

SA GROWER

Growers fear outcome of rise in rates

BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON

HORTICULTURAL grower groups in the north of Adelaide have come out in opposition to a local council's proposal to lift rate charges for primary producers.

The City of Playford has presented three rate options for community consultation. A council statement said the goal was to stimulate job creation in response to a decline in manufacturing and increased financial pressures.

Among the options being considered are no change to the rates policy or a freeze on rates for commercial businesses for the next five years.

The contentious option includes a rate reduction for 66 per cent of residential ratepayers, 91pc of commercial properties and 31pc of vacant land properties, with an increase in rates for certain primary producers.

The council states 6.9pc of primary production properties would receive a reduction, while 50pc would have no change or a small increase. It claims only 1pc of producers would have more significant rate increases.

Ausveg SA state manager Jordan Brooke-Barnett said



Horticultural producers in the north of Adelaide are feeling pressure from a proposal by the City of Playford that could increase primary producers' rates.

the proposal would double or, in some cases, triple the rates paid by these producers.

He said the drive to increase commercial interest in the City of Playford should not come "off the back of primary producers".

"Horticulture is a really significant industry that is poised to provide significant jobs," he said. "This is an irresponsible proposal that is hanging above the industry."

HortEx executive officer Bryan Robertson said as manufacturing wound down, horticulture was already being "expected to do a lot of heavy lifting" and could

not "afford to wear such a heavy rate increase".

City of Playford mayor Glenn Docherty encouraged residents to read all the documents, consider the options and provide feedback before the May 23 deadline.

"At this stage it really is only a rating review and no decision has been made," he said. "Council will need to consider all the submissions it receives."

A public hearing will be held at the Council Chamber, Elizabeth, on May 23.

■ Need to know more?

Submissions can be made at playford.sa.gov.au