

Our Ref:
File:

Contact Officer:
Simon Osborne
Tel 9205 5398

Dear

**Re: Notice of Intention to Declare a Special Charge Scheme 2018 to 2024
Bridge Road**

Property Address: Insert
Proposed Amount Payable per Year – insert relevant amount

As you are probably aware, the current Special Charge Scheme for the Bridge Road precinct expires on 30 September, 2018. The Bridge Road Mainstreet Inc. (**BRMS** or **Association**) has formally requested that Council renew the current Special Charge for a further six year period, commencing on 1 October 2018. Council has considered, and agrees, with the request from BRMS.

BRMS, in partnership with Council, has undertaken a review of their current program to identify future activities that will guide the expenditure of any future Special Charge funds for Bridge Road. This has included:

- Trader association committee meetings;
- Meetings with individual businesses;
- A survey distributed to all businesses with a summary of achievements;
- Information received via social and other forms of digital media; and
- Research and data analysis.

The information obtained by the Association has been used to assist in the development of a Draft Business Plan for the Bridge Road precinct. Based on the review, consultation and initial indication of support, Council resolved, on 5 June 2018, of its intention to declare a Special Charge for the Bridge Road shopping precinct in accordance with Section 163 of the *Local Government Act 1989 (Act)*. A copy of the Council report in relation to this matter can be viewed on Council's website at www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/council-information.

The Special Charge: An investment fund to facilitate effective business and marketing activities

The re-establishment of the Special Charge, raising approximately \$157,000 per annum over the next six years, will be a partnership between the business operators, property owners and Council. The partnership will proactively encourage commerce and business activity within the Bridge Road shopping precinct. Council considers that this will enable the entire shopping precinct to be strongly positioned through joint promotion, marketing and business development activities. A Special Charge can, and it is considered will, play a critical role in helping to fund these activities and initiatives.

What is the proposed amount per property?

The key components of the scheme as proposed by BRMS would apply as follows:

- (a) The Special Charge would apply to properties from:

- (i) Bridge Road, 2 to 662 inclusive;
 - (ii) Church Street, 196 to 280 inclusive;
 - (iii) Lennox Street, 172 to 195 inclusive;
 - (iv) Waltham Street, 2a; and
 - (v) Burnley Street, 174.
- (b) The Special Charge would apply differentially as follows:
- (i) \$300 per annum per ground floor property in Bridge Road;
 - (ii) \$200 per annum for other than ground floor properties in Bridge Road; and
 - (iii) \$100 per annum for properties located in streets other than Bridge Road.
- (c) It is expected that such a Scheme would raise \$157,000 per annum.
- (d) The Special Charge would be introduced for a period of 6 years and would raise a total amount of \$942,000

It is considered that a 'differential' Special Charge would provide for a fairer and more reasonable distribution of the levy and the nature and extent of direct and indirect special benefit.

In establishing the criteria as the basis for the declaration of the Special Charge, the Council considers the appropriate criteria to be:

“ownership or occupation of rateable land that is used, or reasonably capable of being used for commercial, retail or professional purposes”.

The Council believes that the property which you own or occupy (together with all of the other properties and businesses included in the Scheme) will derive a 'special benefit' from the expenditure of the Special Charge funds.

If Council proceeds to declare the Special Charge, each person liable to pay the Special Charge will receive a levy notice to pay the amount of the Special Charge each year over a period of six years. This is in addition to the normal Council General Rates and Charges.

What will the money be spent on?

The expenditure of the proceeds of the Special Charge will be guided by the Bridge Road Business Plan, which is currently in final draft format. The Business Plan identifies strategic directions for the entire precinct, and there is a range of marketing, promotion, events, business support and advocacy identified which include:

- Ongoing marketing, branding and promotion of the Bridge Road Precinct;
- Effective communication with all businesses and stakeholders;
- Supporting initiatives that influence the shopping environment;
- Advocating for improvements;
- Focus on digital marketing;
- Encouraging community involvement in the Bridge Road precinct; and

- Business development and support.

The Association has been appointed by Council to administer the proceeds of the Special Charge and Council requires the Association to have a high level of financial and management accountability. This will include requirements such as the submission of an annual budget at the beginning of each year, quarterly reports and an audited financial report at the conclusion of each year. Additionally, the Association will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Council to confirm that the Association will be acting:

- In an administrative capacity only on behalf of Council; and
- Only in accordance with the requirements and purposes for which the Special Charge Scheme has been declared.

Who will pay the Special Charge?

The owner of a property is primarily liable to pay the Special Charge. However, many landlords have leasing arrangements which allow the Special Charge to be passed on to the tenant (for example, if the tenant is responsible for all out-goings). The decision about who is ultimately liable to pay the Special Charge is a matter between the landlord and the tenant under the terms of any lease arrangements.

Council wants you to be fully informed

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the (as published) Public Notice of Intention to Declare the Special Charge that appeared in *"The Age"* on 12 June 2018. The Public Notice outlines the purposes for which the Special Charge is being raised, and the manner in which it will be collected. Furthermore, Council has written to all property owners and tenants in the Bridge Road precinct and has provided them with a copy of the Public Notice.

It is important that you tell Council how you feel about this proposal now

Council would like to hear from as many persons as possible in relation to this proposal, so that it is able to make an informed decision about whether or not to declare the Special Charge.

You can give your opinion to Council about the proposal by making a written submission under sections 163A and 223 of the Act and/or an objection in writing under section 163B of the Act in relation to the proposal.

You can make a written submission or objection to the Council

Please make your submission and/or objection in relation to the proposed declaration of Special Charge in writing and lodge it with the Council by **Monday 16 July 2018 at 5pm**. Submissions and/or objections must be in writing and addressed. They can be made by visiting www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/specialcharge or sent by mail to Simon Osborne, Senior Project Officer, Yarra City Council, PO Box 168 Richmond VIC 3121. Please note that a decision not to respond to this letter cannot be interpreted by Council as either an indication of support or objection to the proposal.

You can also make a verbal submission at a Council Meeting on 7 August 2018

Council will formally consider any written submissions and take into account any objections received at a meeting of Council to be held at the Richmond Town Hall

333 Bridge Road on **Tuesday, 7 August 2018**. If you lodge a written submission and request in that submission that you also wish to be heard in support of your written submission, you are entitled to speak on this item at the Council meeting. We ask that you kindly indicate on your submission whether you would like to speak to your written submission at the Council meeting.

Council will make a decision at its meeting on 21 August 2018

Following the consideration of any submissions and the taking into account of any objections, it is proposed that Council will decide whether or not to declare the Special Charge at its meeting on **21 August 2018**. You are welcome to attend this meeting and will be advised, in due course, of Council's decision.

Do you need more information?

Please contact Simon Osborne or a member of the Economic Development Unit on 9205 5398 for further information regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Osborne

Senior Projects Officer – Retail, Tourism and Marketing

Enc. Copy Public Notice