

16 June 2026

**2026–27 Douglas Shire Mayor, Lisa Scomazzon
Budget Address**



Introduction

This year's Douglas Shire Council Budget is built on the essentials, the important things our community relies on every single day. It has been shaped directly by the feedback we've heard from residents right across the whole shire. On behalf of my fellow Councillors and I, I would like to thank our community for their understanding and ongoing support as we navigate these complex times together.

This budget is built around four key pillars:

Listening to the community

Essential services

Water security and

Community and economic development.

Pillar One: Listening to the Community

The community has told us clearly what matters most, keeping services reliable, keeping costs manageable, and investing in the places that make our shire special. We've listened, and this budget reflects that.

Council understands that cost-of-living pressures are real and are being felt heavily by households and businesses across our Shire.

Council is feeling these pressures too. We are facing rising costs across our operations, bitumen is up around 50 per cent, diesel is up 30 per cent, waste contracts have risen, and unlike households, Council does not qualify for electricity rebates. These pressures are real, and they affect the cost of maintaining roads, collecting waste, running facilities and keeping our services operating safely.

Like many of you, Council will be tightening its belt, planning carefully, and adapting to the turbulent economic times we find ourselves in.

We have worked extremely hard to keep rate increases as low as possible for most households and businesses.

- **62%** of all residential properties (principle-place-of- residence) will receive general

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rates rise of \$81 or less per year (around \$1.55 per week).

- **78%** of all investor properties (non-principle-place-of residence) will see an increase of \$117 or less per year (around \$2.25 per week).
- **68%** of all commercial Properties will see an increase of \$174 or less per year (about \$3.35 per week).

Importantly, the data shows that most ratepayers fall at the lower end of these increases. These figures reflect our commitment to keeping this budget affordable while still delivering the high-quality services our community expects.

Pillar Two: Essential Services

Essential services are the basics that keep our shire running smoothly clean, safe drinking water; weekly bin collections; and roads and footpaths that are safe to travel on. These are the foundations of a well-run community, and this budget keeps them strong.

There are several important improvements in the 2026–27 Budget, with targeted upgrades aimed at strengthening the places locals use every day.

Some of these improvements are:

- **\$70m** to deliver roads and transport services and assets — including the Daintree Ferry, bridges, unsealed rural roads, urban streets, drainage, footpaths, cycleways, bus shelters, street lighting, and kerb and channel,
- **\$49m** to deliver water security, produce water for residents, and maintain the water network.
- **\$38m** to deliver community services and assets — including halls, parks, outdoor spaces, events that support economic development, foreshores, beaches, Mossman Swimming Pool, Port Douglas Splash Park, cemeteries and the library.
- **\$15m** to deliver sewer services and ensure wastewater is treated and disposed of safely.
- **\$9m** to deliver resource management services including collecting residents' bins.

Pillar Three: Water Security

Water security remains one of our highest priorities. We are progressing major projects including the Cooya Beach Reservoir upgrade and significant pipe replacements across the network to ensure our community has reliable water services now and into the future.

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Close to **\$50 million** will be invested in water and sewer infrastructure as part of the 2026–27 Capital Works Program. This year's budget includes the commencement of the **\$47.5 million** water and sewer program, with **\$32 million** allocated in 2026–27 to priority projects.

These are large, complex works that will continue over several years, but they are essential to building a resilient and sustainable water network.

Pillar Four: Community and Economic Development

This pillar focuses on the parks, pathways, and shared spaces that make our towns welcoming and enjoyable. These improvements aren't just for locals—they help ensure Douglas remains an inviting destination for visitors, supporting our tourism economy and the many local businesses that rely on it.

Key highlights of this economic development focus is:

- The Queensland Government's **\$300,000** investment in a scoping study for the Port Douglas Marine Industry Precinct is an important step toward creating a world-class facility for vessel maintenance and marine services. This project has strong potential to diversify our economy and support skilled local employment and create new industry opportunities for the region.
- Council is undertaking a comprehensive planning scheme review to guide the future of our local economy. As we transition away from the sugar cane industry marking the close of a historic chapter for our region our focus is firmly on the future. This review is about working together to shape what comes next, whether that means new agricultural opportunities, emerging industries, or balanced development that supports long-term growth while protecting our unique regional character. Its about ensuring Douglas Shire continues to evolve while protecting the character and values that make our region unique.
- The new four-lane Daintree Ferry. Construction is well underway at a shipyard in Port Macquarie, and we are meeting key production milestones. This infrastructure will create a more reliable connection, reduce wait times, and improve liveability and the tourism experience across the region.
- Port-to-Mossman Cycle Track: Since the closure of the Mossman Mill, many in the community have expressed interest in seeing the historic rail corridor brought back to life. Planning for a future cycling link between Port Douglas and Mossman is stepping up, with a **\$300,000** feasibility allocation in this budget to support surveys, route assessments, and planning along the alignment of the former cane train line.

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Conclusion

This is a responsible, community-focused budget. It reflects what we've heard from residents, strengthens essential services, supports economic development, and invests in the places that make Douglas Shire an incredible place to live, all while keeping financial pressure off ratepayers as much as possible.

We have a clear plan focused on community priorities, demonstrating a strong commitment to financial responsibility, not just for this budget, but moving into the future.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their time and invaluable input in preparing this budget. I also acknowledge the hard work of the CEO, the Finance team, and the Executive Leadership Team for their guidance, dedication, and assistance.