



Coomalie Community Government Council

Meeting date: **Tuesday, 21 September 2010 from 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM**

Location: Council Chambers, 141 Cameron Road, Batchelor NT 0845

Purpose/Notes: Special Meeting - Community Concerns about Rates and Charges

Chaired by: Clr. Andrew Turner

Minutes rec. by: John Hughes

Attendance:

Present: Clr. Robert Bright, Clr. Sue Bulmer, Clr. Darryl Butler, Clr. Linda Douglas, Clr. Tommy Fawcett, John Hughes, Clr. Bruce Jones, Clr. Deb Koch, Lola Stephenson, Clr. Andrew Turner

Absent: Clr. Trevor Sullivan

Late:

Guests:

Doug Allsopp (present), Chris Bond (present), Kirsten Brink (present), Nan Gillies (present), Russ Hanna (present), Debra Jones (present), Richard Luxton (present), Jude Maglis (present), LeeAnne Mahaffey (present), Sue Mornane (present), Kim Murray (present), Anna Reynolds (present), Andre Scarton (present), Dick Skinner (present), Tony Smith (present), Ron Stanton (present), Terry Wright (present)

Meeting Documents:

(no documents)

Meeting Minutes:

1. Standing Agenda Items

2. Business Brought Forward From Previous Meetings

3. General Business

3.1. Concerns Over Increased Rates and Charges

The following request was received by email on Friday 17th September, 2010

"Dear John and other Council Members

I have been requested to contact you on behalf of residents in Batchelor who will be attending the Council meeting next week. Some members from this group will wish to address Council about the increase in rates. Would you please allow for this on your agenda.

Your Sincerely

LeeAnne Mahaffey"

Office staff understand that several members of the community wish to address Council at the Ordinary General Meeting.

Accordingly the routine agenda has been set aside and a further Ordinary General meeting scheduled for Tuesday 28th September 2010 to consider the items set aside.

Status: Completed



3.1.1. Summary of Concerns and Complaints

The CEO responded to each of the points raised before the meeting. Points of concern and questions had been collected via:

- * telephone
- * counter inquiry
- * personal inquiry
- * email
- * letter
- * petition circulated publicly (not received to date by Council)

and recorded in the agenda.

The presentation is attached.

Discussion of items raised in the presentation and and comments / questions from members of the public followed the presentation.

Documents:

- Rates and Charges.pdf

Status: Completed

3.1.2. Comments from Members of the Public

Members of the public asked a variety of questions and made a variety of comments including:

- * consultation was too late
- * service levels with garbage collection could be reduced to save costs
- * large organisations in the region were sending large volumes of rubbish to the landfills and Council should monitor this and consider introducing / increasing charges for such dumping
- * council should revert to a fully user-pays system for landfills
- * why was a councillor/council employee using a council vehicle on a Saturday (answer was in the course of conducting council business as an employee)
- * was any consideration given to cutting costs
- * were all bad debts being pursued and collected
- * council was doing a good job and prices are rising everywhere
- * in future better consultation was essential
- * funds could be saved by reducing expenditure (\$16,000 pa) on dog management
- * road conditions were very poor
- * multiple rates for mutlipe titles on sections were considered unfair

Status: Completed

4. Confidential Items and Conclusion

4.1. Next Meeting

The next ordinary general meeting of Coomalie Community Government Council will be held in Batchelor at 6.00pm on Tuesday 28th September, 2010.

Status: Completed

4.2. Conclusion

The President thanked guests, councillors and staff for their contribution and attendance and declared the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Status: Completed



Council Meeting
21st September 2010



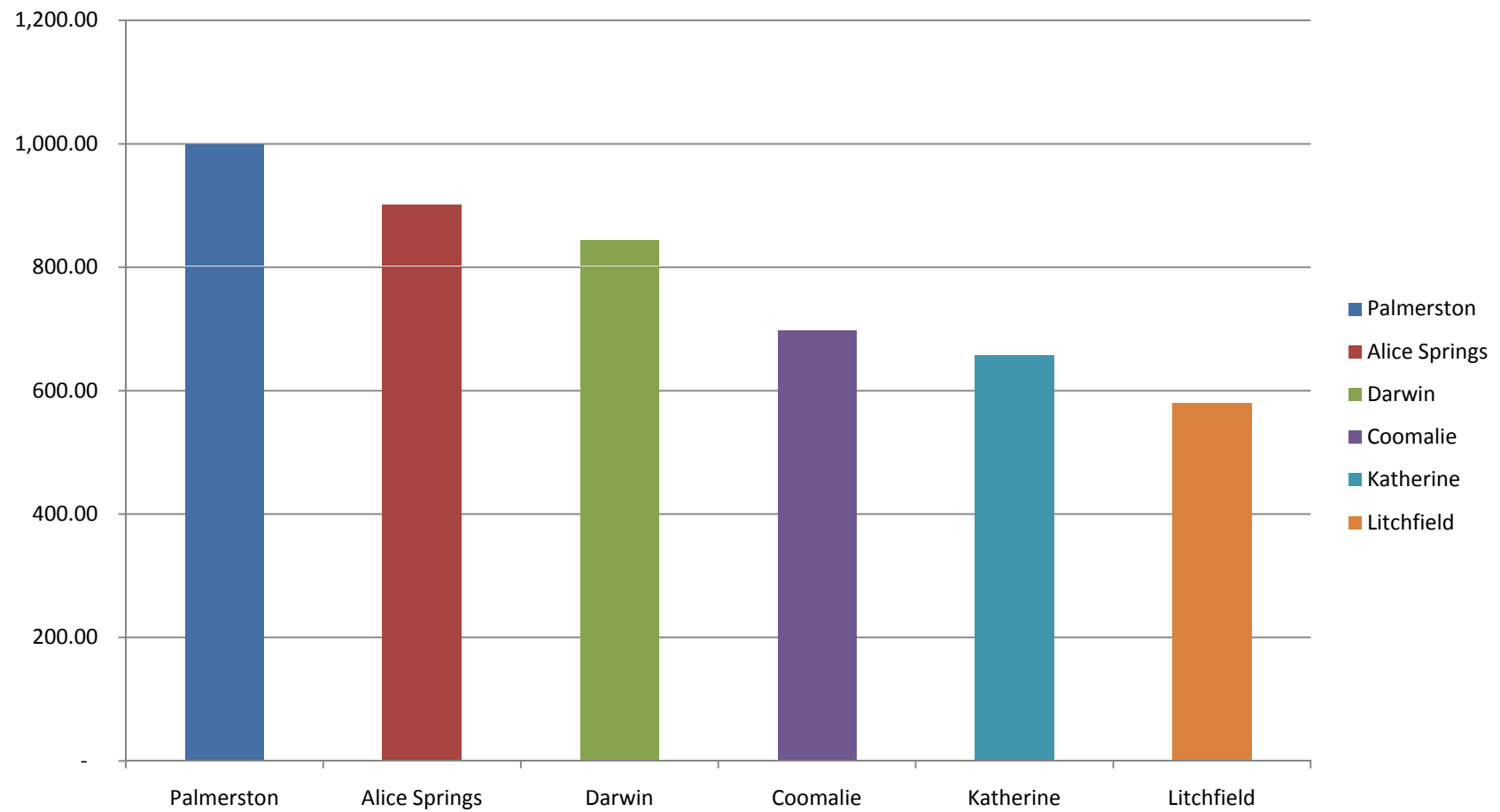
- The overall increase in rates and charges is considered excessive
- **The increase in rates and charges is the amount required for Council to continue its operations under current funding conditions**
- **The change to full cost recovery on garbage and waste management levies is to protect Council's financial position as it can no longer afford to subsidise the services provided**



- The increase in rates cannot be justified
- **Councils rates income rose by \$76,769
- an increase of 15.93%**
- **The offset of NT funding cuts represents a
14.00% increase**
- **The remaining 1.93% was a partial CPI
increase**

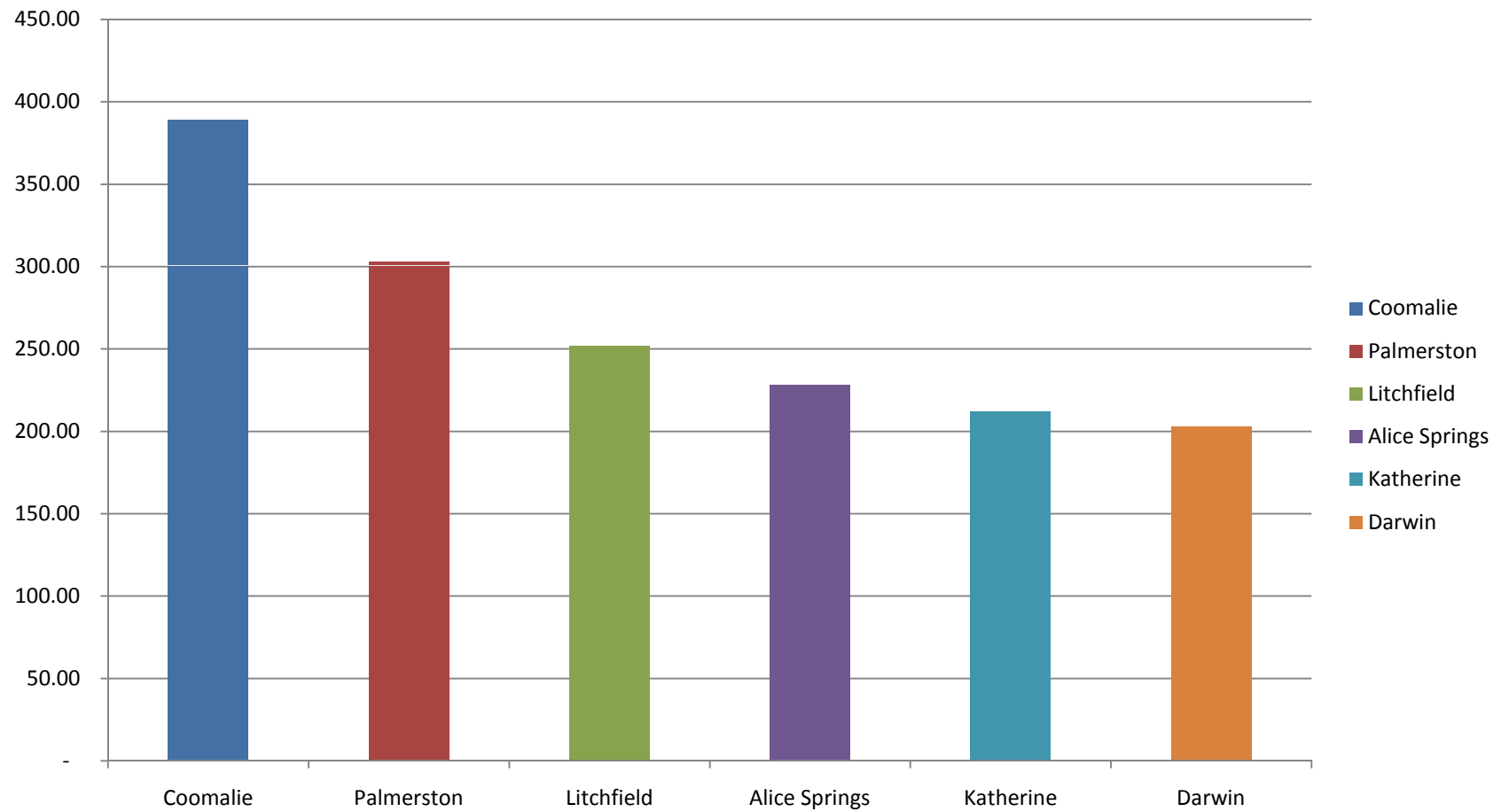


Rates Comparison



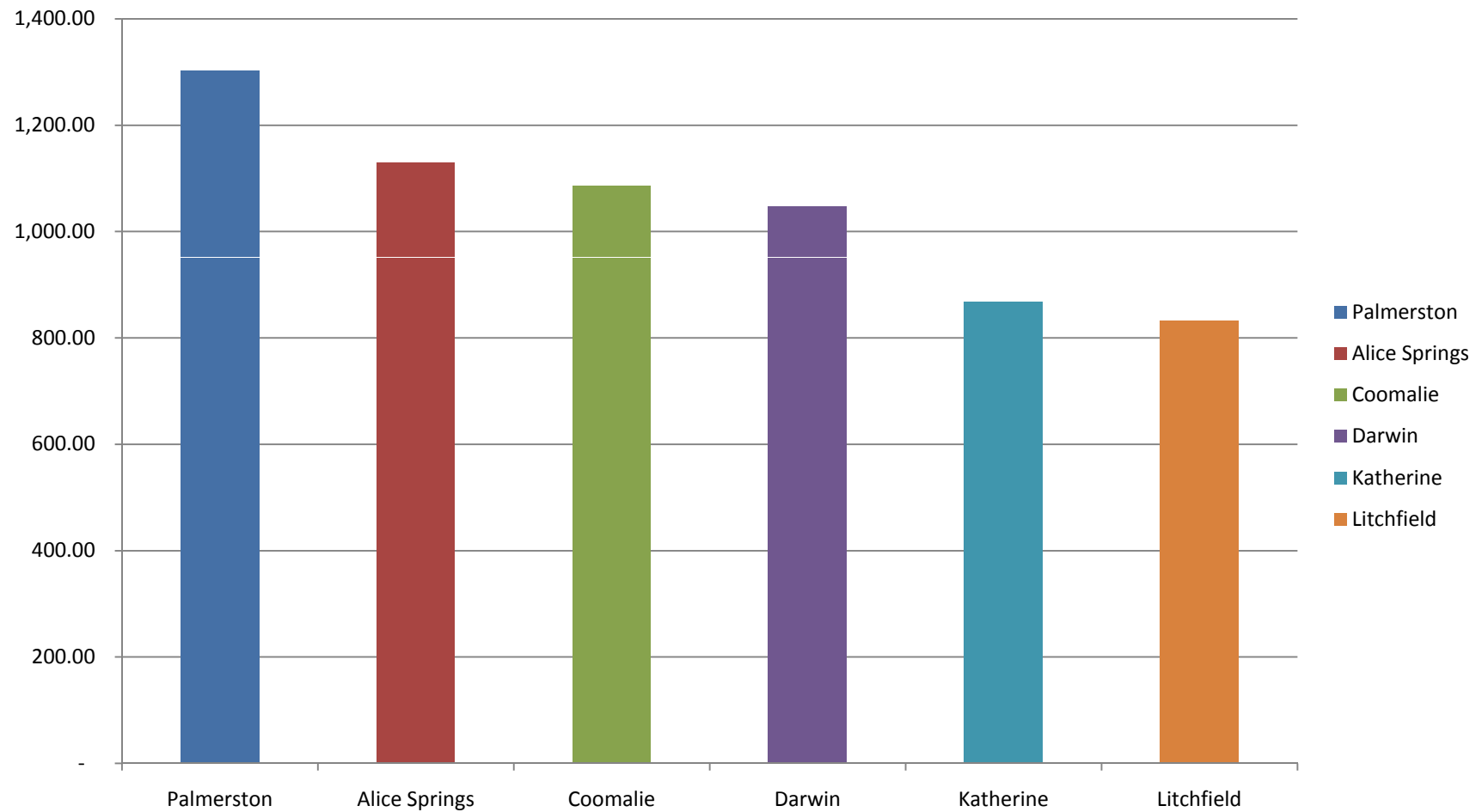


Garbage





Total





- Rates increases of this magnitude are illegal under the Local Government Act
- **Rate capping does not apply to Coomalie Council**
- **Community Consultation is not a requirement of the Act for setting Rates and Charges**
- **The 4 year Shire plan has been delayed with the consent of Council and with advice from the Local Government Department because of uncertainty about boundary changes for CCGC**



- The CEO does not own a property in the Shire - what right does he have to increase our rates and charges when he does not pay rates himself?
- **The CEO does not set the rates, the Council does, by formal resolution**
- **The CEO made recommendations based on the best financial interests of the Council and Community**
- **The CEO stands by recommendations to Council, fully understanding that cost increases of this level are not popular**
- **The CEO's personal circumstances are of no relevance to the job or to the issue of raising rates**



- The increase in garbage charges cannot be justified
- **The increase in garbage charges is to reflect a change in policy to full cost recovery**



Domestic Garbage Charges

Domestic garbage charges were calculated as set out in the table below.

Contracted costs included in the budget have decreased by \$7,544. The increase in garbage charges is wholly attributable to the change in policy to a full cost recovery model.

Item	2010/11	2009/10
Contracted costs of collection	\$77,000	\$84,955
Contracted costs of landfill (township portion)	\$48,000	\$50,022
Total township costs	\$125,000	\$134,977
Domestic portion %	75.615%	75.615%
Domestic portion \$	\$94,519	\$102,063
Number of domestic garbage services	243	243
Cost per service (rounded)	\$389	\$420
Domestic garbage charge	\$389	\$144
Garbage costs subsidy per service	NIL	\$276



Rural Waste Charges

Rural Waste charges were calculated as set out in the table below.

Contracted costs included in the budget have decreased by \$2,433. The increase in waste charges is wholly attributable to the change in policy to a full cost recovery model.

Item	2010/11	2009/10
Contracted costs of collection	0	0
Contracted costs of landfill (rural portion)	\$48,000	\$50,022
Total rural costs	\$48,000	\$50,022
Number of rural waste charges levied	542	542
Cost per service (rounded)	\$88.55	\$92.32
Rural waste charge	\$88.55	\$20
Garbage costs subsidy per service	NIL	\$72.32



- Why do I have to pay garbage charges when I don't reside permanently on my property?
- Why do I have to pay a rural waste management levy when I don't use the tips?
- Why do I have to pay a garbage charge when I don't use the service?
- Why can't I take my rubbish to the tip and opt out of garbage collection services?
- Why do Lake Bennett residents have to pay a Waste Management levy when the transfer bin was taken away last year?



- **Garbage levies are a tax on landholders collected by Council to cover the cost of providing these services, regardless of use or benefit obtained by individual payers**
- **Council has previously reviewed charging systems for garbage and waste management and has determined that it will retain the current system**
- **Much like the Medicare levy funds the health system, people who don't go to the doctor are still required to pay**



- Why have I received a garbage charge when I don't receive the service?
- **Council amended the budget to levy domestic charges on a number of properties within township boundaries that did not receive collection services previously**
- **These charges are currently under review and the affected ratepayers have been contacted**
- **One property was issued the charge in error and the charge has been reversed**



- There was inadequate advance warning of increase
- There was inadequate community consultation
- **The increases and the reasons were published in Stop Press and on the Council's website as required**
- **The budget summary including rates and charges papers will be published in Stop Press prior to the budget meeting in future**



- The cutbacks in NT government funding were foreshadowed several years ago, and I would like an explanation as to why Council did not act earlier to progressively increase fees and charges to lessen the impacts of the current large increase
- **Council has considered such increases previously and resolved to keep increases in line with CPI**
- **Changing circumstances regarding boundary change and funding have been behind the change in outlook for this year's budget**



- I would like an explanation as to why rates installments are not available routinely to all ratepayers other than those experiencing hardship arising from the requirement to pay rates
- **Council's cashflow requirements have been better met by collecting rates in the first quarter of the rates year**
- **Installment arrangements are available in cases of genuine hardship**
- **Installment arrangements will be considered prior to the next budget**

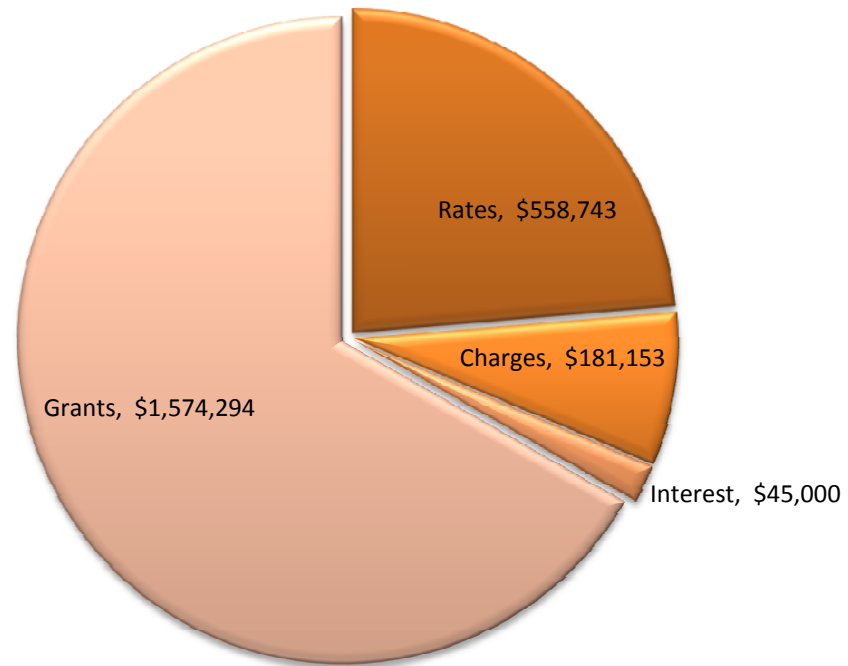


- Why are the rates going up when the road needs re-sheeting?
- Why are the rates so high when I don't get the service(s) I expect?
- Will council be spending more on works like pathways in Batchelor?
- I don't use any Council services and I don't even live on my block so I should not have to pay rates at all

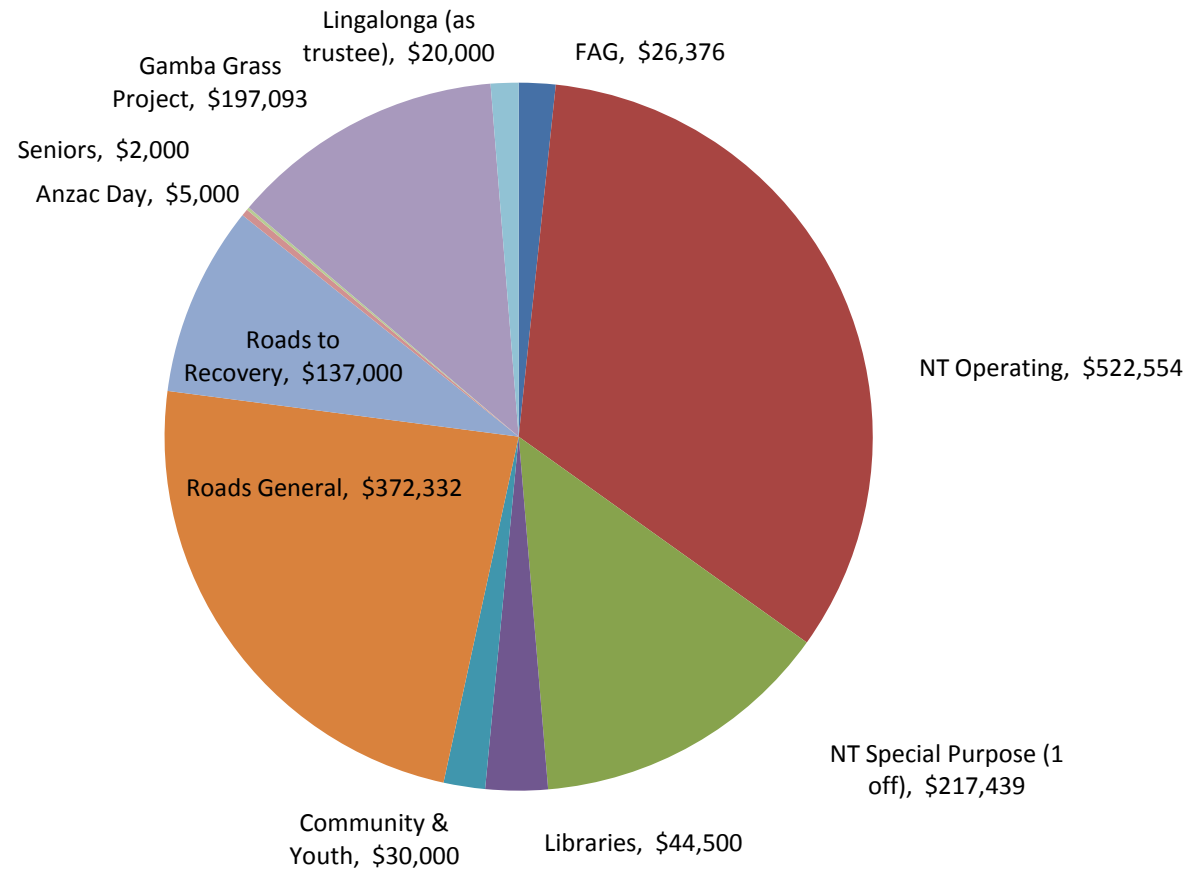


- **More funds will be available for works than would have been available without the increases**
- **Council will soon consider a number of major infrastructure projects and determine the priorities for accelerated capital works expenditure**
- **Rates and charges cover the services and assets Council provides rather than the level of services wanted or expected**
- **Management and staff do their best to contain costs and work efficiently**
- **The fact remains that Council is heavily reliant on diminishing external grant revenues and that Council, even with the increased rates and charges, does not raise enough revenue to maintain and preserve its assets and services**
- **Boundary expansion may alleviate this situation but is unlikely to completely fix it**

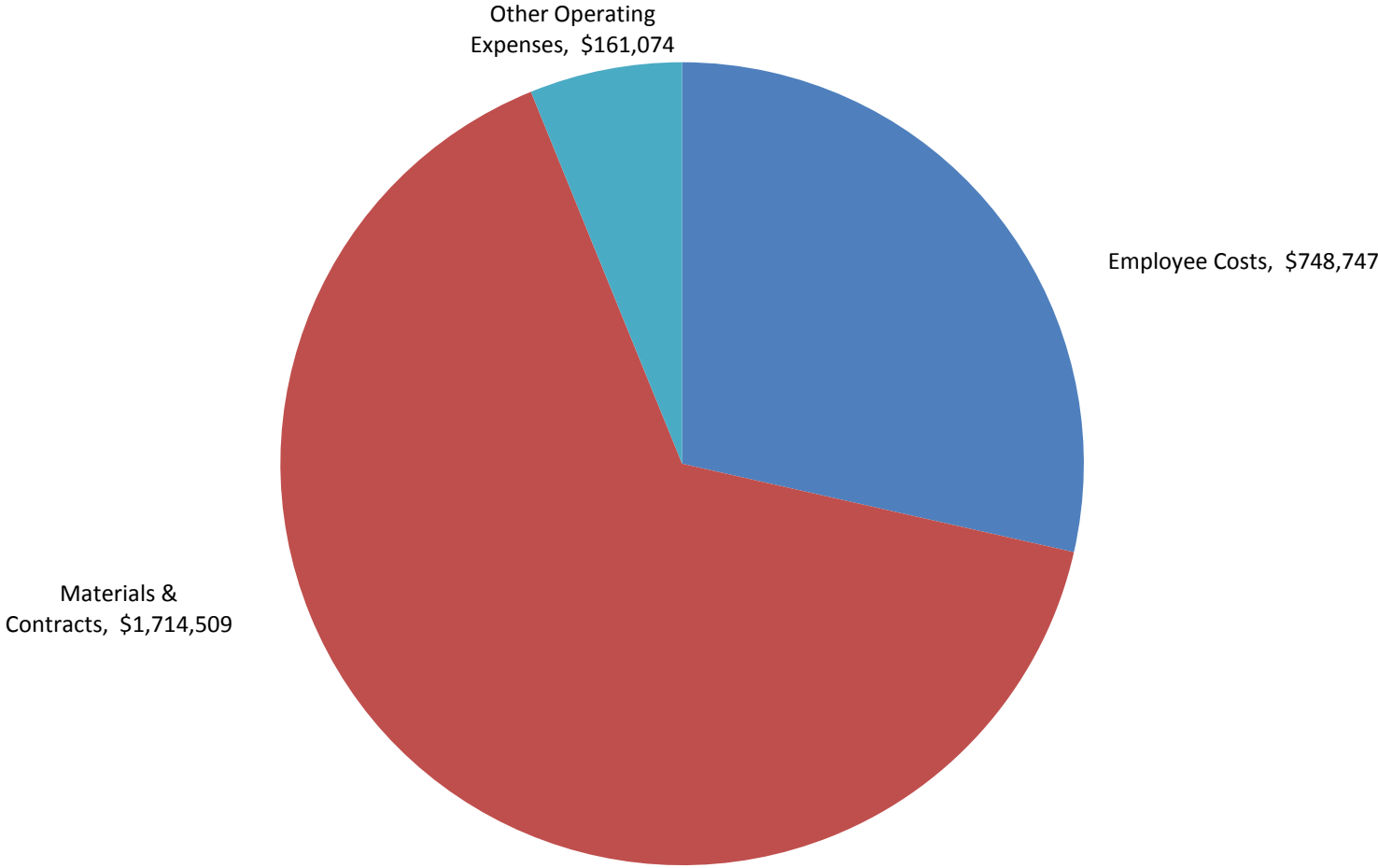
Revenue Sources



Grants 2010/11 (approved)



Expenditure by Type



Expenditure by Program

