

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 11 JUNE 2018

2018/2019 budget to steer the growth of our region

Whitsunday Regional Council has unanimously adopted the 2018/2019 budget at a special meeting held today in Proserpine.

Mayor Willcox said that 'Growing our Region' is the primary focus of this year's budget as Council continues to build momentum and steer our region's economy and recovery forward.

"This Council is passionate in maintaining a consistent level of service for our residents but just as importantly, delivering major infrastructure projects to create jobs and help forge a bright future for the Whitsunday region.

"Council believes that providing residents with improved facilities and services will help us achieve our goal of a happy and thriving community.

"However, this Council is adamant that it will minimise the burden on our communities as much as possible through leveraging external funding opportunities and partnerships with the Federal and State Governments.

"Council and our residents are still in the process of rebuilding our region, including our Council's community assets, damaged by 2017's natural disaster.

"While we are supported in these endeavours by our state and federal governments, these activities do require significant investment of Council's own funds.

"On the other hand, your elected representatives fully understand that the residents of our region are still grappling with similar issues of their own, and therefore the acute need to limit any further financial strain of increased Council rates and charges."

Mayor Willcox confirmed that this year, there will be 0% increase in the total residential rates across the region.

"This means that for the third year running Council will be collecting exactly the same total rates from residents as the previous year; no more and no less," he said.

"Despite this, a few residential properties will see an increase in their general rates. While this can be for a variety of reasons, it is mostly because Council adopts a cap on the increase of general rates in any given year.

"Properties subject to the cap last year, which resulted in the property not charged the full extent of the rates that it would have otherwise been charged, will see an increase in their general rates.

"With costs rising across the board this has proven difficult, but every area of Council continues to work towards best practice in all of our operations."

Residents will continue to receive a 5% discount for the early payment of rates.

"Council has also maintained its concession for pensioners where their ability to pay is restricted by limited and/or fixed income," Mayor Willcox said.

"We recognise that certain types of pensioners have contributed rates over a period of time and should be afforded a concession. To address this situation Council has adopted a pensioner subsidy policy which grants pensioners a subsidy on identified rates and charges of 30% of rates up to a maximum of \$350."

Council will continue to roll out kerbside recycling, which was introduced in the first half of 2018.

“Recycled materials can be used to remake new products and have a positive effect on the environment by reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill,” he said.

“Without a recycling option we would shorten the life of our landfill sites.

“This would have an impact on ratepayers as each landfill cell costs more than \$1 million to construct. And importantly, land that can be used for landfill sites will become scarce in the future.

“We are diverting nearly 20% of wheelie bin waste from our landfills each week, which is fantastic.

“However, more than 30% of your bin contents are recyclable so we still have room for improvement.”

Mayor Willcox said from an organisational perspective, Council will continue to seek ways to improve operational efficiencies and create growth opportunities across all aspects of the region.

“We have already taken great steps in ‘Growing our Region’ in the 2017/2018 year and we will continue to build on that momentum to create an exciting future for our Whitsunday region.

Visit the Whitsunday Regional Council website www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au and our Facebook page for range of information and videos relating to the 2018/2019 Growing our Region budget.

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