



Document Set ID: 3094720  
Version: 2, Version Date: 25/05/2021

SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031

---

This updated Long Term Financial Plan 2021-2031 was adopted by Council at its Ordinary Meeting held Thursday 17 June 2021, following consideration of any comments or submissions received from public exhibition and consultation with the community.

Page | 1

Document Set ID: 3094720  
Version: 2, Version Date: 25/05/2021

## SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>1. Key Financial Sustainability Objectives</b> .....	4
<b>2. Key Items of Operating Revenue and Expenditure</b> .....	4
<b>3. Rates Harmonisation</b> .....	6
<b>4. Special Rate Variation</b> .....	6
<b>5. Baseline Scenario</b> .....	7
Rates and User Fees & Charges .....	7
Grants and other External Funding .....	7
Employee Costs and Organisational Structure .....	7
Materials & Contracts and Other Inputs .....	7
Population Growth Projections .....	7
Indexation	7
Asset Ownership, Management and Renewal .....	7
Depreciation	8
Service Levels .....	8
Natural Disasters .....	8
External Factors .....	8
Interest Rates .....	9
External Borrowings .....	9
Implications	9
Baseline Scenario – Primary Financial Reports .....	10
<b>6. SRV Scenario</b> .....	14
Assumptions	14
Implications	14
SRV Scenario – Primary Financial Reports .....	15
<b>7. Optimistic Scenario</b> .....	17
Assumptions	17
Implications	17
Optimistic Scenario – Primary Financial Reports .....	18
<b>8. Sensitivity Analysis</b> .....	20
Employee Costs .....	20
Interest Rates .....	20
Capital Works Programs .....	20
Grant Programs .....	20
Rates Income .....	20
Cost Shifting	20
Energy Costs .....	20
Insurance and Workers Compensation .....	21
Superannuation .....	21
<b>9. Indicators</b> .....	22
Operating Performance Ratio – Benchmark > 0% .....	22
Own Source Revenue – Benchmark > 60% .....	22
Unrestricted Current Ratio – Benchmark >1.5 .....	22
Debt Service Cover Ratio – Benchmark >2 .....	22
Rates and Annual Charges Outstanding – Benchmark <10% .....	22
Cash Expenses Cover Ratio – Benchmark >3 months .....	22
<b>10. Capital Works Program</b> .....	23

## ***Introduction***

The Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) is a planning and decision-making tool that shows the long-term financial impacts of Council's decisions based on a set of assumptions. It is a requirement under the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework for NSW Local Government. Snowy Valleys Council's LTFP is an important and central part of Council's strategic planning process that spans a rolling 10-year period and is a document that is intended to remain flexible. The LTFP is reviewed and updated at least annually.

The three key elements of the LTFP correspond to Council's primary financial reporting documents, namely the income statement, the statement of financial position and the statement of cash flows. The income statement (or profit and loss statement) details Council's operating revenue and expenditure associated with ongoing activities with a focus on the operating result which shows whether Council is spending more or less than it earns. The statement of financial position (or balance sheet) details changes in Council's assets and liabilities. The statement of cash flows details where Council plans to generate and spend its cash in operating (ongoing) activities and capital programs (renewals, upgrades and new assets).

The key focus of this updated LTFP is Council's general fund which includes all activities except for water supply and wastewater businesses, which are accounted for separately under National Competition Policy requirements. Three scenarios are considered:

- a Baseline Scenario;
- an SRV Scenario; and
- an Optimistic Scenario.

Financial modelling has also been completed for Council's Water Supply and Wastewater Funds. Only one scenario each for the Water Supply and Wastewater Funds is included in this updated LTFP at this stage. Further modelling work is currently being undertaken. A complete revaluation of all assets for these two funds will be undertaken in the 2021/22 financial year.

## 1. Key Financial Sustainability Objectives

Council recognises that the principles of sound financial management in the NSW Local Government Act (chapter 3, section 8B) emphasise two key elements:

- Responsible and sustainable spending (aligning general revenue and expenses and achieving a small operating surplus); and
- Responsible and sustainable infrastructure investment (adequate provision in maintenance and renewal).

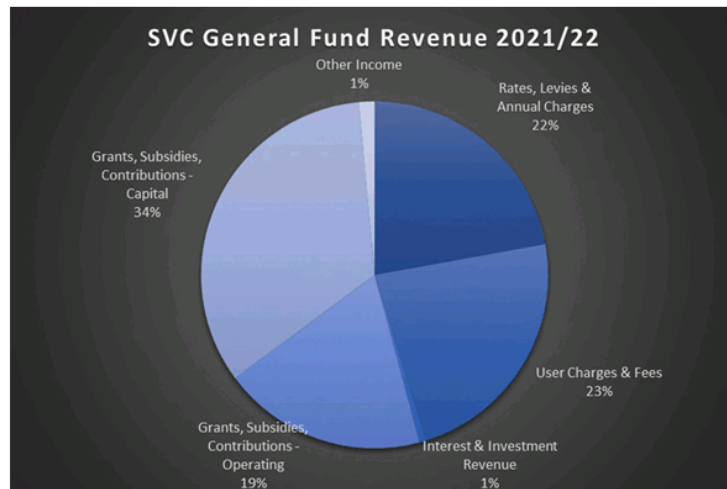
Assumptions informing the SRV scenario for the general fund have been developed with the primary aim of achieving an operating surplus in the long-term.

Council also ensures it provides sufficient funding for renewal of existing assets based on an analysis of actual renewal requirements as set out in its Service Management Plans. Because its assets are in good condition, Council proposes to keep its renewal program stable, but may revise this forecast following a needs analysis in consultation with users.

In addition to the above, Council aims to maintain sufficient cash, manage its debtors, maintain its debt within acceptable limits and to keep the typical residential bill for water and wastewater services as low as possible and stable over the long term. Initial modelling has been undertaken to assess the need for changes.

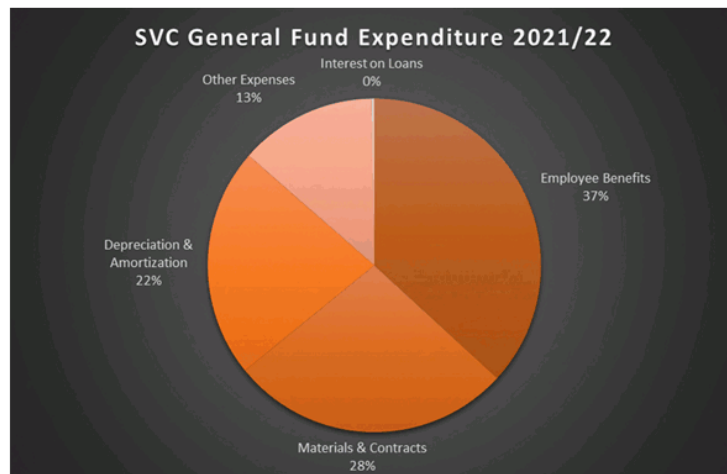
## 2. Key Items of Operating Revenue and Expenditure

The following charts summarise the key areas of revenue and expenditure associated with operational programs in Council's 2021/22 budget for the **General Fund**:



Council expects to receive 45% of its revenue from rates, levies, annual charges and user charges and fees. 53% of revenue is expected to result from operational and capital grants, which for 2021/22 includes \$9.9M grant from Softwoods and \$9.5 in bushfire recovery / economic stimulus funding. The remaining 2% of revenue are from investment returns and other income streams.

## SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031



Council expenditure on employee benefits is expected to comprise 37% of total expenditure. Materials, contracts, and other expenses that are used in direct inputs to operations will make up 41% and depreciation 22%. Interest payments on outstanding loans are below 1% of total expenditure.

### ***3. Rates Harmonisation***

Council approved the structure of its harmonised rates across its local government area after extensive community consultation. Council will levy general rates within four rating categories, residential, business, farmland, and mining. Details are available in the Revenue Policy and on Council's website.

### ***4. Special Rate Variation***

A Special Rate Variation (SRV) applied to residential and business land in the former Tumut Shire and expired on 30 June 2020. To date no additional SRV has been imposed. However, it is evident that Council is unable to continue to provide services at current levels, maintain and renew its infrastructure and continue to replace ageing community assets within the currently available revenues.

The SRV scenario (second below) includes a proposed new and permanent SRV from 2022/23 onwards to allow Council to:

- maintain current service levels,
- fund ongoing maintenance,
- fund renewal of infrastructure assets,
- increase capacity to renew deteriorating assets,
- ensure and improve financial sustainability,
- deliver key priorities in the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program, and
- reduce reliance on external grant funding for asset renewals.

The SRV scenario includes a compounded SRV of 25.44% over and above the IPART rate peg introduced in two steps of 12% over two years. The baseline scenario has been forecast without an SRV. The optimistic scenario contains a reduced SRV. Council believes that an SRV is unavoidable unless service levels are considerably reduced across the Council area. Based on feedback received over the previous years, it is unlikely that the community is willing to accept reduced service levels or declining infrastructure.

Extensive community engagement will be undertaken over the coming months to establish community understanding and willingness to accept an SRV to allow Council to return to a sustainable operating model. This will include engagement about the size required and the options of phasing the introduction of an SRV. Further information will be provided during the engagement period and prior to Council's submission to the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

## 5. Baseline Scenario

The assumptions that inform the baseline scenario are detailed below. The baseline scenario extrapolates from the 2021/22 operational budget. The primary financial reports for the scenario follow the discussion of assumptions. It is important to remember that the LTFP is subject to uncertainties and change including changes due to uncontrollable events such as legislative changes, natural disasters, and economic shocks.

### Rates and User Fees & Charges

Rates, Fees and Charges increase in line with assumed CPI. However, in the future Council utilities charges may change at a different rate depending on service level plans and infrastructure needs.

Commercial works revenue is included in fees & charges revenue, albeit at a reduced level from year 3 due to ongoing uncertainty over commercial works contracts.

### Grants and other External Funding

Operational grant funding is assumed to remain at current levels. Council will pursue funding with a preference for operational funding. Any new and upgrade proposals to service levels and asset infrastructure are reviewed prior to funding submission and recommendations are based on whole-of-life costing, community benefit and affordability in the long-term. Financially unsustainable projects will not be pursued.

### Employee Costs and Organisational Structure

Council's organisational structure budget reflects all current positions. It is based on the re-structured administration that was put in place in November 2019. Further organisational structure reviews are expected and will have an impact on future planning.

Employee costs make up 37% of consolidated Council ongoing expenses (General Fund 37%, Water Supply Fund 34%, Wastewater Fund 40%). The overall salaries and wages budget is \$17.9M for the financial year 2021/22. Cost decreases resulted from a recent restructure and from a shift in accounting for some employees (primarily those working in the Infrastructure Works division) from operational activities to capital activities, particularly grant-funded construction projects. Cost increases result from mandated wage increases under the Local Government Award and staff moving through the Award structure. Historically Award increases have been higher than CPI and the allowable increase in rates revenue under the rating peg. Statutory increase in superannuation contributions come into effect during the next 5 years.

### Materials & Contracts and Other Inputs

Materials and contracts make up 28% and other operational inputs 12% of Council ongoing expenses. These costs are assumed to increase in line with CPI.

### Population Growth Projections

Overall population growth is forecast to be less than 1%. Due to the minor forecast, the LTFP has been prepared based on a no-net population change basis.

### Indexation

Base indexation of assumed CPI of 2% has been used except for employee expenses to which an assumed index of 2.5% has been applied.

### Asset Ownership, Management and Renewal

Council is seeking to maximise the useful life of all assets and aims to achieve this by adequately funding maintenance and renewals. Council continues to manage assets in accordance with its adopted Asset Management Plans within budget constraints. Council owned/controlled assets receive priority spending and Council will continue to review



## SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031

circumstances that have an impact on strategy, including condition assessment protocols, determining remaining asset lives and service levels.

The forecast expenditure is insufficient to meet the cost of predicted asset renewals risking declining levels of asset conditions leading to more costly replacements, reductions in service levels and a backlog of renewals. Council is fully utilising the revenue from Roads to Recovery and other State and Commonwealth grants to fund renewals and maintenance activities. A key assumption in the LTFP is that capital works are at least partially linked to external grant funding. Council may need to identify additional income sources and/or reduce the service levels provided should the level of grant funding decrease in future years,

### Depreciation

Depreciation makes up 22% of consolidated Council operating expenses (General Fund 22%, Water Supply Fund 26%, Wastewater Fund 19%). By the end of the 10-year forecast period, depreciation is expected to rise to 24%. The forecast assumes no significant valuation movements that would affect the current charges and the method for applying useful lives. While there is potential to reduce depreciation by disposing of underutilised assets, such a move will need to be considered in consultation with users.

Council's stormwater drainage assets are being revalued in the financial year 2020/21. At this stage there is no indication whether this will result in a change to depreciation expenses.

### Service Levels

Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive service level review and preparing new and updated Service Management Plans (SMP). Corporate overhead costs and, where applicable, identified direct costs will be recovered from all services, capital projects and commercial works to avoid cross-subsidisation of services.

All services will be evaluated for community benefit, delivery costs, full-cost recovery, community service obligations and alternative delivery options. In engagement with the community, Council will identify services the private sector may be better placed to efficiently deliver and low-value services for reduction, divesting and rationalisation. Services that promise highest value to the community and are financially sustainable will be prioritised and those services that draw excessively on Council resources will be considered for reduction. Maintenance management systems and plans are aligned with preferred service levels and funding opportunities.

### Natural Disasters

The LTFP assumes that Natural Disaster impacts on public infrastructure will be funded from State / Commonwealth natural disaster arrangements. However, the recent bushfire crisis has shown that in the case of a major disaster, these funding arrangements are inadequate to cover all costs to Council. No allowance has been made for future disaster events, however, if Council achieves its financial sustainability goals, it will be much better placed to respond should a major disaster affect the area. The baseline scenario leaves no room for this.

Funding is not received for Water and Wastewater Infrastructure, Public Open Space and Recreational Facilities, damage to which must be funded from available reserves or is covered under insurance arrangements.

### External Factors

In the past few years financial assistance grants have been partially prepaid. While this has a negative effect (reduction in income) on the operating budget of the following year, the fact that it has occurred on a regular basis has resulted in minimal impact against forecast income. All scenarios assume that all grant funding will be received during the financial year it has been allocated.

SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031

---

### Interest Rates

Due to the ongoing economic uncertainty a conservative approach has been taken for the initial two years. For the following years, a slightly higher return has been assumed.

### External Borrowings

Council currently holds several external loans against water, wastewater, caravan park and building assets. At this stage only one future loan is forecast within the LTFP (Water Fund). Loans will be considered in future where required and beneficial to Council's cash flow management.

### Implications

The baseline scenario shows an operating deficit after capital grants for all 10 years. The importance of the implications of an ongoing operating deficit forecast in this scenario cannot be overstated. Over the next 10 years the general fund cumulative deficit \$40 million and the consolidated cumulative deficit reaches \$35 million. General fund cash holdings reduce by \$17 million, to well below the level of cash required for ongoing operations. It will also result in deteriorating infrastructure assets due to the inability to fund required renewals. This scenario fails to meet the key principle of financial sustainability to achieve a balanced result.

Council's sustainability cannot be maintained if grant funding reduces. Over the longer term, as assets which are currently in good condition deteriorate, Council will need to increase its investment in replacements and to do so, it will need to draw on its operating income and its reserves unless additional grant funding can be sourced. The baseline scenario shows no room to achieve this.

Without taking measures to increase revenue and decrease expenditure, Council will not be able to afford the provision of the level of services and infrastructure it currently provides to the community. Such a course of action will also fail to meet the key principle of financial sustainability regarding intergenerational equity where Council is unable to maintain its infrastructure assets as required.







SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031



Consolidated Income Statement (General + Water + Wastewater Funds)

Baseline Scenario

Consolidated Income Statement table with columns for years 2021/22 to 2030/31 and rows for Income (Rates, Levies & Annual Charges, etc.), Expenses (Employee Benefits, etc.), and Operating Result.

Consolidated Balance Sheet

Consolidated Balance Sheet table with columns for years 2021/22 to 2030/31 and rows for Current Assets (Cash and equivalents, etc.), Non Current Assets (Infrastructure, etc.), Current Liabilities, Non Current Liabilities, and Equity.

Consolidated Cash Flow

Consolidated Cash Flow table with columns for years 2021/22 to 2030/31 and rows for Cash Flows from Operating Activities, Investing Activities, and Financing Activities.

## 6. SRV Scenario

Based on feedback received from the community as part of the Service Level Review and Rates Harmonisation, Council does not believe that the community is willing to accept reduced service levels or declining infrastructure without considerable community discussion and engagement.

The SRV scenario shows a path that allows Council to increase its revenues via increased rates and reduce its expenditure through efficiency gains and cost savings with moderate adjustments to service levels. It assumes that these shifts can be sustained in the long-term. Council's Road to Sustainability Plan outlines several actions Council is taking to achieve its objective of delivering sustainable best value to the community.

The SRV scenario represents Council's preferred long-term path to financial sustainability.

### Assumptions

The key assumptions contrasting to the baseline scenario are:

- Introduction of a permanent SRV under S508A of the *Local Government Act* of 25.44% over and above the IPART rate peg over two years which incurs an estimated \$125K implementation cost in 2021/22
- Increased income based on community acceptance of user-pay fees for Council services
- Slower increases to employee costs from lower-than-expected award increases, redeployment, and reductions
- Reduction in operational input costs due to efficiencies, savings from day-to-day operations and moderate adjustments to service levels
- Asset renewals and maintenance at level required to avoid infrastructure renewal backlogs and deteriorating assets

### Implications

The SRV scenario shows a return to operating profits for the general fund from year 7. It allows Council to increase its asset replacement reserves to make sure services can be delivered into the future. The SRV scenario meets all key principles of sound financial management. It returns operations to a surplus in the long-term, invests responsibly in infrastructure and avoids burdening future generations with excessive costs or extensive reductions to services.

However, while this scenario shows reduced reliance on external grant funding, Council continues to rely on external funding for infrastructure renewals. Additional external funding of approximately \$4 million over the next 10 years will be required to fully fund required renewals in the general fund. Council considers this level of additional funding achievable.







## 7. *Optimistic Scenario*

The optimistic scenario shows the implications of a path that allows Council to increase its revenues from various sources and gain efficiencies and cost savings at a better-than-expected rate.

### Assumptions

The key assumptions contrasting to the SRV scenario are:

- Reduced SRV of 10% only
- Continued ability to secure commercial works at higher level
- Increased income based on extended user-pays fees for Council services
- Increased investment returns in favourable economic environment
- State and Federal Government provide increased operational support to offset recent and ongoing cost-shifting
- Dividend from the water and sewer funds to the general fund
- Considerably slower increases to employee costs achieved by lower-than-expected award increases, postponement of superannuation changes, redeployment and reductions following service level adjustments
- Higher than expected reduction for operational input due to new efficiencies, for example from regional purchasing contracts, and service level reductions
- Fully funded infrastructure renewal and maintenance
- Ability to moderately upgrade infrastructure and source additional external funding

### Implications

The optimistic scenario shows a balanced result for the general fund over the 10-year forecast with the consolidated result returning to profitable levels in year 5. It allows Council to continually upgrade assets, fully fund asset renewals and maintenance, and increase asset replacement reserves to make sure services can be delivered at levels expected by the community into the future. It uses a reduced SRV with the possibility of phasing it out towards the end of the forecast period.

The optimistic scenario meets all key principles of sound financial management. However, it is not considered achievable and is based on tenuous assumptions, particularly the ability of other levels of government to increase support to local government from what is currently provided. It is also unlikely that the community will accept service rationalisations and service level reductions to the degree required to achieve this scenario.





## 8. Sensitivity Analysis

Both the baseline and SRV scenarios have been evaluated in relation to their sensitivity to changes in the assumptions. The optimistic scenario has not been sensitivity tested as it is not considered to be the community preference or achievable at this stage.

### Employee Costs

Council's ability to contain rises in employee costs has a major impact on future performance. A key issue is the level of capitalisation (allocating employees to capital works programs rather than operational) and the level of resourcing required for civil contracting activities.

Future increases (indexation) of employee costs due to award increases and progression of staff through the salary system are critical components of the modelling. Employee costs increasing by an average of 1% higher than the assumed rate results in an additional \$9 million and \$8 million to employee costs by the end of the 10-year period for the baseline and SRV scenario respectively.

### Interest Rates

Council has very low levels of borrowings and the existing loans are at fixed rates with interest payments decreasing over time. However, the interest received on investments has an impact on operating results. Further, utilising reserves for major capital investments decreases the available investment assets from which interest is received.

### Capital Works Programs

A significant increase in Council's capital works programs over what is proposed in the updated LTFP will reduce reserves and cash holdings. If Council embarked on adding new capital projects resulting in additional assets, not only would the reserves decrease, but operational costs would increase both for maintenance and depreciation.

### Grant Programs

Council relies heavily on external funding for its operations and capital works renewal program. If such grants were reduced or discontinued, Council would have to generate considerably more revenues from other sources. It has been assumed that Government funding remains at current levels, however, should such funding decrease because of current economic stimulus spending, Council's operating result would significantly worsen.

### Rates Income

Rates Income is restricted to rate pegging as set each financial year by the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). If rate pegging was abolished, Council would have greater flexibility to achieve financial sustainability.

### Cost Shifting

Over the years other levels of government have shifted costs associated, among other, with emergency services, weed management, food safety regulation, road safety programs and fire and emergency services levy to local government without funding. It is likely that this trend will continue and negatively affect Council's operating results.

### Energy Costs

Increased energy costs are occurring with Council continually looking at ways to minimise future costs. Solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling for Council buildings have resulted in savings with further projects being investigated.

---

SNOWY VALLEYS COUNCIL – UPDATED LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 - 2031

---

#### Insurance and Workers Compensation

Forecasting insurance premiums is difficult. Considerable increases in insurance premiums are possible, influenced by several issues, particularly the occurrence of natural disasters, economic uncertainty and climate change.

Workers' compensation premiums can increase at any time following a rise in claims or with major open cases. Council's safety, risk & quality committee is committed to reducing premiums and claims through increased risk mitigation, awareness and workplace safety programs.

#### Superannuation

Council is responsible to fund investment shortfalls in the defined benefits member scheme until all staff in the scheme have retired. Council has been advised to expect to be called upon to fund investment shortfalls in this scheme due to the current economic environment. However, no additional allowance has been made in the financial forecast at this stage as the extend of the funding requirement is unclear.

## 9. Indicators

Council's key objectives include the achievement of an operating surplus over the planning cycle and adequate funding of asset renewals. This is achieved under the SRV Scenario. Other considerations include the achievement of industry benchmarks that Council must report on as part of its annual report.

The following ratios are anticipated to occur under the SRV scenario (comment included where divergent for the baseline scenario):

### Operating Performance Ratio – Benchmark > 0%

This ratio measures financial sustainability and indicates Council's capacity to meet its ongoing expenditure by comparing revenues with operating expenses (excluding capital grants and contributions). In the SRV scenario, Council reaches the benchmark by 2025/26. Under the baseline scenario, Council is unable to reach this benchmark.

### Own Source Revenue – Benchmark > 60%

This ratio indicates Council's ability to control its own operating performance and financial sustainability. It compares operating revenues gained from sources other than grants and contributions to its total operating revenues. Council meets this benchmark in 9 out of 10 years.

### Unrestricted Current Ratio – Benchmark >1.5

This ratio indicates Council's ability to meet short term obligations as they fall due. Council meets this ratio throughout the period of the LTFP. However, in the baseline scenario, Council assets quickly deplete, and Council is unable to meet this ratio from about 2025/26.

### Debt Service Cover Ratio – Benchmark >2

This ratio indicates the proportion of operating revenues being utilised for interest and principal repayments on loans. Council is well within the benchmark over the entire period of the LTFP.

### Rates and Annual Charges Outstanding – Benchmark <10%

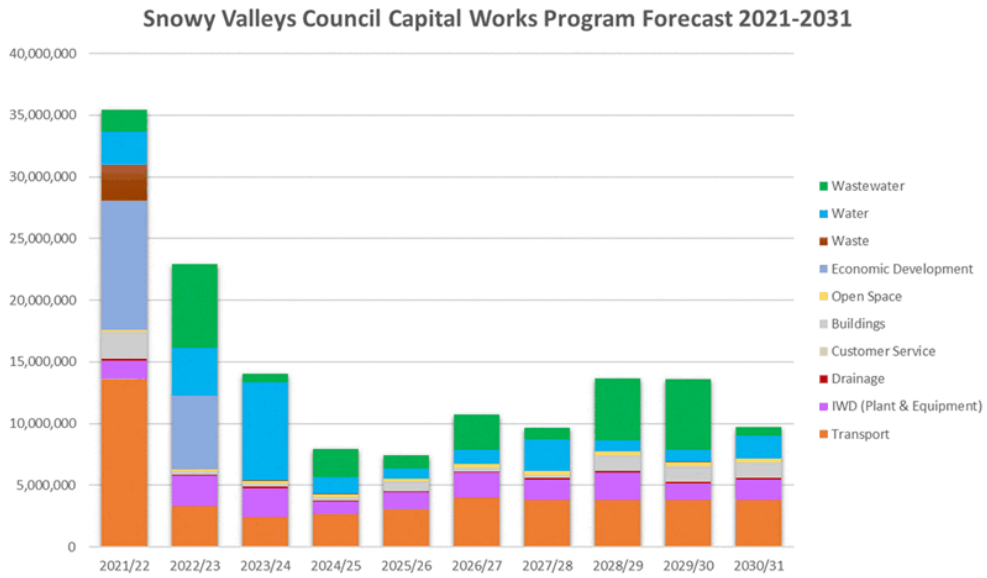
This ratio assesses the impact of uncollected rates and charges on liquidity and the adequacy of recovery efforts. It is expected to be achieved over the entire period of the LTFP. However, economic factors may influence rates and charges collection in the earlier years of the forecast.

### Cash Expenses Cover Ratio – Benchmark >3 months

This ratio indicates Council's liquidity. It determines the number of months a Council can continue paying for its immediate expenses without additional cash flow. The ratio is expected to be achieved over the period of the LTFP. But under the baseline scenario Council is unable to meet this ratio from year 2027/28.

### 10. Capital Works Program

The capital works program for 2021/22 is included in the operational plan and budget paper. The chart below shows the planned capital expenditure over the next ten years.



Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan contains further information on Council's asset portfolio.