



Budget in uncertain times to firm foundations

Bundaberg Regional Council's 2026–2027 budget has balanced the impacts of cost increases and market volatility with prudent spending, firming the foundations of the region's financial security.

Budget highlights:

- This budget is projecting an \$8.4 million surplus. These funds are below the target Council needs to achieve to make principal debt repayments, plan for growth and respond to unforeseen circumstances.
- For an Urban Residential ratepayer, the general rate will increase by 8.28% which is equivalent to about \$2.40 a week.
- To achieve financial sustainability immediately Council would have had to introduce a minimum general rates increase of at least 13.2% this year however Council knew this would be an unfair burden on ratepayers.

Following significant changes ahead of its 2025 – 2026 budget, which included an organisational restructure, operational efficiencies and a rates review, Council is continuing its positive financial turnaround.

The Long Term Financial Plan confirms that, despite facing more than a decade of deficits just two years ago, the organisation is projecting surpluses for the next eight years before meeting the surplus target it needs by 2035.

Finance portfolio spokesperson Cr Deb Keslake said this continued improvement in the region's financial security was a positive result however it was crucial that Council remained on course.

"We've made positive progress in repairing our finances and we'll keep building for the future," Cr Deb Keslake said.

"While we are in a position where we're making difficult decisions today, we're firming the foundations for tomorrow to secure our region's future."

In the 2026 – 2027 budget Council is projecting an almost \$8.4 million surplus, however this result remains below the organisation's goal to achieve a 5% surplus of recurrent expenditure.

Budget 2026–27



“It’s important that the community understand that a surplus isn’t just ‘money in the bank,’” Cr Keslake explained.

“These are critical funds which ensure we can make our principal debt repayments, plan for growth through the renewal and upgrade of our critical infrastructure and respond to unforeseen circumstances.

“During the current market uncertainty caused by global conflicts and supply chain issues, which have led to an average of 30% cost increases in many of the sectors that impact Council, having this additional capacity becomes even more important.

“While it is a positive result to achieve a surplus, having this surplus sitting below our target is also evidence that we need to continue to implement strategies to achieve financial security.”

Cr Keslake said Council understood that residents were also facing cost of living impacts.

“We know many locals are doing it tough which is why our rating strategy focuses on ensuring general rates are applied fairly and equitably across all categories.

“As a result the general rates for people’s homes have been kept as low as possible.

“For an Urban Residential ratepayer, the general rate will increase by 8.28% which is equivalent to about \$2.40 a week.

“If we were to return our organisation to full financial sustainability immediately, we could have been looking at a minimum general rates increase of at least 13.2%.

“We know many residents are already doing it tough so that simply was not an option.

“Instead, we are taking a slow and steady approach in a very uncertain market ensuring we remain financially responsible while still supporting our community.

“This is why we are prepared to focus on achieving the surplus we need in the long term.”

Cr Keslake said overall, when including charges for utility costs including waste, water and wastewater, the average urban residential ratepayer would see an increase of \$4.29 per week, which was a slightly lower increase than last year.

Council’s 2026 – 2027 budget document and associated resources can be found [here](#).

There are budget education resources available on [this page](#) which further explain budget processes and concepts, including the Long Term Financial Plan and maintaining a surplus.