

Essential services focus of 2020/21 Council budget

Delivering essential services for the community is the focus of the 2020-21 Whitsunday Regional Council Budget adopted unanimously at a special meeting in Bowen Council Chambers today.

Mayor Andrew Willcox presented his fifth budget as Mayor and first budget of the new Council.

“Throughout the COVID19 pandemic Council has been able to maintain essential services to our residents and this budget ensures that we will continue to deliver for our community,” Mayor Willcox said.

In my time as Mayor I have had the privilege of overseeing the Whitsundays recovery post TC Debbie in 2017 and I am ready for this next challenge of leading our community through the economic recovery, the social recovery and just as importantly, the physical and mental health and well-being of our residents.

“My Councillors have worked tirelessly to deliver a budget based on the prioritisation of essential services.

“It is also built on our core focus of delivering strong financial management, local jobs and the liveability and economic growth of our region,” he said.

“For the fifth consecutive year there will be no increase in the total general residential rates across the region.”

Mayor Willcox said thanks to Council’s prudent financial management Council they had also been able to achieve 0% general rate increase for most categories.

“This means that, despite five years of rising fuel, insurance and power costs and loss of income due to COVID-19, Council are virtually collecting virtually the same general rates in total from residential ratepayers as 2016.

“However, with maintaining essential services forming a key base of this year’s budget – there will be small increases in the charges for water, sewerage and waste services.

“Importantly, Council’s \$114M operating budget ensures we maintain sound financial management through a minor surplus of just over \$109,000,” he said.

“This Budget will see us deliver the final key recovery projects from 2017 Cyclone Debbie, including the opening of the new Proserpine Administration Building.

“The three most exciting major projects for 2020/21 will be commencing construction of Bowen’s Flagstaff Hill and the Proserpine Entertainment Centre and completion of the new Shute Harbour facility.

These major projects not only create jobs for locals as a priority but will also help forge a bright future for Our Whitsunday region.”

Media Release

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Mayor Willcox said Council welcomed the continuation of the State Government’s Works for Queensland funding which will see improvements to existing community infrastructure fast tracked into this budget.

“This funding ensures improvements to local buildings, parks and gardens, and community facilities,” he said.

“Importantly this is a back to basics budget that will see no new loans and a commitment to debt reduction.

“Almost \$5M has been allocated to reduce our current loans, meaning Council will end the next financial year with a debt of approximately \$79.7million and an asset base of \$1.2billion....in simple terms that compares to effectively owing \$80,000 on a \$1.2M home.

“These are unprecedented times and my Council has worked hard to ensure there are minimal impacts upon households across the region.

“Under my watch Council have practised responsible financial management by delivering balanced budgets, significantly increasing our asset base, introduced a focus on organisational reform and controlling our debt,” he said.

“We are the caretakers of an amazing and diverse part of the world and our community has historically shown amazing resilience to overcome setbacks.

My Council will continue to provide strong united leadership and I look forward to working with CEO Mr Rod Ferguson on delivering the 2020/21 Whitsunday Regional Council budget for our community.”

Visit the Whitsunday Regional Council website www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au and our Facebook page for range of information and videos relating to the 2020-21 WRC budget.

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