

Mayors Budget Address

2023 – 2024 Budget

How quickly another year has passed and today it gives me great pleasure to put forward the Douglas Shire Councils budget for the financial year 2023/2024 which budgets for a \$257k surplus.

As your elected representatives, it is our responsibility to ensure the efficient allocation of resources and the overall well-being of our Shire. I believe that this budget is a reflection of that commitment to progress, sustainability, and the betterment of our community.

The people of Douglas Shire have faced years of challenges that Covid-19 has brought, and on top of that, the international pressures placed on the economy from the war in Ukraine, unprecedented inflationary stresses, supply shortages and obvious to all accommodation concerns - however our community is resilient and has continued to see itself through what gets thrown at us, and continues to come out stronger on the other side.

I am pleased to announce that our Shire's economy has shown growth. This growth is allowing us to invest in various sectors, including infrastructure, water supply, community services, and public safety. Our goal is to continue this upward trajectory and create an environment that will foster innovation, attract businesses, and provide opportunities for all residents including places to live.

I believe that we have managed to get the best result we can to keep the broader general rate rise for residents as low as possible whilst committing to maintaining service levels. Most residential Principal Place of Residency rate payers will see a general rate rise of 3.9%, which is substantially below CPI and far less than some neighbouring Councils.

Utility charges are increasing by 4.5% but this figure is also well below CPI.

Through strong advocacy, and working with the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Australian Local Government Association we have seen changes in Federal Government Grant funding to councils, which have greatly contributed to placing this council in a much stronger position for future years and I thank the Prime Minister for acknowledging the important role that Local Governments plays and also thank the staff for making the recent changes to ensure this budget reflects the best outcome for our rate payers.

In terms of infrastructure, we have allocated a significant portion of this budget to improve our roads, pedestrian paths, bridges and the ferry operations and come November when the budget review is completed, we will have a better idea of the potential for looking at progressing some of the long awaited projects that our community has been asking for.

Our Shire's infrastructure is the backbone of our economy, and by investing in its maintenance and expansion, we can ensure the smooth flow of goods and services, as well as the safety and convenience of our residents. Transportation is also closely linked to tourism, something our Shire's economy relies on. It is also crucial for emergency response and disaster management during times of crisis.

Water supply is another key area of focus in this budget. Council plays an essential role in providing water security that contributes to a healthy economic base from which the community and businesses can grow and prosper. Long-term water security for the Douglas Shire is considered critical and this year's budget which sees \$3.6M invested into water supply is a reflection of those needs.

The budget sees \$1.7M towards Wastewater infrastructure. While it may not be a topic that immediately catches our attention, wastewater management plays a crucial role in our everyday lives and the overall well-being of our communities. By investing in wastewater treatment and infrastructure, we are investing in our shires future and improving the overall quality of life.

Lastly, sustainability and economic development are at the forefront of our agenda. We recognize the important need to address climate change and protect our natural resources. By embracing in sustainable practices, we can create a healthier and more resilient shire for future generations to come.

Your Council has no borrowings and is debt free at a time of rising interest rates. We are currently receiving good interest returns on investments which is also contributing to today's positive result and the community's asset equity shows our balance sheet growing strongly, once again showing the financial ability and strength of this shire.

In conclusion, the 2023/2024 budget reflects our commitment to progress, sustainability, and the well-being of our community as we continue to build our culture, preserve our environment, and engage in our future. We aim to create a shire that is prosperous, inclusive, and resilient. I am confident that support

and collaboration we receive from this community will allow us to achieve these goals and continue to build a brighter future for all residents.