



Mayor's message

The 2021-22 Council Budget marks a financial turning point in the recovery from a global pandemic which last year cast a dark cloud over our lives and futures.

Although COVID-19 remains an active threat, Queensland has been one of the most successful places in the world at subduing the coronavirus.

I take this opportunity to thank our public health officials and frontline emergency workers for their outstanding efforts to keep us all safe.

The Bundaberg Region community responded magnificently. Our fantastic people followed public health directions and generously supported neighbours who needed assistance. Thank you everybody.

The new normal means today we can live in relative safety, travel more confidently in our own state and most parts of Australia, and plan ahead with greater certainty.

Council spent more than \$2 million on COVID relief measures including community sporting grants and fee waivers. We also had lower revenue from the airport and venues, and extra costs for cleaning and COVID compliance.

It's a credit to everyone that we're now forecasting a balanced budget in the 2021-22 financial year.

This is a responsible budget which puts Council and the community back on track for recovery.

Our capital works program is targeted to achieve the best value for the greatest community benefit in circumstances where builders and tradies are flat out.

There's some irony that interest rates are at record low levels but the capacity to build is being stifled by record high demand for construction workers and materials.

The good news is that Council is taking the plunge to build a new regional aquatic centre in Bundaberg.

During many years in public office, thousands of people have told me they want a new state-of-the-art pool for health and wellbeing.

It's a genuine pleasure for me and my fellow councillors that we're going to deliver this important generational project over the next few years.

The regional aquatic centre will benefit all members of our community, including the disadvantaged and people with disabilities.

We're also starting work on the Moore Park Beach Master Plan following months of community consultation.

Building a new surf club at Moore Park Beach will be the catalyst for other works to enhance the amenity of this beautiful area.

Divisional councillor Jason Bartels and I worked hard over several years to see this become a reality, and along with our fellow councillors we're pleased to deliver.

At Neilson Park Beach I'm pleased the Budget delivers improved water access for people with disabilities.

At South Kolan we're improving road safety along an important school bus route.

At Woodgate Beach there will be upgrades to the local hall.

Completion of the new Gregory River water treatment plant will meet future development needs in Childers and Woodgate for many years to come.

Likewise, the budget commits to starting an upgrade of the Kalkie water treatment plant, which services our growing coastal areas.

Councillors are always focused on minimising costs for residents and ratepayers.

It's a challenge to balance community expectations with people's capacity to afford the rates and charges that are required to deliver services and projects.

I believe we achieved the right balance this year with a general rates increase close to CPI.

We've consolidated two previous charges into a single levy which shares the burden of public safety across everyone in the community. We all benefit from the hard work of our Rural Fire volunteers, surf lifesavers and SES.

For an average residential ratepayer, there will be a \$2.47 weekly increase in rates and charges including water, sewerage and waste. The average agricultural landowner will pay an extra \$2.41 per week.

Thank you to all Councillors, the executive team and staff for your efforts in putting this budget together.

I look forward to working with everyone to continue building Australia's best regional community.

Jack Dempsey

Mayor, Bundaberg Regional Council