



## No rate increase for most ratepayers

The overwhelming majority of Bundaberg Regional Council ratepayers will see no increase in their rates for 2020-21.

Finance portfolio spokesman Steve Cooper said councillors had adopted a “responsible budget for difficult times” which includes no rise in general rates before adjustments to offset the removal of the early payment discount.

Cr Cooper said the rate in the dollar would reduce by the amount previously provided through the early-payment discount (9.135 per cent).

“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.”

Cr Cooper said Council recognised that many ratepayers had been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown, especially small business operators and landlords.

“Council has adopted a responsible budget for difficult times which provides relief and stimulus while maintaining service levels and investing in community infrastructure,” he said.

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

“Fee increases in this budget have been kept at the minimum level to cover the cost of providing services.”

There’s a two per cent increase for waste collection charges (\$7) and a 2.5 per cent increase for sewerage connections (\$19 per pedestal).

“We’ve removed the early-payment discount, which was \$112 for the average residential ratepayer,” Cr Cooper said.

“This discount applied if payment was made within 35 days of the rate notices being issued.

“Councillors felt it was inequitable because people who couldn’t afford to pay were missing out.

“Also, pensioners were receiving less discount as the Council pension rebate was deducted from the general rate before the discount was applied.”

Cr Cooper said the due date for rates would be within 35 days of notices being issued.

“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,” he said.

“Those who can’t pay by the due date should contact Council to enter into a payment arrangement.



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"If the arrangement to pay is completed by 31 December 2020 no penalty interest changes will apply."

Cr Cooper said the Budget forecasts a 3.08 per cent increase in total rate revenue, mostly in the agricultural sector because of higher valuations.

Earlier this year, Valuer-General Neil Bray said the overall rural land value had increased significantly since the last valuation due to a strong demand for both small and larger size farming properties. Mr Bray said the ongoing demand for horticultural land suitable for small crops and tree crops was a significant factor in the local market.

Of the 1797 farming properties, only about 50 made objections to the Valuer-General.

## **2020-21 BUDGET OPERATING RESULT**

Debt remains at \$77.5 million. No new loans proposed.

Operating revenue \$194 million

Operating expenses \$199 million

\$5,258,397 deficit

Ends

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