

MEDIA STATEMENT



25 June 2021

FY21/22 BUDGET ADOPTED

Cassowary Coast Regional Councillors today unanimously voted to adopt a budget that supported the Community's long term and immediate priorities.

Mayor Mark Nolan said that we are in unprecedented times and this is a budget designed for unprecedented times.

"A significant effort had been made to minimise this year's rate increase whilst presenting a realistic budget that ensured that Council could sustainably fund services, existing infrastructure and new facilities that have been identified as important to the community.

"In 2021, we see the continued impact and recovery efforts of the COVID-19 pandemic and Council has worked hard to retain a low rate increase that abuts CPI to reflect the pressure on individuals and families at this time."

Cassowary Coast Regional Council remains in a strong fiscal position, and in line with our financially sustainable approach, the budget provides for a total operating revenue of \$83.420M and operating expenses of \$83.408M and will deliver a small operating surplus of \$12K whilst sustaining a sound cash position.

Of the 1.98% percent average general rate increase for the coming financial year, this equates to 12 cents per day for the average household, excluding utility charges.

Council worked hard to support our community through the COVID-19 pandemic. We implemented a COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy and extended the discount period for the first rating period from 30 days to 60 days as well as discounting many fees and charges in 2020/2021.

Councillor Nolan said he was confident the budget balanced the community's expectations with achievable outcomes, in light of ongoing COVID-19 impacts.

"The budget reflects our commitment to achieving our Corporate Plan vision, which seeks to strike a balance which is central to our community's desire to see the whole of the Cassowary Coast Region as a place with increasing opportunities for residents to live and work, where the region's assets meet the community's needs, a place with healthier and more sustainable lifestyles, and a place that has a natural healthy environment.

"Council has considered how best to support residents, ratepayers and local businesses so as to remain economically resilient throughout the year ahead, with a continual focus on wellbeing, environmental and infrastructure outcomes.

Some of the key operational initiatives from the budget include:

- Planning Scheme Amendment.
- Local Champions Program.
- Events Placement Program.
- Dog Off-leash Zone – Feasibility Study.
- Nature Play workshop.
- Reconciliation Action Plan Event.
- Appointment of Business and Industry Liaison Coordinator.

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The development of the 2021/2022 Budget has followed the trend of recent years with the process again proving to be extremely challenging.

The budget seeks to strike an appropriate balance between maintaining Council's sound financial position, whilst not placing too heavy a burden on ratepayers through substantial rate increases.

Council has managed to achieve this by factoring in operational savings of \$950k designed to reduce insurance cost, rationalise underutilised or non-performing assets and continuing to review service delivery models.

The impact on the projected long term financial position is also an important consideration and Council has endeavoured to strike a suitable balance between the current financial challenges it faces and its long term financial sustainability.

Council for the first time engaged with the Community Consultative Group to seek feedback on Council's draft Services Catalogue and considered options available in achieving an optimal balance between the rating strategy and service delivery approaches.

The budget summary and budget documents will be available on Council's website on 25 June 2021 <https://bit.ly/3vOV2co> alternatively, interested parties can contact Council on 1300 763 903.

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