

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

11 July 2024



### **North Burnett Regional Council 2024-25 Budget Announcement**

North Burnett Regional Council adopted its annual budget for the 2024-25 financial year at its budget meeting held on Wednesday, 10 July 2024, marking it the first of the new council term following the local government elections in March.

The \$62 million 2024-25 budget seeks to achieve a balance between prioritising community needs and expectations while progressively working towards securing the long-term financial sustainability of your Council.

North Burnett Regional Council Mayor, Les Hotz, noted that the budget's development has not been without its challenges.

"I commend my fellow councillors for their contribution to the development of the budget, particularly those who are new at the table," Mayor Hotz said.

"It is no easy task for a new councillor to contribute to formulating a new budget when they have only been in the job for a very short time, but the new councillors certainly rose to the challenge."

"Councillors were well supported and expressed thanks to Acting CEO Ms Anna Scott, Council staff, and recently onboarded Interim CEO Mr Craig Matherson for their hard work and dedication, with the whole Council working together to arrive at the budget and operational plan for the year ahead."

"Like many Australians, Council is also feeling the impacts of inflation, growing costs, and the impacts of global uncertainties on the cost and supply of goods and services."

"The reality is that the cost of delivering essential services is growing well in excess of inflation, and any cost reductions we achieve are quickly consumed by growing costs elsewhere."

"The costs of road material, fuel, insurance, electricity... it's all essential for service delivery by Council and it's all going up."

"We have had to make some difficult decisions to minimise service impacts and keep rate rises as low as possible."

Council's emphasis on building community trust, delivering essential services for our communities, and planning for the future is focused on positioning the region as a desirable place for families to live and for businesses to invest and expand.

Mayor Hotz emphasised Council's primary priorities are about maintaining essential services, addressing emerging issues, and planning for the future - while striving to keep rates as low as possible. This has been the yardstick against which all decisions in formulating the budget have been measured.

Following the adoption of the budget, Council will continue to seek opportunities for additional cost efficiencies, as well as continue to vigorously pursue grant funding opportunities that support Council to respond to the needs of our region, our residents, and local businesses.

"We have passed a general rate increase of 5%, recognising the pressures households in the region are facing – whilst also ensuring we can fund, as far as possible, the services that are priorities for our communities," Mayor Hotz said.

"We have heard reports of increases of 10% or more in surrounding areas, which reflects the cost challenges councils are facing."

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“We are investing in projects and initiatives that we believe will help us progress towards greater financial sustainability, complement service delivery, and improve efficiency,” Mayor Hotz said.

“We will be investing in technology to better support the delivery of services and to enable our staff to have the tools to do their job efficiently and effectively.”

Council will also be delivering a \$47 million capital works program, with external funding of around \$36 million, which will support considerable investments in roads and other essential infrastructure.

While the capital program is reflective of the economic times, some key infrastructure and service improvement projects in the 2024-25 budget include:

- \$21.8M for continued flood restoration works on impacted areas of the road network.
- \$7.7M for waste infrastructure and landfill capping.
- \$2.8M for the annual gravel resheet and patch program.
- \$1.5M for the annual road resealing program.
- \$1.1M in upgrades to sewerage treatment plants across the region.
- \$435K in pool improvements at various sites across the region.
- \$250K in community facility repairs and painting at various sites across the region.

Mayor Hotz emphasised that ensuring rural roads are well-maintained is a critical priority, as it helps to enhance community safety and connectivity across our region.

“Investing in the region’s road network is a priority for any local government, particularly for our council. Significant investment will continue in the 2024-25 year, with \$21.8 million in continuing flood restoration works and \$4.3 million allocated to resheet and reseal programs.”

“While our road network could always benefit from greater investment, Council has sought to prioritise projects to deliver within our means.”

Looking forward, Council has allocated funds for strategic projects aimed at driving service improvements, growth, and creating new opportunities. Mayor Hotz reaffirmed Council’s dedication to listening to community feedback, engaging with residents, and adjusting plans to best serve their needs.

“Councillors and staff hold the interests of our residents and ratepayers at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to work together with our communities to deliver a prosperous future for generations.”

“On behalf of Council, we extend a sincere thanks to the community for their support. Your continued trust and engagement are vital to our success. Together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant North Burnett,” Mayor Hotz said.