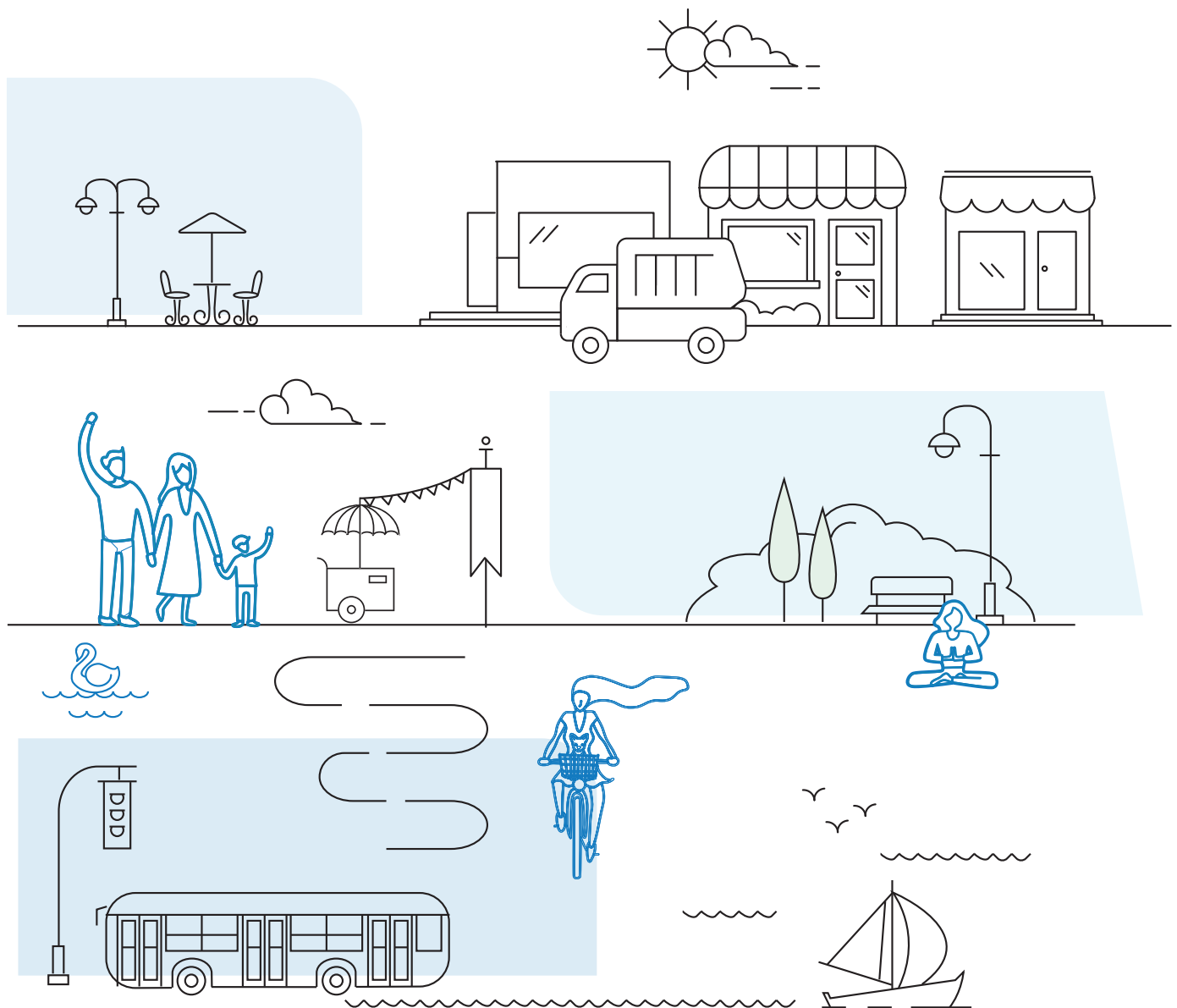


2025/26 BUDGET SUMMARY



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



On Wednesday 18th June we handed down the 2025–26 Whitsunday Regional Council Budget. This was my second as Mayor and I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we've been on over the past year.

Just under twelve months ago we delivered our first budget for the term, just weeks after the new Council was sworn in.

I think you'll agree that it was necessarily shaped by the organisation.

It was a starting point but not yet a statement of our long-term direction.

This year is different, we started early. This budget represents our own choices—debated and hard-fought through months of investigation, consultation, and a commitment to understanding and unpacking the real challenges and opportunities facing our organisation and our region.

It's a budget that seeks to strike a balance: between addressing legacy issues that started before this term, refocusing our services on core responsibilities, and laying the foundations for the critical infrastructure our growing region needs for the future.

You don't get told what you inherit, and as we've worked through the budget, we've started to understand a deeper issue in the financial structure of the organisation.

In recent years council has consistently delivered a "balanced" budget on paper, in reality we were starting to live beyond our means. Our general fund which derives its revenue from our core rates and charges had developed a structural deficit of around \$10 million per year.

This growing structural deficit has been cross-subsidised by our commercial arms, namely our water and sewerage businesses - funded by payers of water and sewerage utilities charges. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, and as a singular entity some may say to be expected but it highlighted an ideological problem:

We were continuing to deliver a wide and growing range

of services - services that our community has come to expect but without the financial headroom needed to invest back into our core infrastructure to sustain our region long-term.

At the same time, we've been navigating the fallout from significant property revaluations brought down last year, rising inflation, and a cost-of-living crisis. Council is not immune to these. Core costs from road materials to waste collection to insurance have risen steeply across the board.

And let's not forget about our other levels of government. It should be well known in the community that local governments receive 3 cents in every dollar in the total pool of taxation revenue collected nationally with the remainder going to the state and federal governments. We maintain a large percentage of community infrastructure with very little in the scheme of things if that's not enough the financial assistance grants we receive from them to support service delivery and roads are going down, this year by an order of \$779,000 or 12%. That's money taken from our community to be allocated somewhere else, yet we are continued to be asked to provide millions of dollars in services through cost-shifting into areas like public safety, disaster response, natural resource management and welfare. If local governments are to remain sustainable, something has to change.

Like many regional Councils, our existing rating structure has served us for many years. But as our region has grown and changed with more diverse land use, shifting property values and increasing demand for services—it's become clear that the time is right to review and refine the way we fund our services.

To address this, late last year we initiated a full Rating System Review, bringing in independent experts (AEC) to help us undertake major reform our general rating model.

Our goals were clear: equity, simplicity, and sustainability and increase the emphasis on user pays where a user directly benefits from a service.

All Councillors participated and had ample opportunity to provide their feedback in this journey and the result is a fairer, more modern rating system designed to better reflect how our community has changed and ensure that everyone contributes their fair share. Whenever you make a change to the system some rates will go up and some rates will go down as we see with this new model.

Our residential ratepayers make up 87% of our rate base and for residential owner-occupiers, the average general rates increase is 2%, with utility charges—covering water, sewerage, and waste, increasing by around 5%. All up, the average residential household with waste collection will pay \$2.92 more per week.

For general commercial and industrial ratepayers, it's a bigger shift this includes an average increase of around 21% - roughly \$14 a week. That's not a figure we arrived at lightly. But for too long, commercial rates have failed to keep pace with property values and service demands. Likewise large ratepayers in the Resource and Energy sectors will see a significant shift under the new model ensuring they pay their fair share in our community.

As part of our financial reform, we're also advancing the transition of many Council fees and charges to a user-pays model—ensuring the full cost of services like waste disposal, development inspections, and facility hire is borne by those who use them, not the general ratepayer base.

This approach improves transparency, reduces cross-subsidisation and supports long-term financial sustainability so we can continue delivering high-quality services without compromising our future.

In trying to avoid sharp rises in the past, we ended up with an imbalance. This year's budget begins the process of correcting that helps lay a more equitable foundation going forward, where everyone is contributing fairly to the services and infrastructure that support our region's growth and prosperity.

This budget isn't just about revenue. It's also about how we spend smarter and deliver better.

Over the past year, we've reviewed our operational services function by function—looking for ways to streamline, create efficiency, and reduce duplication.

As a result, we've identified and enacted approximately \$3 million in efficiency savings across the organisation, including in areas such as libraries, the Proserpine Entertainment Centre, environmental stewardship, community donations, communications and promotion and corporate back-of-house functions.

These savings haven't come at the cost of quality—but they've helped us refocus on what matters most: delivering core services where they're needed, when they're needed. Moving forward we cannot afford to stop here, we need to continue to look for better more efficient ways of doing business, minimise waste and become more productive with what we have.

Conversely, some core service areas have seen an enhanced focus including boosting our operational roads and footpath maintenance by an additional \$2.5 million, to ensure we're not just building infrastructure—but maintaining it.

This year's budget delivers a \$114 million capital works program—a significant investment in the long-term strength and resilience of our region.

These investments reflect our strategic priorities and the scale of infrastructure required to support a growing, modern region.

And importantly, it lays the financial groundwork for generational infrastructure—the kinds of projects that will define and drive our region's growth for decades to come.

Initiatives like the Cannonvale Community Hub, the Whitsunday Regional Sports Precinct, the Collinsville Community Hub and the upcoming regional precinct masterplans are not just aspirations—they are a vision and catalyst for future investment, connection, and opportunity in our community.

In summary, this is a budget that looks forward.

It acknowledges the realities of today; rising costs, ageing infrastructure and financial imbalance, while taking confident, responsible steps to get us back on solid footing.

It delivers real outcomes now. Better maintenance, fairer rates, and major infrastructure investment—while also laying the groundwork for the region we want to be in 10, 20 or 30 years' time.

I want to thank my fellow Councillors for working together through this process. These were not always easy decisions and I'm sure there are many things we don't entirely agree, but they were necessary.

To our staff, thank you for your professionalism and commitment to delivering a better Council for the Whitsundays.

The 2025–26 Budget is a roadmap for where we're headed. It doesn't solve every challenge—but it sets us on the right path: fairer, financially stable, service-focused, and future-ready.

Mayor Ry Collins

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our Corporate Plan 2025 - 2030 sets the strategic direction for the next five years, guiding Council's decisions, services, and investments to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the region.

Vision

A united community working together to drive a resilient and diverse economy and a liveable environment

Mission

To ensure the Whitsunday Region thrives for everyone now and in the future

The Corporate Plan is committed to strategic focus areas within which outcomes are prioritised. The focus areas include:

1. Our Economy - We plan for growth with the future needs of the community, business and industry in mind
2. Our Community - Our places and spaces enhance the liveability and diversity of our communities
3. Our Environment - Our region is resilient and celebrates its natural assets
4. Our Council - People, business and community
5. Our Infrastructure - Our region has infrastructure that meets current and future needs

The 2025/26 Budget is guided by Council's Corporate Plan, which the Corporate Plan outlines the priorities that matter most to our community and provides the foundation for Council's planning and decision-making.

Each year, Council develops an Operational Plan that identifies the key initiatives and projects we will undertake over the financial year. It outlines what we will deliver in the year ahead, aligned to the long-term goals in the Corporate Plan.

The 2025/26 Budget then allocates the funding required to carry out those initiatives. While the Operational Plan describes the activities at a general level, the budget presents the financial detail – showing how funds are assigned to specific projects and services that support our strategic direction.

Together, the Corporate Plan, Operational Plan and Budget ensure Council's actions remain focused, accountable and aligned with community priorities.



OUR KEY SERVICES

AIRPORTS, PORTS & QUARRY

Whitsunday Coast Airport,
Bowen, Collinsville & Mt Coolon
Aerodromes, Shute Harbour
Marine Terminal, Foxdale Quarry

LIBRARIES,
CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SERVICES

4 regional libraries with free membership
17,756 library members
62,242 resource users
55 community centres & facilities
3 Holiday Parks

PARKS & RECREATION

- 120 parks and 3 cemeteries
- 93 playgrounds
- 3,712 pieces of park furniture
- 30 pieces of exercise equipment
- 65 single & 40 double BBQ's
- 7 sport & recreation facilities
- 734 HA parkland and recreation areas requiring maintenance & landscaping

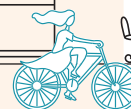
AQUATIC FACILITIES

3 regional swimming pools
Airlie Beach Lagoon
3 water parks



GOVERNANCE, DECISION MAKING & INTERNAL OPERATIONS

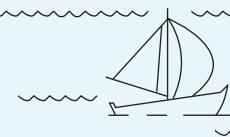
Ensuring efficient management of internal services across the organisation
technology, governance, finances and
Council's property and fleet



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

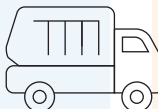
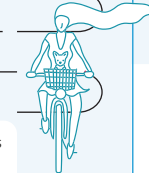
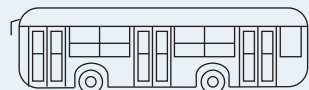
Did you know we provide funding support for Tourism Whitsunday?

Bowen Tourism & Business and GW3 for regional & economic development



ROADS, FOOTPATHS & BUILDINGS

- 1330 KM's of unsealed roads
- 1030 KM's of sealed roads
- 140 KM's of footpaths
- 27 bridges
- 393 commercial, corporate & civic buildings
- Over 200 KM's of stormwater pipework



COMMUNITY GRANTS & EVENTS

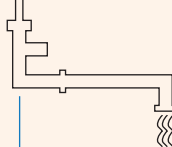
Our community grants program provides financial support to enable local sport, arts, non-for-profit groups and events to reach their goals. This financial year we have allocated \$1.8M

WASTE & RECYCLING

On average in 24/25:
750,000 kerbside waste bin collections
and 335,000 collections of comingled
recyclables (maintaining a 0.01% misse
bin rate (1 in 10,000))
Over 36,000 tonne of waste was
landfilled at Bowen and Kelsey Creek -
total of 65,000 individual transactions

WATER & SEWERAGE

8 water and sewerage treatment plants
100 water and sewerage pump stations
850 KM's water & sewer mains
Over 31,755 water & sewer connection



PLANNING, REGULATORY & ENVIRONMENT

- Adaptation and mitigation projects to prepare our region for climate change.
- Town planning to ensure sustainable development
- Regulating compliance with state & council laws

INVESTING IN EVERYDAY LIVEABILITY

The operational budget covers the ongoing costs of delivering services and running the day-to-day activities of Council.

ROADS, FOOTPATHS & BUILDINGS

Roads, buildings and footpaths providing essential links across our region **\$45.2M**

WASTE & RECYCLING

Supporting a cleaner region through responsible waste and recycling **\$14.5M**

AQUATIC FACILITIES

Regional pools, water parks and the Airlie Beach Lagoon—free, fun and open to all **\$5.7M**

PARKS & RECREATION

120 parks to enjoy, thousands of play pieces & spaces to stay active **\$11.3M**

LIBRARIES, CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Libraries and customer and community spaces for locals **\$9M**

COMMUNITY GRANTS & EVENTS

Grants to help local groups, sport, arts and events thrive **\$1.8M**

WATER & SEWERAGE

Safe, reliable water and sewer systems, maintained to serve our growing region **\$37.1M**

PLANNING, REGULATORY & ENVIRONMENT

Environment protection, sustainable planning and local law regulation **\$10M**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Investing in tourism and development via key regional partners **\$2.7M**

GOVERNANCE, DECISION MAKING & INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Efficiently managing tech, governance, finances, property and fleet **\$12.8M**

WHITSUNDAY COAST AIRPORT



The Whitsunday Coast Airport is a fully self-funded, Council-owned asset that operates without any ratepayer subsidies. It delivers strong financial returns, with profits reinvested into services and infrastructure for future growth.

BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	\$'000
Operating Revenue	173,846
Operating Expenses	170,182
Operating Result	3,664
Capital Revenue	51,514
Capital Expenses	9,742
Net Result	45,436

Capital Expenditure

	\$'000
Capital Works Program	114,643
Repayment of Borrowings	6,825

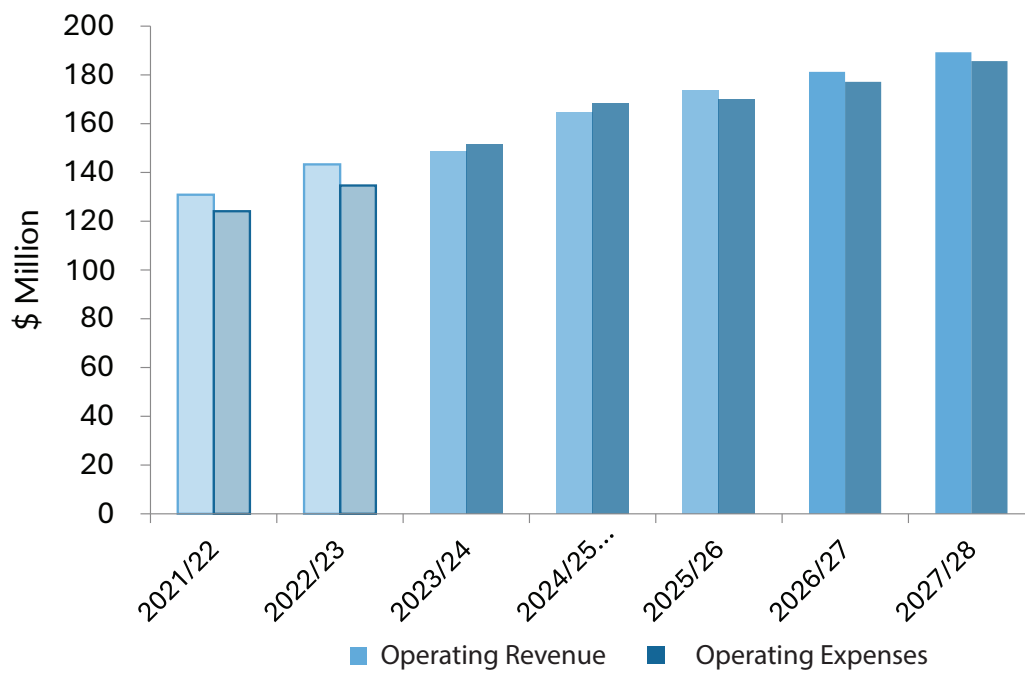
Financial Position

	\$'000
Current Assets	97,139
Non-Current Asset	1,475,761
Total Assets	1,572,900
Current Liabilities	32,713
Non-Current Liabilities	90,787
Total Liabilities	123,500
Net Community Assets	1,499,400

Borrowings

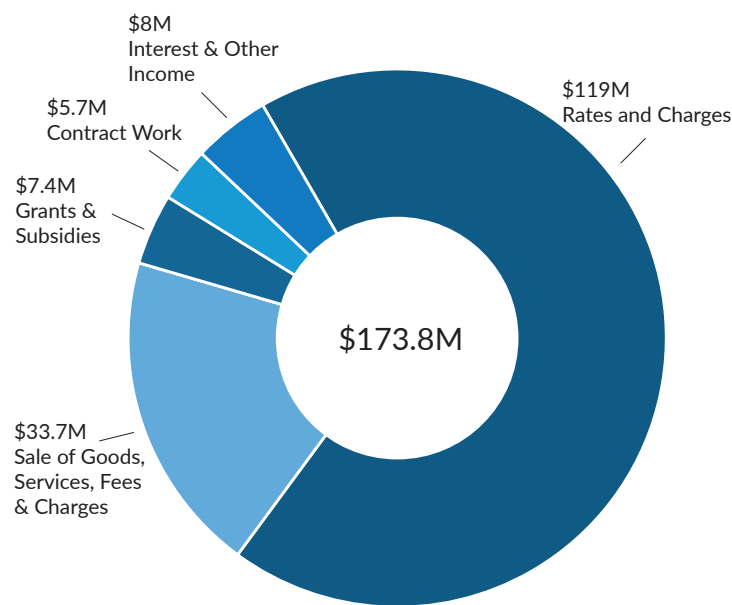
	\$'000
Outstanding Borrowings (Start of Year)	57,402
Borrowings per Assessment \$	3,061

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - OPERATING BUDGET

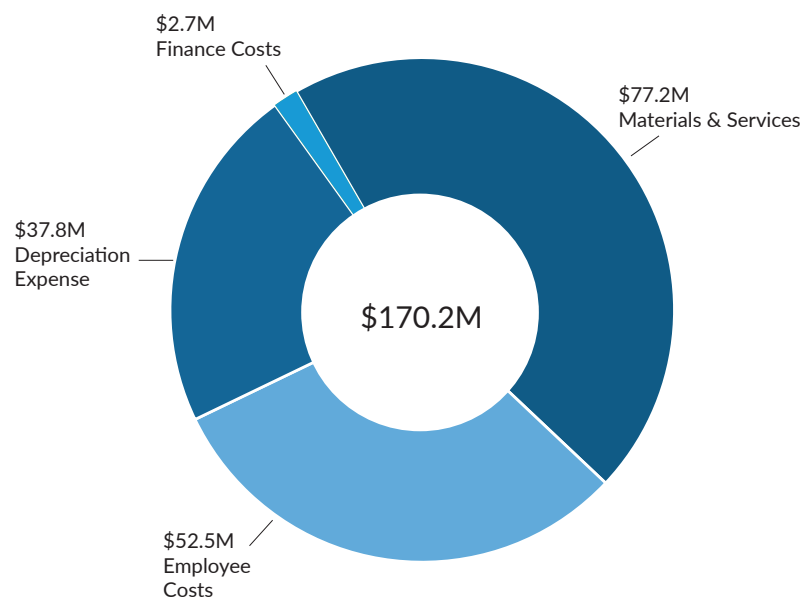


OPERATING BUDGET BY CATEGORY

2025/26 Budgeted Revenue Sources
Breakdown by Category

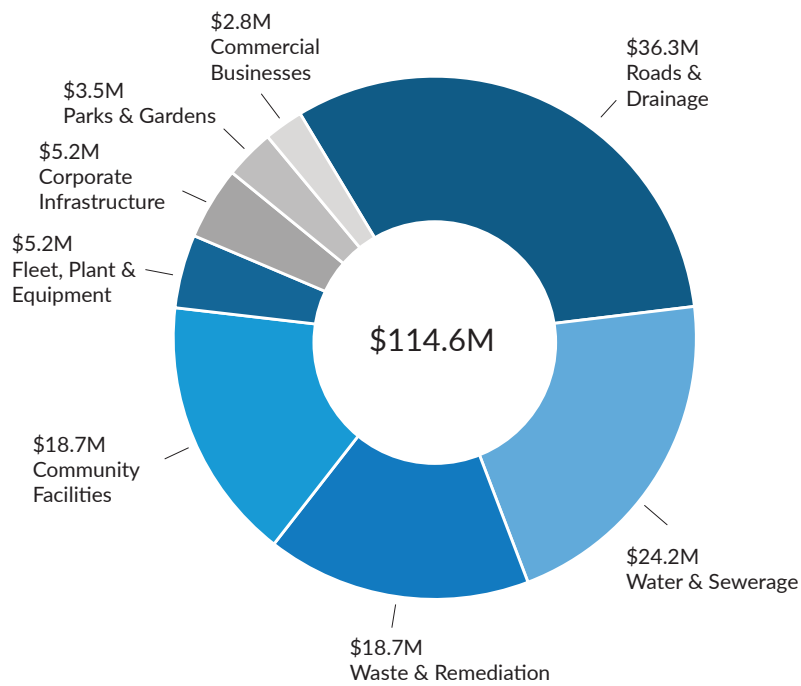


2025/26 Budgeted Expenditure
Breakdown by Category

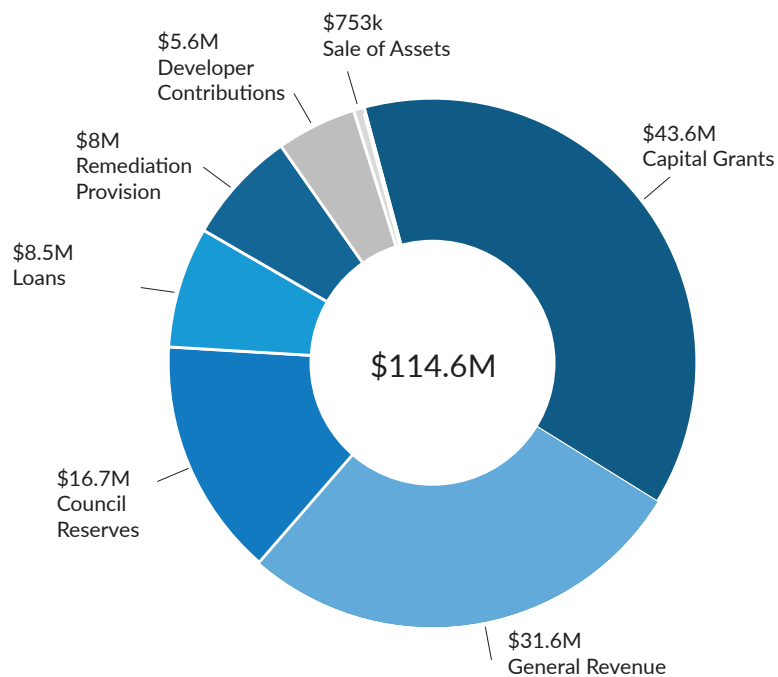


2025/26 CAPITAL BUDGET & REMEDIATION WORKS

Breakdown by Asset Class

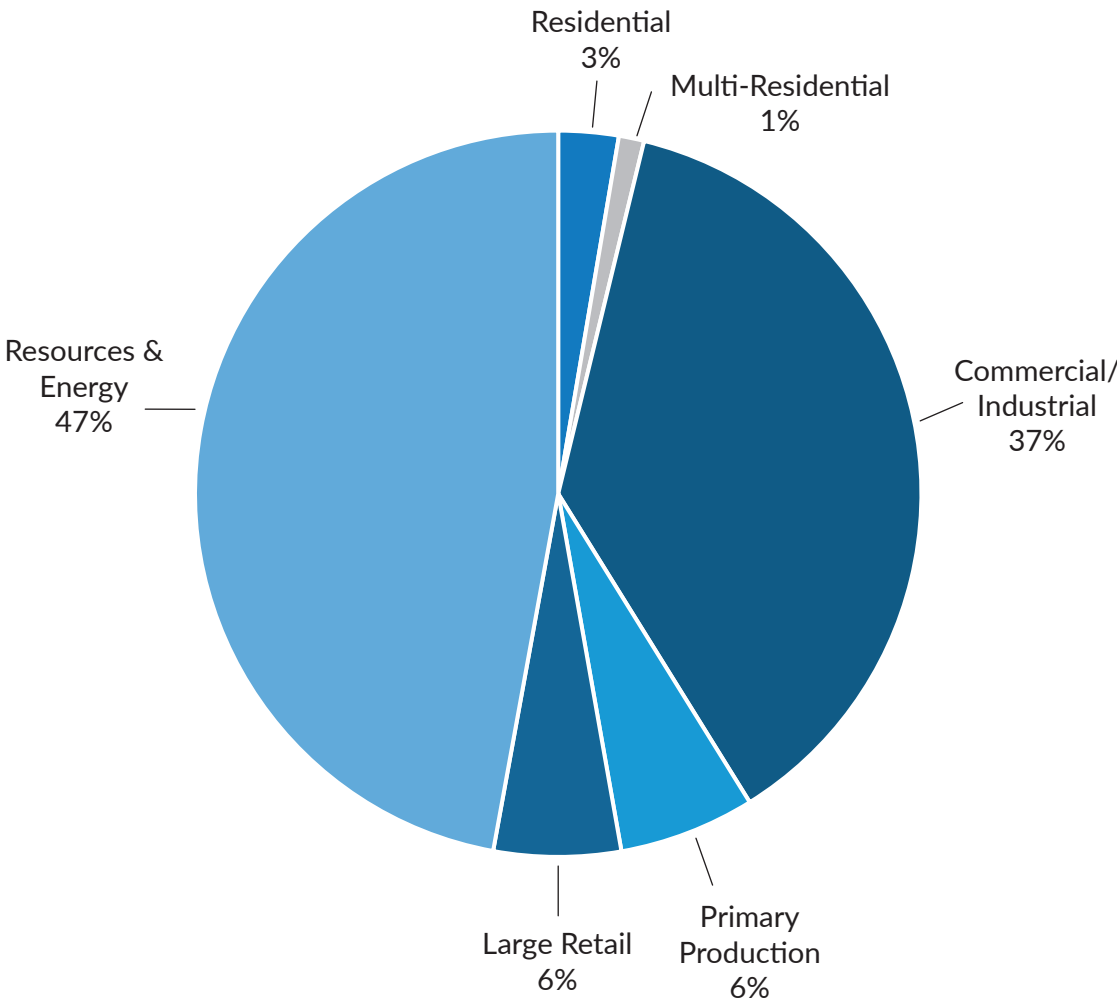


Breakdown by Funding Source



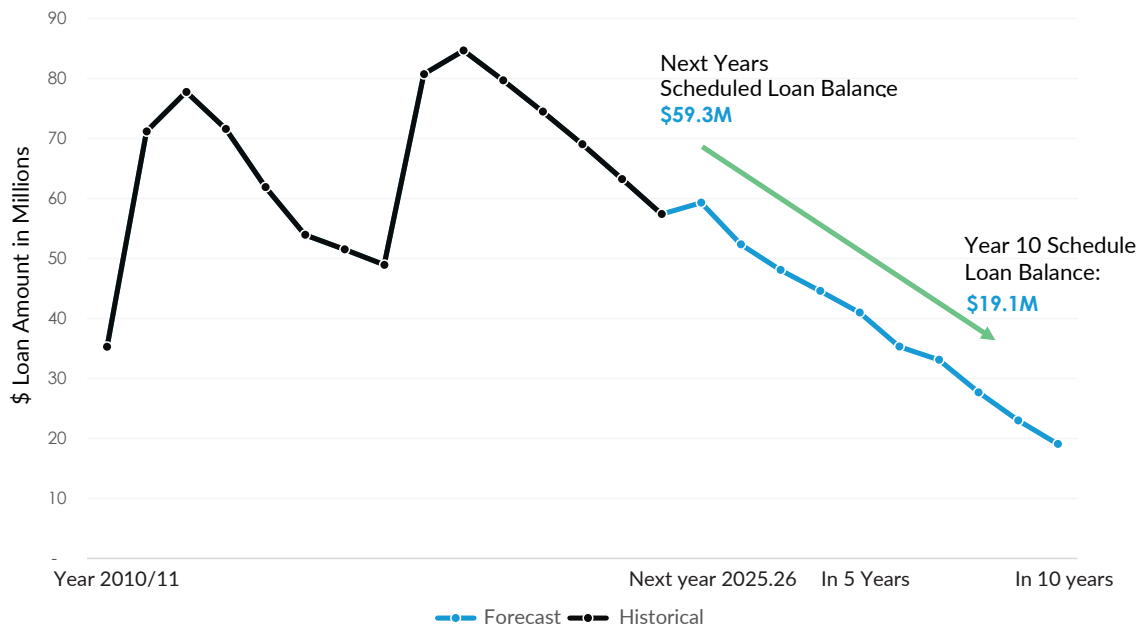
GENERAL RATES

Portion of Rates Yield Contribution



HISTORICAL & FORECAST LOANS

10 Year Forecast Balances



Long Term Sustainability Ratios

Type	Measure	Target (Tier 4)	Est Actuals as at 30 June 2025	30 June 2026	30 June 2027	30 June 2028	30 June 2029	30 June 2030	30 June 2031	30 June 2032	30 June 2033	30 June 2034	30 June 2035
Financial Capacity	Council Controlled Revenue	N/A	84%	88%	89%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Operating Performance	Operating Surplus Ratio	>0%	-2.22%	2.11%	3.11%	2.77%	3.81%	4.60%	5.86%	6.18%	6.47%	6.13%	6.16%
	Operating Cash Ratio	>0%	22%	25%	26%	25%	26%	26%	27%	27%	27%	26%	26%
Liquidity	Unrestricted Cash Expense Cover Ratio	>4 months	10.75	7.51	6.51	5.09	5.33	5.57	5.91	5.91	6.48	6.69	7.35
Asset Management	Asset Sustainability Ratio	>80%	247%	184%	256%	128%	125%	116%	110%	102%	94%	100%	113%
	Asset Consumption Ratio	>60%	67%	68%	67%	67%	66%	65%	64%	65%	63%	62%	61%
Debt Servicing Capacity	Leverage Ratio	0-3 times	1.62	1.35	1.13	1.03	0.87	0.77	0.62	0.57	0.46	0.39	0.32