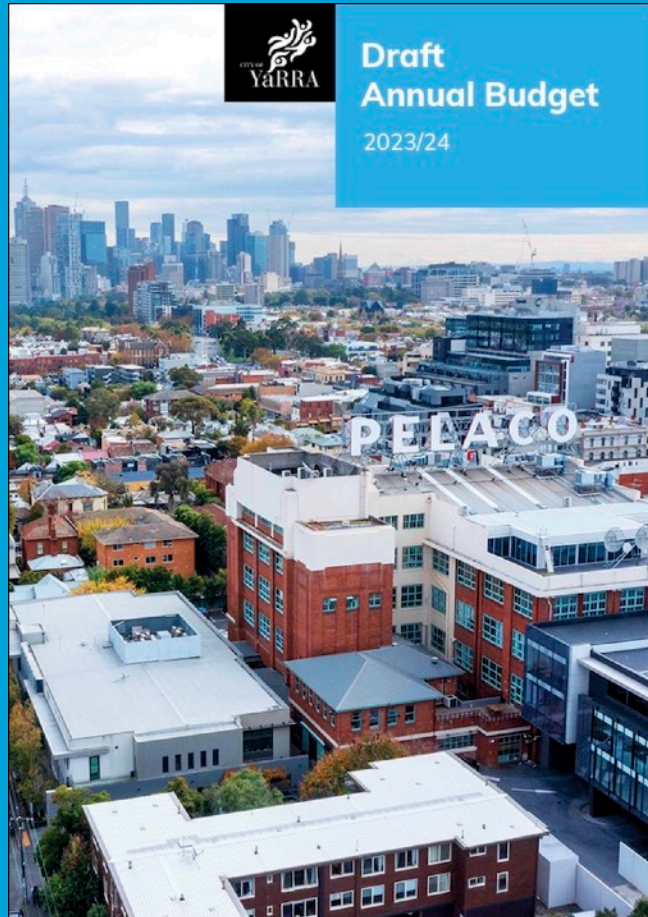


RESPONSE TO DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra Inc.
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Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a vision for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving neighbourhoods. We see our streets being used by people from all ages, irrespective of whether they walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers should be able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,900 followers on Facebook. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also a member of the Victoria Walks Walkability Action Group network.

Further information is available at: streets-alive-yarra.org/about.

Context

Streets Alive Yarra is a group of people. We have stories about children who feel unsafe walking or cycling to school, about parents who would like to age for longer in their own home, and about friends who want to see more trees as well as experience more public open space. We're people who support social justice and equity, and the freedom to get to schools, shops, sport or the library, irrespective of whether we walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive.



Image credits: supporters of Streets Alive Yarra

Introduction

We're concerned that the draft budget doesn't match the city's aspirations, as defined in the Community Vision and the Council Plan, to deliver a lot of new public open space, and safe conditions for walking and cycling across the municipality. We think the budget could be better.



Image credit: [Brent Toderian on Twitter](#)

Elements we support

We support the following elements in the draft Budget:

- Cremorne Pedestrian Improvements and Feasibility Assessment of Key Intersections (\$0.15m)
- Smith and Gertrude Street Tram Stop Upgrades - preparatory work (\$0.06m)
- Parking Strategy Year 1 (\$0.15m)
- New Deal for Schools (\$0.11m)
- Strategic Transport service area overall expenditure (\$0.58m)
- Local Liveable Streets (\$0.265m)
- Otter Street New Park (\$1.76m)
- Cambridge Street Reserve (Collingwood) expansion (\$1.06m)
- Charlotte Street (\$0.18m)
- Inner Circle Linear Parklands Masterplan (\$0.125m)
- Accelerating Tree Planting program (\$0.588m)
- Separated Waste Charges - we support the separation for two reasons, (1) because if the cost for waste services increases significantly faster than the rate cap, it will negatively impact upon other council services unless it is moved out to a separate charge; and (2) because it's not fair to charge some households twice (i.e. those who pay rates but don't get waste removed by council).
- Deliberative Panel to examine financial sustainability (\$0.3m)

Elements that should be changed

We suggest that the following elements should be changed or improved:

- There doesn't seem to be any budget allocation for acquisition of significant areas of land for new public open space, but there should be.
- The budget allocation for pocket parks is too low to enable council to meet its strategic objectives, and should be increased to \$10m.
 - Each annual budget should have enough funding to deliver a new pocket park each quarter, somewhere in Yarra.
- The budget allocation for walking and biking is too low to enable council to meet its strategic objectives, and should be increased to \$10m.
 - Each annual budget should have enough funding to deliver a new wombat crossing each month, somewhere in Yarra.
 - Similarly, each annual budget should have enough funding to deliver an additional 3 km of bike lanes on the 'New Deal for Cycling Network' that are 'green' or 'compliant' as defined by the Transport Strategy.
- The budget allocation for Place Making and Liveable Local Streets is too low to enable council to meet its strategic objectives, and should be increased to \$10m.
- The budget allocation for climate change mitigation is too low to enable council to meet its strategic objectives, and should be increased to \$10m.
- The revenue from Parking Services is too low, resulting in car travel (with its associated CO₂ emissions) being subsidised, and residents being denied extra services (or capital expenditure) because revenue is forgone. While we support the budget allocation to develop a new Parking Strategy, the need to generate additional revenue from parking is urgent and the review should not prevent council from complying with existing adopted policy, i.e. requiring visitors to pay for parking.
 - We suggest that visitors to an area (e.g. commuters) should be charged \$10 per day to park in Yarra, via Permit zones and digital permits, which can raise \$50 million per year, noting that this would be separate to the 'visitor permit' for residents.
 - Similarly, the price for any on-street parking permit (e.g. resident or business permit) should be increased to a minimum of \$1 per day (or \$365 per year), noting that this refers to the full price, not the concession price.

Further information:

- <https://streets-alive-yarra.org/budget/>
- <https://streets-alive-yarra.org/revenue/>

Requests for clarification

We suggest that the following items should be clarified:

- In the Long Term Financial Plan, the Public Open Space Reserve is listed as \$24.4 m for 22/23 and estimated to receive an additional \$5 million per year. However, less than \$2 million is budgeted to be spent from the reserve in 22/23, and only \$5 million per year in subsequent years, thus leaving the bulk of the funds untouched. Why can't more new open space be funded from this reserve each year?
- From the open space projects included in the 23/24 budget Table 4.5.2, why is only some money under the Parks and Open Space section coming from the open space reserve, with the rest from cash? We suggest that using more money from the open space reserve would free up cash for a more ambitious capital works program.
- Will previously adopted LAPMs continue to be funded, so that the planned infrastructure works can be completed?
- Will Road Safety Studies (RSS's) continue at two per year, as planned, including funding to deliver the recommended infrastructure improvements?
- Will elements of the Swan Street Streetscape Masterplan be delivered, apart for planning for the Charlotte Street park?

Concluding remarks

The council budget should better align with the Social Justice Charter, the Council Vision, and the Council Plan, including greatly increased investment in walking, cycling, trees and place making, funded by reforms to the pricing of on-street parking.

Although Yarra has often led the way in the past, compared with other municipalities, this does not mean that council is doing enough to comply with its own adopted policies, or even to align with the [broad community support](#) for a more beautiful, liveable and accessible city.

Yarra has the means, i.e. a massive revenue opportunity by correctly pricing on-street parking, and the policy basis, i.e. 'require visitors to pay for parking', and should move immediately to use it.

Streets Alive Yarra would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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