

This morning Council presents a budget that reflects our commitment to prudent financial management, community resilience, and sustainable growth. This budget invests in what matters most—our people, our services, and our future.

We are planning for a return to surplus by 2027–2028, 5 years ahead of schedule. While we are budgeting for an operating deficit of just over \$915,000, this budget sets a responsible and planned course forward. It acknowledges the financial pressures we face, including the impacts of Cyclone Jasper, and responds with a plan that balances fiscal discipline with continued investment in the services and infrastructure our community depends on.

By implementing these measures now—including a general rate increase of approximately \$2 per week for owner-occupiers and \$3 per week for investors—we forecast a more than half a million dollar reduction in the operating deficit by the end of the next financial year, with a projected surplus of \$423,000 by 2027–2028, 5 years ahead of the previously forecast 2032/2033 return to surplus.

This rate increase for 2025 – 2026 is not taken lightly. It reflects the real costs of delivering essential services such as clean drinking water, weekly rubbish collection, safe roads, and the operation of our libraries, pools, and community facilities. These services are the backbone of our community, and we are committed to maintaining their high standard. That means reviewing our operations to ensure we deliver efficiently and effectively, without compromising on quality.

This year's budget also includes a record investment in infrastructure—over \$134 million in capital works aimed at boosting resilience, sustainability, and liveability across the shire.

\$96 million is allocated to disaster recovery and resilience works particularly north of the Daintree River, helping restore and future-proof critical infrastructure impacted by Cyclone Jasper.

Council has also allocated \$2.6 million to commence landside infrastructure improvements that will support the future upgrade of the Daintree River Ferry. These works lay the foundation for a four-lane vessel that will ease congestion and improve the crossing experience for residents and visitors alike.

We are investing \$10.3 million in the Mossman River Intake—an alternative water source that will strengthen water security for the Douglas Shire, supporting population growth and climate resilience.

Families can look forward to the completion of the Port Douglas Splash Park, with \$2.3 million allocated to create a vibrant, welcoming space for children and families to enjoy. We anticipate opening the park during the September school holidays.

Other key infrastructure investments include \$4.5 million for critical repairs to our water main network and \$3 million for road network renewals and upgrades.

These projects are not just about bricks and mortar—they're about improving how we live, preparing for future challenges, and making Douglas Shire an even better place to call home. They also support local jobs and economic activity, with many projects creating employment opportunities and engaging local contractors.

Mayor Scomazzon budget speech July 1 , 2025

This budget is about making thoughtful choices today to secure a financially stronger and more resilient future.

