



BOB: Amanda, over the last couple of weeks we've been talking about trying to identify some of the main priorities that our Council should consider, especially given it's budget time. Those we raised last week come from myself and other community feedback that you've been hearing. I'm also aware that Put Orange First, a group that you play a vital role in, is putting in a budget submission as part of the community input process.

This week, I wondered if you might like to tell us if any of the priorities we mentioned last week feature in Council's budget plans, and maybe a bit about Put Orange First's budget submission?

AMANDA: I have a copy of the Put Orange First budget submission, and I have received informal information about issues that other community members have raised. Put Orange First made a submission to Council's budget last year and were essentially told that it was too late to make a difference, which goes against the idea of exhibiting the budget and a council must consider any submissions that have been made concerning the draft plan in approving the budget, which I understand is expected to occur at the 23rd June Council meeting.

The Put Orange First group was greatly concerned that Council has not extended the consultation period on the budget beyond 28 days this year despite COVID-19 and the fact that it has extended its consultation period on Development Applications to 40 days. Councillors gave themselves an extra three weeks to develop the budget while giving the community no extra time, nor any additional engagement methods.

It is actually very difficult to comment on Council's Delivery Plan/Operational Plan (which includes the annual Budget for 2020/21 and the following 3 years) because it has been a moveable feast this year since the draft went to Council twice and the wrong Delivery Plan/Operational Plan is on exhibition on Council's Your Say webpage – it's last year's Plan. There is also an important mandatory element missing, in breach of the Local Government Act (S405), which requires that the Council include a map showing where the various rates will apply within the local government area. The Put Orange First group would like to see where the CBD rates apply, and would like to see the Economic Development Department compare CBD rents and rates in Orange with Sydney, Parramatta, Bathurst and Dubbo.

The draft budget reveals plans to spend \$78.9 million on capital projects in the coming year, part of a projected four year capital spend of \$226.6 million from 2020/21 to 2023/24. This compares with the 2019/20 budget that planned to spend \$73.2M in 2019/20. The Group welcomes

economic stimulus and would still like to have discussions about other ways Council can stimulate the local economy including working with local property owners to consider the costs of doing business in Orange.

One of the late changes that was made to the 2019-20 budget was to defer the Corporate Services restructure and save \$260,000. Put Orange First understood that the restructure had proposed the creation of an Economic Development Office, and would like to know what has happened to this proposal as now is the time to be proactive with economic development.

Put Orange First also proposed last year to bring the major players in the advancement of Orange together so that more impact could be made through collaboration than all acting separately, but no such meeting has been held and now there is an additional group in the COVID Rebound Committee, so it is disappointing that the stakeholders have not been brought together to create more impact. Put Orange First made many of the same points as they made last year with an increased emphasis to many of their concerns about bricks and mortar retail in the CBD given the boost the COVID-19 pandemic has given to online retail while shops have been closed, which may have changed people's shopping habits permanently.



...We need a campaign to commit to retaining retail shops in the CBD or face the alternative of an empty and derelict CBD...

Last year the Put Orange First submission suggested that Council employ a CBD Place Manager to facilitate engagement and speed up planning processes particularly in the implementation of the FutureCity proposals. The Place Manager would also work with local property owners over lease costs and customer service training because of concerns from local business people a year ago about the difficulties being faced, particularly by CBD retailers. The following is from the 2019/20 submission and is now an increased concern.

'In the future what will a CBD consist of if not retail?

Actions need to be taken now to reverse current trends and engage local people in understanding that buying online will ultimately mean there are no shops in the City Centre. We need a campaign to commit to retaining retail shops in the CBD or face the alternative of an empty and derelict CBD. On this basis, the CBD needs to be developed not as a place of shopfronts, but as an experience and we would encourage dialogue with local business about concepts such as creating malls in streets like Anson Street and Lords Place.'

The Group was pleased to see that land sales will underpin the budget and we would like to see what sites Council owns that can be used strategically to promote the sustainable development of our Local Government Area.

In agreement with other responses to the budget, the Group disagrees with the proposal for a general rates increase of 2.59%; and water and sewer rates increase of 2.5%. This is at a time when we use less water and the inflation rate has been running at 1.9% for the last 12 months. Given that Orange City Council has the highest combined rates in Australia we do not accept that this rate increase should be needed, nor do we agree with a bulky waste levy being levied against all ratepayers.

I am aware of other responses made to Council and some include comments on the proposed increases to Fees and Charges that form part of the budget:

1. No increase to the rental for the Lake Canobolas Kiosk; 8.05% is extraordinary
2. No fee increase to personnel associated with the Audit and Risk Management committee
3. No increase in fees for use of the Showground due to minimum use
4. No increase in the hiring of the showground Pavillion
5. No increase in Poultry & Pigeon Shows hire of the Poultry Pavillion.
6. Congratulations on the draft 50% reduction for hiring the Ag Pavillion to wedding reception bookings.

OTHER COMMENTS INCLUDE:

What does council have in the draft budget material that will achieve the Key Idea presented at the Community Consultations for "..... suggest that council could advocate for lower or subsidised commercial rents and a campaign to encourage light industry/small manufacturing companies to move ... to Orange" (page 17 of Community Strategic Plan – Key ideas; and/or page 46 of the May 12th agenda)?

The Operational Plan measurements need to be invigorated as they reflect an outdated method, plus display an inaccurate picture of true results. Quantifiable measurements are required.



Rod Bloomfield

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