

Budget 2026/27

*A Responsible Budget Today
for a Stronger Region Tomorrow*



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



On Wednesday 17th June we handed down the 2026/27 Whitsunday Regional Council Budget.

This is my third budget as Mayor. A quick bit of history. The first budget of this council was adopted only weeks after this Council was sworn in and was largely a management budget. There was limited opportunity to influence its direction, and understandably it

reflected decisions made from another time.

Our second budget, last year's budget, marked the beginning of a different conversation.

It was the first opportunity for this Council to properly interrogate the organisation's financial position, challenge assumptions and begin addressing some of the underlying issues we had identified. What we found wasn't and still isn't comfortable, but we are getting there.

We identified a growing structural deficit within the General Fund. We found increasing reliance on commercial and utility activities to support day-to-day operations. We found areas where transparency could be improved and areas where difficult decisions had been deferred for too long.

Over the past two years, Council have spent a significant amount of time addressing those challenges. In fact, by the end of today's meeting, Councillors will have participated in thirteen dedicated budget workshops and meetings during this financial year alone. That is a significant commitment, but it reflects the importance we place on getting this right.

The reforms contained within this budget did not happen by accident. They are the result of Councillors asking difficult questions, challenging long-held assumptions, demanding greater transparency and setting a clear direction for the future of this organisation.

This Council has driven a comprehensive rating review, challenged spending patterns, increased the focus on user-pays principles where appropriate, sought greater transparency around our business activities and placed

financial sustainability firmly at the centre of our direction and decision making.

Most importantly, it should be clear we have shifted the conversation this year.

For too long, budget discussions were primarily focused on revenue, how much can we increase taxes - as you can recall I asked we start things differently this year.

This year, for the first time in many years, this budget places as much emphasis on expenditure and cost control as it does on income. That matters. Do you know why it matters? Because families and businesses across the Whitsundays are doing exactly the same thing.

In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, people are looking closely at what they spend, where they spend it and whether they are getting value for money.

Council should be held to the same standard.

The community rightly expects us to manage our own affairs responsibly before asking them to contribute more. That expectation has helped shape this budget.

Importantly, this budget has adopted an average general rate increase of four per cent across all categories. Residential households, businesses, primary producers, tourism operators, mining and island communities have all been considered under the same overall framework.

Now, I know no budget is ever going to be universally popular. Nobody opens their rates notice hoping to pay more. That's just reality. But what we have sought to do is take a balanced approach.

An approach that recognises the pressures facing households, businesses and primary producers while also recognising Council's responsibility to remain financially sustainable and continue delivering the services and infrastructure our community expects.

Importantly, this Council has not approached this budget by simply looking for additional revenue. We have also looked inward. We have challenged expenditure, reviewed services, restructured the organisation, improved transparency and sought greater efficiency across Council operations. Because financial sustainability cannot be achieved through rates alone.

It also requires discipline, accountability and a willingness to continuously improve the way we operate.

This year we have continued to advance user-pays principles in areas where there is a clear beneficiary of a service.

We have improved transparency around our commercial businesses. We have strengthened the separation between the General Fund, utilities and commercial activities. And we have continued the work of aligning Council's resources with Council's priorities.

Importantly, this budget reduces the General Fund deficit from around \$12 million only a short time ago to approximately \$3 million today. That is a significant improvement.

But let me be equally clear. A budget on paper is not an outcome. The true test of this budget will not be today's vote. The true test will be what happens over the next few months.

Will the efficiencies be delivered?

Will the savings be realised?

Will project delivery improve?

Will our commercial businesses perform?

Will our customers notice a difference?

Will the organisation demonstrate the accountability and performance our community expects?

Those are the questions that matter. This Council has now set a clear direction.

The expectation now is delivery.

The expectation now is performance.

The expectation now is continuous improvement.

Council has set the direction. Through our Corporate Plan, our budget, our Operational Plan and our long-term financial forecasts, the pathway forward is now clear. The challenge is no longer deciding what needs to be done. The challenge is doing it.

And the community has every right to expect results and should know this Council has every intention of delivering them.

Of course, financial sustainability alone is not enough.

The purpose of improving Council's financial position is to create capacity to invest in the future of our region.

The Whitsundays continues to be one of the fastest growing regional communities in Queensland.

More people are choosing to live here.

More businesses are investing here.

More families are building their future here.

Growth creates opportunity, but it also creates responsibility.

Growth requires housing.

Growth requires roads and transport infrastructure.

Growth requires water and sewerage infrastructure.

Growth requires community facilities and public spaces.

Growth requires long-term planning and investment.

The challenge for Council is ensuring we stay ahead of that growth rather than constantly trying to catch up.

I'm pleased that today we are also adopting Council's updated 10-year plans and financial forecasts.

These plans remind us that financial sustainability is not an end in itself.

The purpose of reducing deficits, improving commercial performance and strengthening Council's financial position is to ensure we have the capacity to invest in the infrastructure, services and community facilities a growing region will require over the next decade.

Annual budgets are important, but the real challenge is ensuring the decisions we make today leave future Councils and future generations in a stronger position than we found them.

This budget invests more than \$100 million in services and infrastructure across the region, including \$46 million in roads, buildings and footpaths, almost \$40 million in water and sewerage infrastructure, and almost \$18 million in waste and recycling services.

These are the investments that keep our communities functioning today while preparing for the growth of tomorrow.

That is why this budget continues to focus on some of the most important long-term challenges facing our region.

Housing remains one of the biggest issues confronting our community. This budget continues investment in the infrastructure, planning and growth initiatives needed to unlock future housing supply across the region.

From the commencement of more than \$50 million in housing-enabling infrastructure through the Build

Whitsundays initiative to strategic master planning, our local housing action plan and a future new Planning Scheme we are laying the foundations for thousands of future homes and ensuring the Whitsundays remains a place where people can live, work and raise a family.

We are also continuing to invest in community infrastructure. The Cannonvale Community Hub and Collinsville Community Hub represent a new generation of community facilities for our region.

These projects are not simply about buildings. They are about creating places where people connect, access services, participate in community life and strengthen social connections.

At the same time, Council continues work on major strategic initiatives including implementation of our first Environment Strategy, airport commercialisation, network planning and other operational initiatives that will help shape the future of the region.

These projects may not always attract headlines today, but they will help determine what the Whitsundays looks like ten, twenty and thirty years from now.

Importantly, this budget also continues investment in the infrastructure and services our communities rely upon every day.

- Roads
- Footpaths
- Water
- Sewerage
- Waste services
- Parks and public spaces

These are the foundations of a well-functioning community and Council has a responsibility to maintain and improve them while preparing for future growth.

Looking back over the past two years, I believe this Council has achieved a great deal. We have identified problems that had been allowed to grow for too long.

We have been prepared to have difficult conversations. We have challenged the status quo. We have established a clearer strategic direction.

And we have started the work of building a more accountable, financially sustainable and future-focused organisation.

But there is still much more work to do.

The journey is not complete. This budget is not the destination. It is another important step forward.

If I was to describe my first year of this Council term in one word, it would be understanding. The second year would be reform. The third year is about delivery. Because ultimately, our community does not judge us on plans, strategies or reports.

They judge us on outcomes. They judge us on whether projects are delivered. Whether services improve or evolve.

Whether rates are spent responsibly and transparently. Whether Council keeps its promises, and not changes our position That is exactly how it should be.

The community has every right to expect results and should know this Council has every intention of delivering them.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their commitment throughout this process.

I would also like to acknowledge the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Leadership Team, Finance team and all staff who have contributed to the preparation of this budget.

While there have been robust discussions along the way, everyone involved shares the same objective — building a stronger organisation, a stronger region and a stronger Whitsunday community.

I commend the 2026/27 Budget to Council.

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 2026/27 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 2026/27 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.

BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	\$'000
Operating Revenue	188,674
Operating Expenses	176,563
Operating Result	12,111
Capital Revenue	102,558
Capital Expenses	13,323
Net Result	101,346

Capital Expenditure

	\$'000
Capital Works Program	181,461
Repayment of Borrowings	6,854

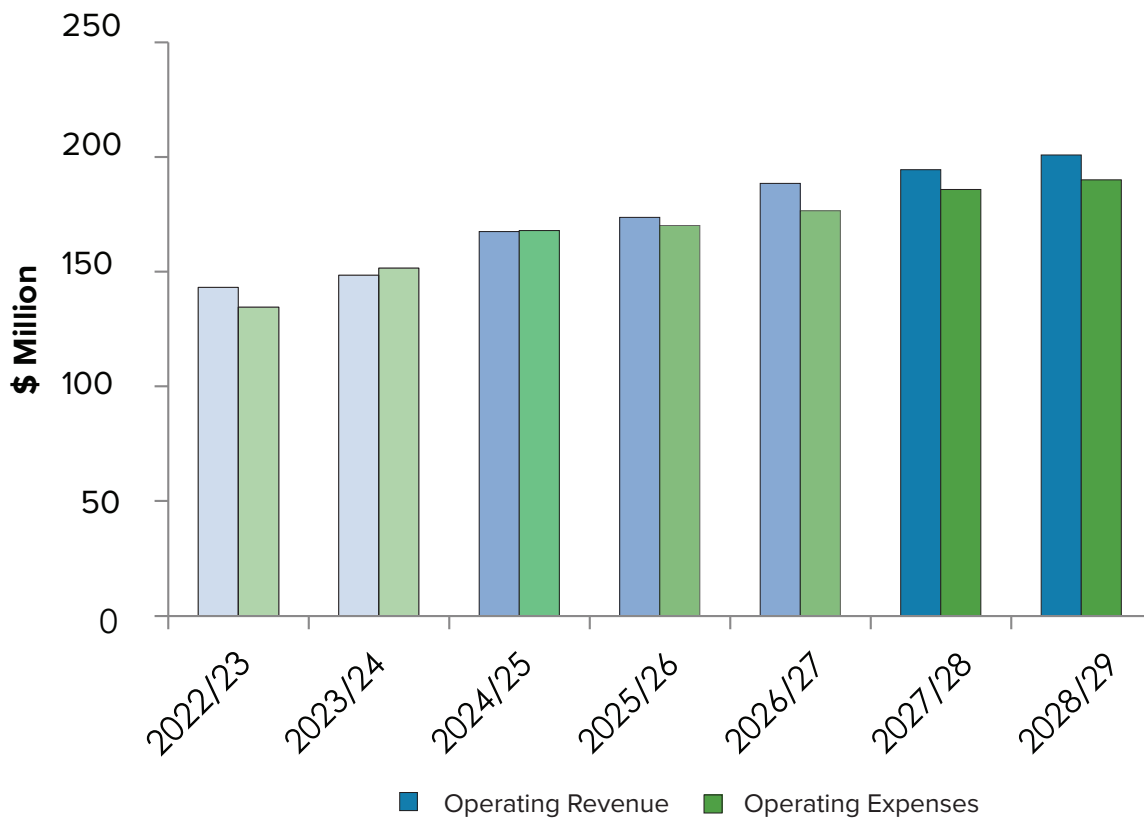
Financial Position

	\$'000
Current Assets	117,572
Non-Current Asset	1,590,164
Total Assets	1,707,736
Current Liabilities	46,022
Non-Current Liabilities	109,474
Total Liabilities	155,496
Net Community Assets	1,552,240

Borrowings

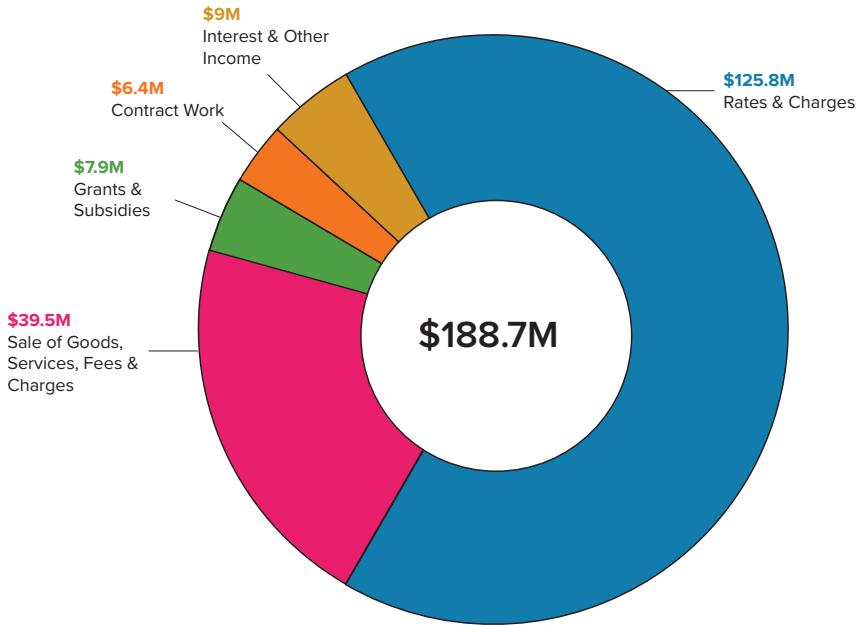
	\$'000
Outstanding Borrowings (Start of Year)	59,045
Borrowings per Assessment \$	3,407

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - OPERATING BUDGET

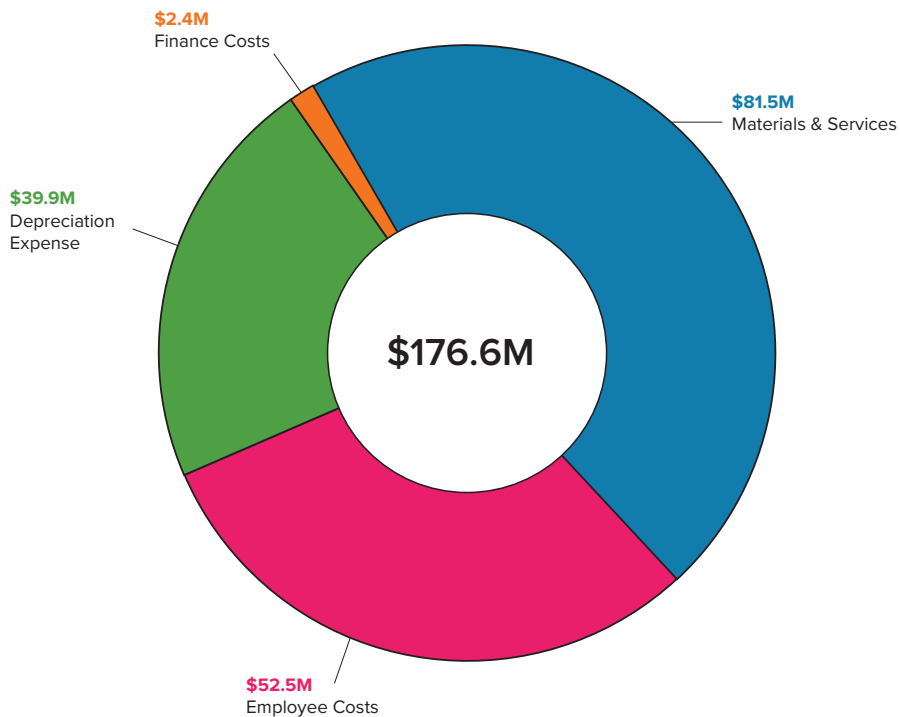


OPERATING BUDGET BY CATEGORY

2026/27 Budgeted Revenue Sources
Breakdown by Category

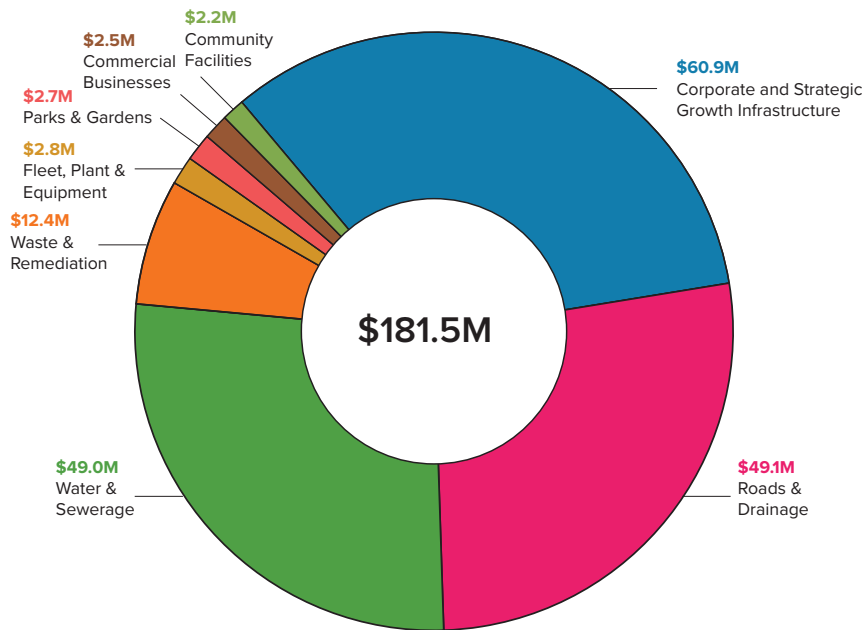


2026/27 Budgeted Expenditure
Breakdown by Category

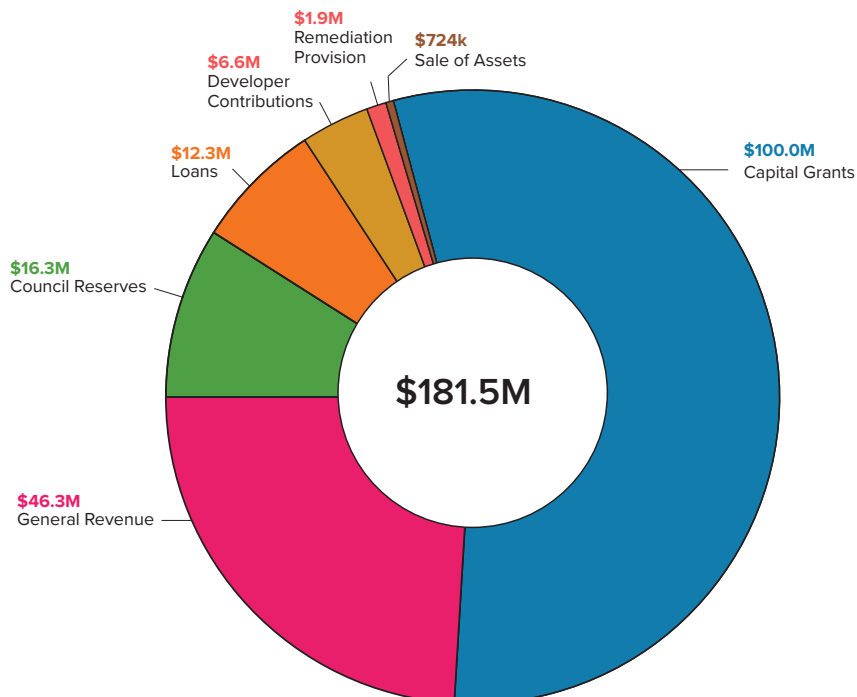


CAPITAL BUDGET & REMEDIATION WORKS

Breakdown by Asset Class

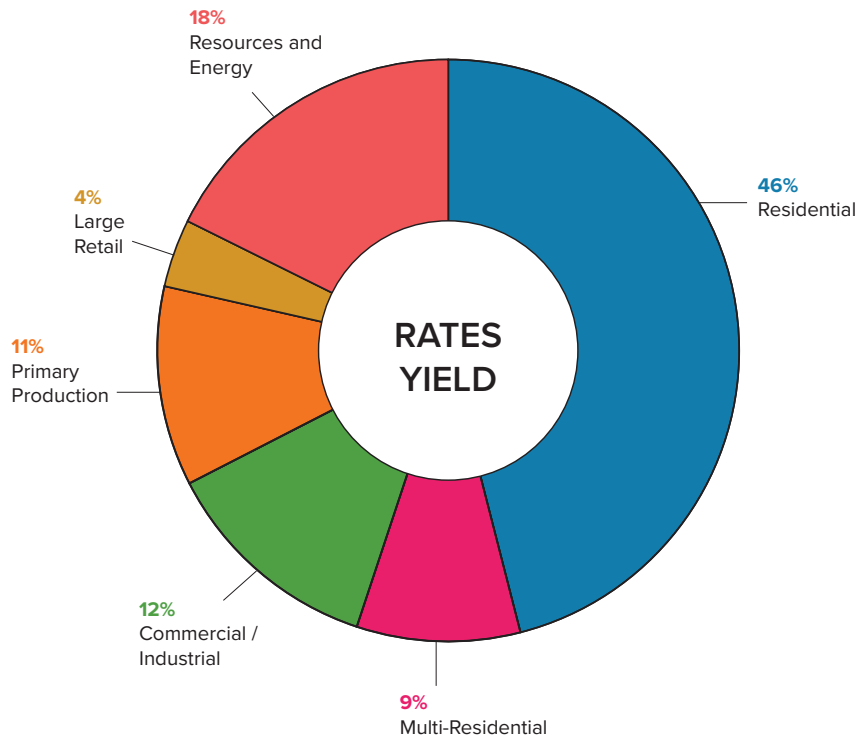


Breakdown by Funding Source



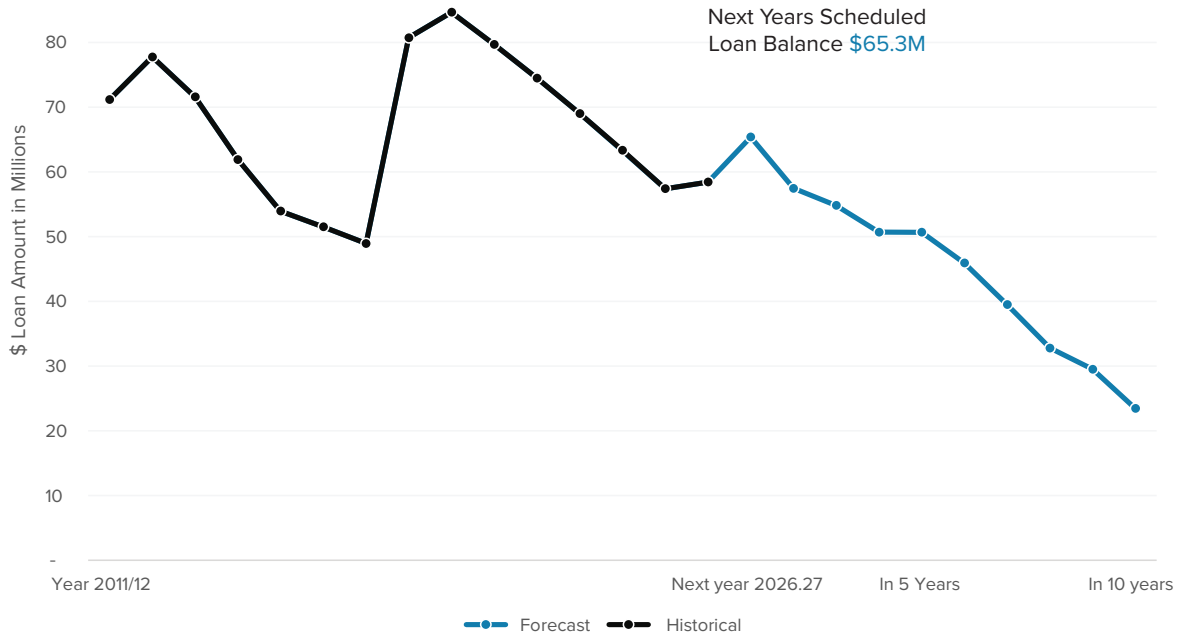
GENERAL RATES

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 2026	30 June 2027	30 June 2028	30 June 2028	30 June 2030	30 June 2031	30 June 2032	30 June 2033	30 June 2034	30 June 2035	30 June 2036
Financial Capacity	Council Controlled Revenue	N/A	88%	87%	89%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Operating Performance	Operating Surplus Ratio	>0%	2.11%	6.42%	4.42%	5.38%	6.75%	7.84%	8.78%	9.34%	9.36%	9.44%	9.90%
	Operating Cash Ratio	>0%	25%	28%	28%	29%	29%	30%	31%	31%	30%	30%	30%
Liquidity	Unrestricted Cash Expense Cover Ratio	>4 months	10.18	8.44	7.63	7.54	7.38	8.39	9.23	10.41	11.79	13.12	14.70
Asset Management	Asset Sustainability Ratio	>80%	245.74%	231.22%	144.83%	103.23%	90.95%	90.83%	78.44%	82.9%	83.76%	95.61%	67.11%
	Asset Consumption Ratio	>60%	67%	68%	67%	66%	66%	64%	63%	62%	61%	60%	59%
	Asset Renewal Funding Ratio	> 90%	165%	206%	140%	96%	90%	87%	91%	89%	96%	96%	61%
Debt Servicing Capacity	Leverage Ratio	0-3 times	1.34	1.23	1.06	0.97	0.84	0.79	0.68	0.58	0.47	0.42	0.33



View the 2026/27 Budget at
www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au