coast compares favourably with Baw Baw Shire (\$1,898) and South Gippsland (\$1,833). While the Wellington Shire's residential rates are lower (\$1,371), it benefits from having a significant agricultural rate base as well as the Longford Gas operation, a large industrial ratepayer.
2. Bass Coast receives significantly less income from the Grants Commission (\$6.5 million) compared to Wellington Shire, which receives \$14.4 million, South Gippsland (\$10.3 million) and Baw Baw (\$9.6 million).
3. Bass Coast is home to several world famous tourist icons and therefore enjoys very high levels of visitation as a tourism destination. This requires Council to spend additional funds, especially in the peak summer season on maintaining and keeping the municipality clean.
4. In setting the budget, Council has been cognisant of the impact of the pandemic on its residents and has developed a financial hardship policy, which enables ratepayers, and businesses who can demonstrate financial hardship to defer their rates until June 2021. Council considers ratepayer's financial capability on a case-by-case basis and supports the implementation of the Financial Hardship Policy for these situations.
5. Council has reduced its labour budget and applied the savings towards funding new initiatives (e.g. Dinosaur Trail) that will generate economic stimulus in the Shire.
6. The budget contains a record capital program of \$28 million including funding for a number of multi-year projects that will provide benefits to both current and future generations (e.g. aquatics design and Cowes Cultural Centre).

Yours sincerely



Ali Wastie
Chief Executive Officer

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