

MEDIA RELEASE 19 June 2024

Indigo Shire Council's proposal will see rates rise by more than 7%

Indigo Community Voice is deeply concerned about Indigo Shire Council's proposal to incorporate an Environmental Management Contribution (EMC) charge into General Rates. This will add approximately \$824,000 to the ratepayer burden in the 2025/26 fiscal year, increasing Rates by more than 7%.

Whilst the Essential Services Commission assesses higher rate applications, ultimately the strategic decision to move forward with incorporating the discretionary EMC charge into General Rates for 2025/26 rests directly with the current councillors.

Council charge schemes, similar to Indigo Council's EMC charge have been considered by the Local Government Minister and Local Government Victoria, as requiring rectification. The EMC burden on ratepayers arguably should have been rectified and removed years ago.

Indigo Shire ratepayers have contributed more than \$7.5 million over 15 years through the EMC charge, yet there has been little to no action on the \$4.2 million rehabilitation works, which was the original and primary reason for the charge.

Council's declared "climate emergency" appears starkly at odds with the lack of progress on the rehabilitation of the four closed tip sites and the continued uncontrolled release of methane from these sites.

While the EMC charge was expanded over the years to cover other costs, the funds have largely disappeared into general revenue. This increased financial flexibility in operational areas under the control of the CEO has not translated into progress on tip site rehabilitation works.

If the EMC is not removed, the financial burden falls on ratepayers and the responsibility for applying the potential future rate increase will fall on the newly elected councillors.

A more prudent financial approach would be to focus on core essential services, remove the EMC charge and implement improved operational cost controls which would directly benefit ratepayers.

I strongly urge Councillors to consider removing the EMC charge, undertaking rehabilitation works and managing the CEO, to ensure improvements in operational and financial performance.

This strategy would alleviate the financial burden on ratepayers and demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility and fiscal prudence.

Herb Ellerbock

President

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