



Councillor Column

By Cr Victoria Brown

The rates notices are out. This is the second year in a row Council has delivered a 4.5% increase, the lowest rate increase we have had in 10 years, and Council is proud to be able to achieve this whilst continuing to provide all the services we enjoy. In addition to keeping the rates steady this year, and in response to community concern, Council has reduced the rates increase for the commercial properties to 2.5% to support them during these challenging economic times. We have been able to achieve this by reducing our costs and increasing our efficiencies, through initiatives including installing led street lighting, replacing the boiler at the swimming pool and purchasing multi wheel rollers to reduce road maintenance costs.

Rates, fees and charges, along with state and federal government grants, are used to provide all Shire services which include Homecare, the leisure centre, the library, waste collection, road maintenance and community grants to name just a few.

Setting rates is complex and needs to reflect the current and future needs of the broad community. This is where the Strategic Community Plan comes into effect. Councils need to ensure that the rates they set for the year are not going to leave the community with a hole in the budget going into the future. Rather than concentrate on a year to year basis Councils have to keep an eye on the bigger picture and the impact it will have on services and assets in the long term.

In the last 12 months Council has launched the Edge of the Bay event, incorporating the opening of the skate park and the lighting of the Christmas tree. We have implemented multiple recycling solutions to reduce our reliance on landfill, from introducing eWaste and glass crushing, to work shopping ideas with the community to develop a Community Waste Strategy.

So paying your rates is really important to our community and is vital for the services you rely on. Congratulations to the winners of the first weekly rates payment draw for this year. Not only did they win \$250 but they are also in the barrel with a chance to win a 2 night stay at the Quality Hotel Ambassador Perth or 2 return air tickets to Perth, courtesy of Rex Regional Express. There are 4 more draws and to be eligible ratepayers must pay their current years rates in full before 27 September.