

Onkaparinga Council Report



April 2024

Prepared by Thalassa Ward Cr Marion Themeliotis. If you have any local issues, you would like me to follow up on or require any assistance with Council, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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**Update –
Childcare center
Development
Murrays Hill Road
Coromandel Valley**

The proposed childcare centre for 20 Murrays Hill Rd Coromandel Valley received Planning Consent in November 2023, but the applicant has not yet selected a building certifier on the PlanSA portal, which means that they have not yet received Building Consent which is required prior to full development approval being issued. It looks like the property is on the market - <https://www.ringpartners.com.au/buy-residential-real-estate/house-20-murrays-hill-road-coromandel-valley-sa-1127412137>
No mention of the childcare centre in the agents listing that I can see!

**Boundary Reform
– Frank Smith Park
Coromandel Valley**

Dear Cr Themeliotis,
In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-52789, we'd like to advise the following Final Response.
Question:
1. Has council considered any opportunities for boundary reform or had any discussions with Mitcham Council on either council moving the boundary to have Frank Smith Park within one council?
[The Council has not considered or received any requests for boundary reform or had any discussion with Mitcham Council re Frank Smith Park.](#)
1. If not, is this something that council should look at?
[Should a process through the Boundary Reform Commission be commenced Council would be required to review the relevant land area and provide the required information to the Local Government Boundary Commission. Further details on the process and costs involved in boundary reform can be found on the Commission's website, via the following link:
<https://www.dit.sa.gov.au/local-government/boundaries-commission#:~:text=The%20South%20Australian%20Local%20Government,the%20Local%20Government%20Act%201999>.](#)

<p>Update – CWMS Advocacy</p>	<p>Dear Cr Themeliotis,</p> <p>In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-49076, we'd like to advise the following Final Response.</p> <p>You have enquired regarding the status of the following part of Council's 14 November 2023 resolution regarding the Water Assets Strategic Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prepares an advocacy plan to the State Government, Local State and Federal Members and SA Water to consider taking on the asset and that this advocacy plan be brought to a future Council meeting for Council consideration and input.</i> <p>An update on this will be presented to Council at the same meeting it considers the outcomes from this Tuesday's Elected Member session on advocacy priorities. It is anticipated this will occur in July 2024.</p> <p>As identified in the 14 November 2023 agenda report, for SA Water to take on our CWMS assets "a significant and sustained advocacy campaign would likely be required". As a such it is appropriate that this be matter considered in conjunction with other advocacy priorities.</p> <p>The update will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide details of discussions with SA Water • identify potential advocacy approaches and their risks and opportunities • seek direction on next steps. <p>Thank you. Civic Governance Team</p>
<p>Speed – Grants Gully Road Clarendon</p>	<p>Dear Cr Themeliotis,</p> <p>In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-48528, we'd like to advise the following Final Response.</p> <p>Grants Gully Road, Clarendon</p> <p>Thank you for your enquiry on Grants Gully Road, Clarendon. This road is an arterial road under the care, control and management of the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT). This means the installation of traffic measures and collection of any traffic data on Grants Gully Road is the responsibility of DIT.</p> <p>We will forward the concerns to DIT for their consideration and request they provide us with a response which we will forward to you.</p> <p>In the meantime, in the interest of road safety, we encourage residents to contact SA Police Traffic Watch on 131 444 to identify any poor driver behaviour or speeding motorists and to seek police assistance with enforcement.</p> <p>Thank you. Civic Governance Team</p>
<p>Kerb ramps - intersection of Murrays Hill Road</p>	<p>Dear Cr Themeliotis,</p> <p>In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-42552, we'd like to advise the following response.</p>

<p>and Patricia Street, Coromandel Valley</p>	<p>Kerb ramps - intersection of Murrays Hill Road and Patricia Street, Coromandel Valley Following your correspondence, we have reviewed the priority of this kerb ramp upgrade project. Whilst we note that the intersection of Murrays Hill Road and Patricia Street is in proximity to the Sturt River Linear Park Trail, it is not nearby other pedestrian generators such as aged care or shopping facilities, which results in this project receiving a low priority score. We are prioritising the upgrade of kerb ramps in areas with higher pedestrian traffic, such as along Hub Drive, Aberfoyle Park, within the next five years. DDA compliant kerb ramps are installed at the McNamara Road and Light Road intersection that provide accessible entry to the trail. This route may be a more appropriate alternative to use. We also note that a footpath is scheduled to be installed on Patricia Street between Murrays Hill Road and Light Road within the next five years, subject to budget allocation. If there is a possibility to bring forward the kerb ramp installation at Murrays Hill Road and Patricia Street as part of this project that will be explored during the project scoping and design phases.</p> <p>Thank you. Civic Governance Team</p>
<p>Roxanne Avenue, Aberfoyle Park – reserve upgrade</p>	<p>Dear Cr Themeliotis, <i>The following information has been provided by the Operations Division.</i> Roxanne Avenue, Aberfoyle Park – reserve upgrade The Roxanne Avenue, Aberfoyle Park reserve is classified as a Local Family reserve and was initially scheduled for construction in the 2024-25 financial year. This has been retimed to the 2026-27 financial year. The retiming is due to an adjustment of our Open Space renewal program to prioritise playgrounds based on the observed asset condition, utilisation, classification in our Open Space Strategic Management Plan (OSSMP) and to ensure the program is managed within the current category budget. Staff inspected the playground on 2 April 2024 and no defects were identified during that inspection. We have commenced the scoping stage of project planning for the renewal of the Roxanne Avenue Reserve and anticipate that community engagement will occur in 2025. As you are aware we are currently reviewing the OSSMP which sets our service levels and guides our playground and reserve planning. Any changes to the existing service levels will potentially impact the priority and timing of future open space and playground renewals such as this reserve.</p> <p>Thank you. Civic Governance Team</p>
<p>Powell Street Reserve</p>	<p>Dear Cr Themeliotis, In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-46550, we'd like to advise the following response. Powell Street Reserve</p>

The renewal of the Alcock Way playground, also known as Powell Street Reserve was scheduled for 2024-25.

The project timing was reviewed due to competing priorities within the budget to manage a significant number of aged playgrounds and the need to prioritise the delivery of state government projects.

Renewal of this playground has now been retimed for delivery in the 2028-29 financial year, subject to budget approval.

As you are aware the project will be subject to the annual budget process. In addition, we are currently reviewing the OSSMP which sets our service levels and guides our playground and reserve planning. Any changes to the existing service levels will potentially impact the priority and timing of future open space and playground renewals city wide.

Thank you.

Civic Governance Team

Night works –
Main Rd Cherry
Gardens

Main Road, Cherry Gardens

Night Works Notice

We are delivering the Adelaide Hills Productivity and Road Safety Package to upgrade key strategic arterial roads in the region. The road improvements will support economic growth, improve road safety and increase fire resilience.

The \$150 million initiative is jointly funded by the Australian Government (80%) and South Australian Government (20%) over five years.

When

Monday 27 May 2024 to
Friday 21 June 2024,
weather permitting.

Hours of work

7pm to 6am.

Where

Along Main Road between
Black Road and Chandlers
Hill Road

What's happening

Following further technical investigations and planning, night works along Main Road Cherry Gardens have been rescheduled and will now commence on 27 May 2024 with an expected completion date of 21 June 2024.

How this affects you

During night works, Main Road, between Oakridge Road and Chandlers Hill Road, will be temporarily closed with detours in place. Please see the detour map on the [project website](#).

There will be no night works on Saturdays and Sundays.

Budget - Thalassa

What has council done to find savings?

We have identified a \$2.48 million reduction in employee costs in addition to previously identified savings of \$2.5 million. Through better calculation of depreciation on stormwater assets we have also achieved a \$2 million saving.

As part of our continual review of contracts, materials and other expenses we have delivered a further saving of \$700,000.

The combined total of these items is \$7.68 million in savings.

We are also continually focused on alternative funding and revenue sources to reduce the reliance on rates in the longer term.

Will residents still get the services, maintenance and projects they need?

Yes. We will continue to provide essential services and maintenance across our growing city.

This includes waste services, maintenance of assets including roads, footpaths, parks, libraries and community centres, and a range of important support services for disadvantaged people.

City-wide projects totalling more than \$7.57 million will be delivered including the annual road resealing program, urgent and general roadworks, bushfire preparedness, tree pruning, footpaths, and lighting upgrades and maintenance.

What can I do if I am having difficulty paying my rates?

We recognise that some ratepayers are experiencing ongoing financial hardship and we can assist by providing a range of options to manage payment of rates that are outstanding or will soon become overdue.

In the first instance please contact our Customer Relations team on 8384 0666 to discuss the options that may best suit your circumstance.

To make an application for hardship, contact an accredited financial counsellor to assist you with this process.

To find a local financial counsellor, please phone the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 or visit ndh.org.au talk to a financial counsellor.

The financial counsellor will then contact us, either with you or on your behalf, to progress your application. All details supplied are confidential.

Ratepayers who hold a State Seniors Card can apply to postpone payment of rates on their principal place of residence each year. Seniors must pay \$500 of their rates each year but can postpone payment of any amount levied above this.

Postponed rates remain as a charge on the land and are not required to be repaid until the property is sold or disposed of. Monthly interest charges apply to amounts postponed.

You can find more information on hardship policies, rebates, and concessions at onkaparingacity.com/feebates

Important projects for Thalassa ward

\$1,550,000

road safety upgrades at Piggat Range Road, Onkaparinga Hills and Eaton Road, Chandlers Hill (originally budgeted in 2023-24)

\$1,370,000

continuing construction of the Aberfoyle community centre extension (originally budgeted in 2023-24)

\$233,800

traffic calming improvements at Mount Malvern Road, Chandlers Hill

\$91,800

pedestrian refuge project at Hub Drive, near Istanbul Drive, Aberfoyle Park

\$78,000

flood prevention works at Malvern Court, Aberfoyle Park

Budget questions

?? Draft Budget - Questions you have asked.

Council has heard the feedback received so far on the council's draft Annual Business Plan and Budget.

Below are the answers to the most common questions we've received.

Remember, if you want your comments to be included in the report to Council, please visit the Your Say page linked at the end of this post to provide your feedback.

1 What is the forecast debt level for 2024-25? And how did we end up here?

The 2024-25 budget forecasts a debt of \$128 million. Despite previous budget repair plans, continued expenditure, borrowing, and community pandemic support—while crucial at the time—has veered us off track. Action is needed now to regain financial sustainability and achieve a balanced budget. While your elected members have scrutinised every aspect of the organisation and identified \$7.68 million of potential savings, these measures alone are not sufficient.

2 How much extra income does the council generate with smaller block sizes, subdivisions, denser housing, and increased property values?

When SA's Valuer General determines that property values have increased, it doesn't mean the council gets more money directly. Instead, it means that some individual homeowners might end up paying a bit more in rates because their property is now deemed to be worth more compared to others. However, the total amount of money in the council's budget remains the same.

When new properties are built or existing properties are subdivided, the council does see an increase in its income. This is because these new properties are now contributing to the council's budget for the first time. For example, the council expects to receive around \$1.2 million from these new properties in 2024-25. This additional income will be used to provide services for these new properties and the surrounding areas.

3 How can you justify increasing prices but decreasing services?

Implementing a user-pays system to some services to allocate expenses fairly based on usage, reduces the rate percentage for everyone. Only those who utilise extra services bear the additional costs, rather than spreading the expense across everyone's rates. Examples include green waste drop-offs, mattress collections, additional bins, and development application fees.

4 How are you going to achieve a balanced budget?

To avoid relying solely on rates, this budget focuses on generating other non-rate revenue, reducing debt in the long-term, and cutting expenses for the 2024-25 budget. The costs within our direct control are budgeted to increase below CPI for South Australia.

This budget will return us to a balanced position within the next 12 months and minimises future reliance on rates.

Many people aren't fully aware of all the services local government offers beyond what's legally required like road maintenance, grass slashing, waste collection or development approvals. They may be surprised to learn that we're also responsible for providing street lighting, fire prevention, hazard management, dog and cat management, parking control, public health including food inspections, and more. Additionally, councils provide facilities such as libraries, parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, and arts, recreation, and community centres. They also provide coastal care, support various groups, including youth, seniors, and those with disabilities, while promoting tourism and economic development, and managing natural resources. In addition, we provide valued community events such as the Christmas Pageant, Trucks on Tour, Encore Summer and Winter pop-up activities, and the Beachside Food and Wine Festival which delight local families and bring economic benefit to local businesses.

Some people have higher expectations about road and land maintenance, but they may not be aware that some roads and public spaces are owned and managed by the state government, not the local council. However, just focusing on "roads, rates and rubbish" won't meet the community's needs or provide all the events and services our community values. So, we're looking at ways to save money, like more effectively managing employee costs, reviewing our grants program, and eliminating duplicate services that others already offer.

5 You've made plans before to fix the budget issues. What is different this time?

This Council is committed to budget repair now, as soon as possible, to avoid more severe financial challenges later.

The draft budget will bring the City of Onkaparinga back to a balanced (financially sustainable) position within 12 months.

By continuing to control spending and costs, the forecast is for the council to remain in a balanced budget position, maintaining future rate increases in line with CPI following this budget repair process.

The Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) undertakes economic regulation and provides advice to local government on its financial sustainability. ESCOSA has determined that the City of Onkaparinga was financially unsustainable over

the previous 10 years, and potentially financially unsustainable in the future if we do not act now.

ESCOSA, along with its assessment, also outlined a range of recommendations. The draft budget has been prepared having considered ESCOSA's report and adopts many of the recommendations.

Delivering on this budget means the council will also meet all financial indicators set for the South Australian local government sector, including achieving a balanced budget and ensuring appropriate spending on renewal and maintenance of existing assets. The elected members and the organisation are confident this puts the City of Onkaparinga on the right track.

6 What are the consequences for not sticking to the plan?

Failure to act now will worsen the debt situation, and the council will become financially unsustainable.

Council considered the following consequences when preparing the budget:

➡ Debt management – If we do not manage our debt, we will continue to borrow money to pay for projects. The consequence of that is we will need to service that debt, using funds which would otherwise be re-directed back to the community.

➡ Long-term financial plan – If we don't stick to the long-term financial plan principles, further borrowings will be needed to pay for projects that are not budgeted for, including the ongoing servicing and maintenance of those projects.

➡ CPI and low rates – While a 0 per cent rate increase or increases below CPI provide short term immediate relief, they can have longer term compounding financial implications as the council is now experiencing. Spending on renewal and maintenance when needed, saves the amount of money needing to be spent in the future. The City of Onkaparinga has assets of nearly \$3 billion to maintain. That's why in this budget \$39 million of the capital projects budget is focussed on renewing and maintaining what we have rather than on new assets. The focus is back on maintaining what we have.

➡ Asset rationalisation – Under-utilised or excess assets are expensive to manage and maintain. We must have an asset rationalisation strategy to ensure a balanced budget, and a sustainable long-term financial approach. Doing this strategically ensures we will have the right community facilities in the right place.

7 How much of the proposed annual budget is going to paying down the debt?

\$8.2 million of the proposed annual budget will go towards paying down debt and interest costs. Our next focus is to develop a strategic debt reduction plan that will clearly identify how debt needs to be managed going forward. This requires us to return to a surplus budget first.

Further budget questions:

◆ Budget items explained ◆

● Green waste drop-offs ●

The cost to the individual per token (each token allows for the disposal of 1 cubic metre of green organic material) is \$24 for 2024-25

● Mattress collections ●

The cost for the collection and recycling of mattresses will be \$40 for 2024-25.

● Additional Bins ●

The cost of each additional bins for 2024-25 is as follows:

- Recycling bin - \$68 per bin
- Green organics bin - \$79 per bin
- Waste bins - \$205 per bin

● Development application fees ●

The increased fees relate to the following development services (not applications):

- Information retrieval – house plans - \$75 for enquiry
- Processing and completion of search \$45
- Liquor licences – comments to CBS on liquor licence applications - \$140 per response.

● Grass mowing (including fuel reduction mowing). ●

The reduction in grass mowing to some of our reserves is for 2024-25.

Council will look to delay the normal cycle of mowing leading up to the peak season (i.e. the grass would be longer in the wetter/greener months) and Council will then undertake our usual pre-summer season mowing once the grass has cured to manage the risk. This approach would need to be seasonally adjusted dependent on climatic conditions.

How we got here:

ESCOSA - Past 10 years of council = UNSUSTAINABLE! Onkaparinga Council is UNSUSTAINABLE!

- ➡ Had a debt management plan = Didn't deliver or stick to plan.
 - ➡ Had a Long-Term Financial Plan = Didn't deliver on the principles of the LTFP
 - ➡ Introduced CPI & Low rates = Continued to spend and borrow out of control.
- ESCOSA "Onkaparinga has too many assets to maintain and manage."
- ➡ Had a plan for asset rationalisation = Didn't deliver or stick to plan.

Question on council staff:

Why can't we reduce staff salaries or staff to address budget repair?

City of Onkaparinga services approximately 10% of the SA population. We have 770FTE in our 2024 budget, however, these staff service 180,000 residents across 518 square kilometres. We are a large organisation, but we serve the largest population in south Australia across one of the largest metropolitan geographical areas.

For the next budget, we will be operating with about 4.3 employees per thousand residents. Put another way, 4.3 employees will provide all the services that 1,000 residents require, from collecting bins to maintaining playgrounds, from cutting grass to providing community support services, approving developments, and keeping libraries open.

Within the 2024/25 budget an additional \$2.48 million in employee cost savings has been recognised. Further reducing staff numbers is a possible way to address budget repair, however it often comes at the cost of service-delivery and service levels.

Service delivery.

Staff are hired to deliver services to the community. To reduce staff numbers, Council will need to identify services which it no longer wishes to provide to the community. As programs or services are closed, FTE would be reduced, and this would reduce overall employee expenses. Previous community consultation has indicated that residents do not want to service to be cut. The current draft budget has not proposed program or service closures.

Service levels.

The draft budget already contains several proposed reductions to service levels. The existing proposals include service level adjustments which will have the least impact on the community. Additional savings can be found thorough more aggressive service level adjustments; however, this will lead to a decline in the quality and timeliness of services provided to residents. Service level adjustments risk broader impact on the community, particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups who rely on council services. Despite these challenges, we're constantly looking for ways to reduce employee expenses. Continuous improvement initiatives, technological change and upskilling existing staff provides opportunities to review staffing levels. When any role becomes vacant, we undertake an analysis to determine of the role is required or if it can be absorbed into existing staff roles. This work is continuing.

Why are so many staff on 6 figures?

Being the largest council in South Australia, we have a number of management positions attracting salaries more than \$100,000 due to the level of responsibility, decision-making and oversight involved. Salaries for these roles are benchmarked against other councils, and assessed against an external classification framework to ensure remunerations levels are both appropriate and competitive. Our management hierarchy is relatively flat for an organisation of this size. According to the Local Government Performance Excellence report, Onkaparinga has more 'employees' per 'manager' than most other councils. This demonstrates a commitment to minimising management expenses.

In addition, a number of roles across Australia are at the \$100,000+ level due to market conditions. These include those managing disability services, youth services and community services, professional roles including senior accountants, project managers and specialist corporate staff, and many senior IT positions. This can be exacerbated by shortages in the market for these particular skillsets. To remain competitive with other employers and sectors, our salaries have to be comparable to those in similar roles elsewhere.

Given that the majority of our staff are on the frontline doing the job, and noting that we have a relatively flat hierarchy, the reason some staff are on six-figure salaries is a product of current market conditions and competition for skilled employees.

Dear Cr Marion, Themeliotis,

In relation to your Elected Member Enquiry, Reference REQ2024-46953, we'd like to advise the following Final Response.

Thank you for your email regarding the number of employees Council had in 2023-24 compared to budgeted for 2024-25. This response has been provided by Jade Bird, Manager Financial Services, Corporate.

On 31 December 2023 there were 735.33 FTEs.

The employee costs budgeted for in 2024-25 is the equivalent of 741 FTEs. The budget recognises that not all positions are filled at any one time.

Thank you.

Civic Governance Team

**Automated
External
Defibrillators
(AED) funding**

The South Australian Government is improving access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) across the state by making them mandatory in certain buildings, facilities, and vehicles.

Preventive Health SA is providing grants of \$1,000 to assist eligible not-for-profit community and sporting organisations meet the requirements of the Automated External Defibrillators (Public Access) Act 2022 (the Act).

All not-for-profit community or sporting organisations that own buildings or facilities are encouraged to apply.

Apply now here: <https://www.preventivehealth.sa.gov.au/.../south...>

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You can follow the page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100077458014215>