

Media Release

16 July 2024

Budget confirms Council's commitment to community and service delivery

Gladstone Regional Council has adopted its 2024/25 Operational Plan and Budget centred around increased service levels and a renewed focus on community pride.

Built upon the solid foundation of Council's previous term, this year's Budget aims to be responsive to community needs, responsible in how we manage the community's finances and one that places further emphasis on core service delivery.

Council's \$349M Budget includes a \$107M Capital Works program that will fund projects related to roads and drainage, water and wastewater, parks, footpaths, sport and recreation.

Gladstone Region Mayor Matt Burnett said the 2024/25 Budget strikes the right balance between delivering value for the community now, but with an eye on the future.

"Council has listened to the community and heard very clearly that increased focus is needed on our parks, drainage areas and roads," Mayor Burnett said.

"As a result, we have increased funding in these areas by \$1.4M across the entire region.

"We have also invested in civic pride initiatives totalling \$600,000 ranging from beautification projects, major event attraction, increased investment in biosecurity and much more.

"This year we have dedicated around 80 per cent of our budget to delivering the fundamental things we rely on each day like roads, bridges, water, waste and sewerage, and our fantastic outdoor areas.

"By having an increased focus on these core services, we are playing our part in making our communities a fantastic place to live, work and play."

Mayor Burnett added that continued investment in our economic future ensures the region is well positioned to capitalise on the emerging industries and opportunities within the Gladstone State Development Area (GSDA).

"This Budget supports Council's responsibilities in guiding our region through Gladstone's economic transition from the industrial capital of Queensland to the renewable energy superpower of Australia," he said.

"We are ensuring our infrastructure and services are appropriately planned and delivered so our essential services remain fit for purpose and we appropriately enable infrastructure to support growth projects in the GSDA."

Complementing a reinvigorated focus on delivering for the community is Council's 2024/25 Budget theme – *Proudly playing our part*.

This theme relates to our success being driven from the inside out. It acknowledges that when we work together, we unlock knowledge and strengthen our understanding of the role we all play in achieving great outcomes for both Council and our community.

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Council's Key Services investment in 2024/25 includes (but not limited to):

- \$103.9M on Roads, Bridges, Footpaths and Drainage
- \$56.2M on Sewerage Services
- \$55.9M on Water Services
- \$27.0M on Waste Services
- \$24.6M on Parks and Environment
- \$9.2M on Arts, Culture and Entertainment
- \$6.0M on Community Development and Support.

The 2024/25 Capital Works expenditure of \$107M includes (but not limited to):

- \$40.4M for Capital Roads and Drainage Projects
- \$37.5M for upgrades to Water and Wastewater (Sewerage) Infrastructure
- \$6.2M for Bridge Replacements and Upgrades
- \$5.9M for Capital Parks, Sport and Recreation Projects
- \$4.1M for Footpath and Cycleway Upgrades.

Mayor Burnett said Council's \$107M Capital Works program has been supported by both the State and Federal Governments to the value of \$50M.

"This demonstrates the continued effectiveness of Council's strategy to seek specific funding for our capital project expenditure," he said.

"The continued investment by other tiers of government during 2024/25 will contribute to the planned delivery of key capital projects including \$21.5M in restoration of damaged road infrastructure across the region, \$11.9M for Lowmead Road safety and sealing upgrades and \$1.6M for the Agnes Water Skate Park."

Mayor Burnett said this year's Budget was not without its challenges as Council – and the entire nation – continue to tackle cost pressures associated with inflation.

"Not only are we facing rising costs due to inflation, we are also seeing asset pressures, particularly in our waste, water and sewerage networks, due to the combined effects of regulatory and environment changes and unit price increases," he said.

"We recognise the challenging environment that we are operating in and have delivered a Budget that is responsible and sustainable for the long term."

To achieve sustainability, Council has once again been able to reduce its interest-bearing debt.

"I am proud to declare that for the 12th consecutive year we have no new borrowings," Mayor Burnett said.

"Our focus on reducing existing debt will see interest bearing debt decrease to \$80.7M by June 2025, a reduction of \$6.2M.

"This continued reduction of debt across multiple Council terms represents responsible financial management on behalf of the region's ratepayers."

Rates for the average residential ratepayer will rise by 4.2 per cent in 2024/25.

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Mayor Burnett said that while there have been no property revaluations during the past year, Council has undertaken a holistic review of its rating structure.

“This review of the general rate has been done to make sure the rating system is split between properties in an equitable manner,” he said.

“To do this, we have reset all categories with particular focus on residential categories by implementing five levels of valuation banding, along with a review of the alignment of our higher density residential categories.”

Meanwhile, commercial and light industrial land uses will see a 4.9 per cent increase in the general rate, with major industrial land uses seeing a 7 per cent increase.

Mayor Burnett said the costs associated for waste disposal, transfer station operation and recycling have had significant cost pressures applied during recent years.

“As a result, it has been necessary to increase service charges by 8.2 per cent, which is \$5.76 per day for collective utility charges,” he said.

“We are continuing to work collaboratively with our neighbours and stakeholders within the region to find long term solutions that deliver on minimising our waste to landfill and in turn minimise waste costs for ratepayers.”

Mayor Burnett said Council’s water networks have also come under increasing cost pressure with material and asset costs increasing at a rate well beyond CPI in our network operations.

“Due to this the base network access costs for water will increase by \$50 per annum in the Lake Awoonga scheme and \$60 per annum in the Agnes Water, Miriam Vale and Bororen schemes,” he said.

Council will continue to support our pensioners in the best way we can by offering eligible pensioners a remission of \$320 per annum, an increase of \$10 from last year, in addition to the State Government pensioner concession of \$200.

“Overall, Council’s 2024/25 Operational Plan and Budget aims to be responsive to our community’s needs with a deliberate focus on our core services,” Mayor Burnett said.

“We know the Gladstone Region's future is bright and we look forward to proudly playing our part in driving our region forward with continued success for the year ahead.”

Visit www.gladstone.qld.gov.au/budget to learn more about Council’s 2024/25 Operational Plan and Budget.

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