

City 'faces hard decisions'

Wodonga City Council would have to make some hard decisions in the coming weeks, the city's new Mayor, Cr Pam Stone, said yesterday.

"The council is going to have to look carefully at whether it can increase its rates, even in line with inflation," she said.

Cr Stone is Wodonga's first woman mayor.

She was elected on Monday after defeating the retiring mayor, Cr Les Boyes.

Cr Boyes was later elected Deputy Mayor, defeating Cr Barry Rogers for the position.

Cr Stone paid tribute to Cr Boyes for his work as mayor during the past 12 months.

"He carried out his duties with a nice, quiet dignity and he was always accessible to us," she said.

Cr Stone said yesterday that the council faced difficult decisions regarding rates because of the problems confronting the rural community and difficult financial times facing many urban families.

"We will have to look at it very carefully," she said.

"We want to keep our programs going, but we also have to remember the money comes from someone's pocket.

"If we do increase the rate it has to be the absolute minimum because of the rural situation, unemployment and the increasing cost of living.

"We are going to have to make some hard decisions because you can only spend so much."

Cr Stone said she was concerned about the housing situation in Wodonga and intended to keep working to try to ease the problem.

It was everyone's fundamental right to have a roof over their head.

"It worries me that housing for low income families has

become welfare housing and that has forced low income families onto the open rental market, which they cannot afford," Cr Stone said.

The council was still trying to get a deputation to the Housing Minister, Mr Frank Wilkes, to discuss the situation.

Cr Stone, a member of the council for nine years, first stood for mayor in 1983.

Her late husband, Les Stone, was the city's first mayor.

The mayoral allowance was set at \$5500.



● Cr Stone in her mayoral robes, with a photograph of her husband in the background. Cr Les Stone was elected the city's first mayor in 1973. Cr Stone said she was concerned at the increasing rate burden.