

RATES IN GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why have my rates increased?

Your Council rates bill consists of three elements:

- Property rates
- Waste charge
- Victorian Government Fire Levy.

Your rates bill has increased this year, due to an increase in the waste charge and the Victorian Government Fire Levy.

Your property rates will also have changed this year. Whether this was an increase or decrease depends on the effect of this year's Victorian Government required revaluation of your property.

The increase in your waste charge is due to China's new policy severely restricting the importation of recyclables, which has been well documented in the state and national news. It has had a significant impact on recycling markets world-wide.

Why were my rates lower when I lived in Geelong/Ballarat?

Large regional centres like Geelong and Ballarat have a lot of existing infrastructure and many more rate payers to help fund services and improvements; this even applies to more populated shires like Surf Coast (29,000 in [2016](#)) and Moorabool (32,000 in [2016](#)).

Golden Plains has a large geographical area, with a relatively small population – in short, we have a lot of land, and a low rate base (not many people paying rates) to help fund services in that area.

Unlike other councils, we have limited opportunities to generate income apart from rates – we have primarily residential and farms rates but we don't have significant amounts of revenue from big industry, commercial development, or user fees like parking. We work hard to support our Shire through securing grants and funding to support the community, however these are less available now than in previous years.

We strive to meet the community's expectations but we also need to ensure we get more support from State and Federal Government to help us to do that.

Rates information is available on our website, or you can find out about how councils calculate rates on the [Know Your Council](#) website.

I don't see what we get for our rates – we get less services than others.

Rates are a property-based tax, rather than a direct user charge for services received.

Local Government has a responsibility to provide access to services and infrastructure for the public benefit of all and this is our main aim at Golden Plains Shire. The choice not to use services, or the benefits of Council infrastructure, does not remove the expectation that all property owners pay a fair share of rates.

Council also offers a lot of services and benefits that may not be visible to you – for example, you may not personally access our Maternal and Child Health support services, but this year we have had a record number of births to families who do need this important service. You may participate in a local sporting group but not know that part of the improvements to your club rooms were partially funded through a Council Community Grant. You may not require our aged care services but there are many vulnerable residents who rely on these for their wellbeing. You may not play at one of our play grounds or skate at one of our parks, but there are many people who do and get enormous benefit out of doing so.

Rates are necessary to help Council support our entire community across our large, diverse Shire.

My rates do not reflect my house and land value.

In accordance with State Government requirements, the 2018-19 financial year is a revaluation year.

The new valuations are based on the level of value as at 1 January 2018. Up until now and including the 2018 revaluation, property valuations occurred every two years. From 2019, valuations will be centralised under Valuer-General Victoria (a State Government entity) and conducted annually.

The Valuer-General and staff at Valuer-General Victoria (VGV), oversee valuations for State Government property transactions and the making and return of council rating valuations.

[continued overleaf]

VGW also values government assets so departments and agencies can complete their financial reporting requirements – find out more [here](#).

Any person who desires to object to their valuation, must lodge an objection with Council within **two months** of the issuing of the rates notice. The grounds for objecting to the valuation are stated on the prescribed form, which can be obtained by contacting Customer Service.

Paying rates puts too much financial pressure on me.

All property owners pay rates – they are a type of property tax.

Generally rates are paid in full or by four instalments, but you can also arrange to make regular ongoing payments towards your rates. Please call our Rates and Valuations team to find out more.

Under the State Government's Pensioner Rate Assistance Scheme, Council can excuse payment equal to one half of the amount of the current rate, municipal and garbage charges, up to a maximum of \$229.40 (2018/2019) per annum. \$50 is deducted from the Fire Service Levy. To be eligible for the concession you must:

- Hold a current Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Pensioner Concession Card, or a DVA Repatriation Health Card specifying 'War Widow'. (Note: Holders of a Health Care Card are not eligible for a concession).
- Be a permanent resident of the property for which you are seeking the rebate.
- Not yet made an application for any other property, or with any other Council during the financial year.

To apply for this concession please present your concession card to one of our Customer Service Officers. There is no need to re-apply if we already have your details.

Is Council mismanaging its finances?

Council is subject to strict financial controls and audits.

The 2018-19 Budget was prepared based on the adopted principles within the 2017-2021 Council Plan and Strategic Resource Plan. The Budget seeks to maintain and improve services and infrastructure as well as deliver projects and services that are valued by our community, and do this within the 2.25% rate increase mandated by the State Government.

For further information, please contact Council Customer Service on 5220 7111 or email enquiries@gplains.vic.gov.au

Rates have gone up too much, and there is no transparency about why.

We are meeting the State Government rate cap.

The Victorian Government rate cap for 2018/2019 is 2.25%. This means the **average property rate** must not be more than 2.25% higher than last year. It is not a limit on how much your individual property rates can increase. This depends on your property's valuation this year compared to last year and how that change compares with other properties in Golden Plains Shire. As a result, your rates may have increased by more than 2.25%, they may have increased by less than 2.25% or they may have decreased.

The Municipal Association of Victoria has created a video on how rate capping works; watch it [here](#).



The average rate increase percentage and new Garbage Charge have been shared widely with the community since April.

The proposed increase to the Garbage Charge was shared during the draft Council Budget 2018-19 community submission process (open throughout May 2018). The draft Budget submission period was publicised on social media, on a Budget Summary document, on our website, in the Gazette, in our fortnightly 'Golden Plains Shire News' feature in the Miner, on two special Budget update videos by the Mayor, in our Council Meeting update videos, on community signs throughout the Shire and in community newsletters.

These communications explained that increase in the Garbage Charge is due to China's new policy severely restricting the importation of recyclables, which has been well documented in the state and national news. As a result of the global and local situation, the Garbage Charge was increased to \$330 per year.

Council received 34 submissions to the draft Budget, and only three of them addressed waste (see our [Council Meeting Agenda for June](#) for more details)

The [final Budget](#), adopted on 26 June, included the increased Garbage Charge and was also widely publicised.

There is a [Your Rates Explained](#) flyer included with your rates notice, and this year we updated it significantly to answer community concerns – it has a summary of where rates are spent, and information about how rates are calculated.