



Responsible budget in difficult times

A construction industry stimulus package is one of the highlights in this year's Council Budget, which also delivers no increase in the general rate.

Bundaberg Region Mayor Jack Dempsey said it's a "responsible budget in difficult times".

Despite taking a \$2.8 million hit in lost revenue thanks to COVID-19, Mayor Dempsey said the Budget offers relief to struggling households and economic stimulus without increasing debt.

"There's an \$83 million capital works program to create jobs and improve infrastructure," he said.

"There's support for the construction industry to power the engine of economic recovery.

"And there's a helping hand for sporting organisations to get back on their feet."

The Budget forecasts a \$5.26 million deficit due to COVID impacts.

"Unless there's a second wave, Council will return to a balanced budget in 2021-22 with no increase in loans," Mayor Dempsey said.

"This outcome has been achieved because Council prudently set aside funds in the past to meet challenges exactly like this."

Mayor Dempsey thanked the State Government for its support through COVID Works For Queensland \$7.1 million and the Federal Government for \$2.1 million in roads funding.

Some of the major capital projects in 2020-21 include:

- Gregory River water treatment plant \$12.6 million (completion of \$18 million project)
- Back Windermere Road \$2.6 million
- Bundaberg Recreation Precinct \$3.32 million
- Branyan Dr/Avoca Rd/Dittman Rd traffic lights and upgrade \$1.28 million
- One Mile Creek Monduran Rd bridge replacement \$1.24 million
- Hamanns Road, Apple Tree Creek, crossing upgrade \$1.285 million
- Batchlers Road, Gooburrum, upgrade \$850,000
- Coonarr Beach Road sealing \$640,000
- Elliott Heads Holiday Park upgrades \$620,000

Council has previously announced COVID relief measures including the suspension of dog registration fees and support for sporting groups.

"Today I'm pleased to announce a multi-million package called Building Bundaberg Region," Mayor Dempsey said.

"It delivers a range of fee waivers and incentives to encourage development including permanent reductions to infrastructure charges for sectors including rural industries and nature-based tourism."



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Finance portfolio spokesman Cr Steve Cooper said most ratepayers will see no increase in their rates for 2020-21.

Cr Cooper said there's no rise in general rates before adjustments to offset the removal of the early payment discount.

"For the vast majority of ratepayers there won't be a rate increase," he said.

"Some 42,037 ratepayers will see no change or a reduction in the general rate.

"There's also zero increase in water access and consumption charges."

The pensioner discount remains at \$165, which benefits 10,166 ratepayers at a cost of \$1.7 million.

"As a pandemic relief measure, Council has extended the period before interest penalties apply until 1 January 2021, effectively giving people four months to pay," Cr Cooper said.

Ends

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