

**Mayor's Speech**  
**Mayor Peter Flannery**  
**Moreton Bay Regional Council Budget 2020-21**

*(prior to discussion of motions)*

Preparations for this year's Budget have been like no other. As we all deal with the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, Council has maintained a laser-focus on charting a course to recovery.

In a year with this much uncertainty, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that this budget delivers certainty for residents of Moreton Bay region.

- Certainty for job-seekers
- Certainty for part-pensioners
- Certainty for the environment
- Certainty for local businesses and local workers
- Certainty for investors

During uncertain times we must band together, and council must provide the leadership and direction needed for the future.

I am excited to lead a new council in a new decade and drive economic growth that will create local jobs and maintain the lifestyle residents have come to expect in Moreton Bay.

I will now hand over to Cr Constance, Portfolio Councillor for Finance and Corporate Services to introduce the motions regarding the formal adoption of the (2020/21) Moreton Bay Regional Council Budget and Operational Plan.

**Cr Matt Constance, Portfolio Councillor Finance and Corporate Services**

Thank you, Mr Mayor. Before we formally move into discussing the motions and your budget speech relating to adopting the Moreton Bay Regional Council Budget and Operational Plan for the financial year commencing 1 July 2020, I will make a number of observations.

The ambitious program that the Mayor will soon outline does come at a cost, with an average rate rise of 2 per cent and a reduction in our cash balance of \$60.7 million. In 2020-21 council will borrow \$40 million to avoid a further decrease in the cash position, forecasted to increase to \$55 million from year two. However, importantly council remains in a sound financial position - short and long term.

The budgeted net result is \$177.9 million and we will again deliver an operational surplus, the tenth in a row at \$58.1 million.

It is not just prudent financial management that local government is sustainable but a requirement of the Local Government Act. As indicated in the Budget and Operational Plan, Council will again over the ten-year long term financial forecast exceed all statutory benchmarks regarding operating surplus, net financial liabilities and asset sustainability ratios.

Mr Mayor, we remain in a strong financial position with the ability to continue to deliver services and recruit new staff, maintain limited borrowings and deliver a full capital expenditure program while implementing a number of new initiatives. I commend this budget.

MOTION 1...

*(after completion of motions, Mayor speech to commence)*

Thank you, councillors.

This Council will provide certainty through a capital budget spend of \$220 million this coming Financial Year and we will recruit around 130 new employees as we chart a course to economic revitalisation for our region.

### **Coronavirus Response**

Already council has faced this pandemic head-on by activating the Moreton Recovery Group and providing direct stimulus when and where it was required.

We have dedicated \$32.9 million in coronavirus stimulus measures designed to provide certainty for the most impacted groups and individuals in our community and to get our region booming again.

- We are paying local suppliers on a weekly basis to inject money into the local economy quickly.
- For those people who have found themselves out of work and receiving the Federal Government's Job Seeker payment, we are providing \$200 in rates rebate over two quarters.
- We have introduced a new local buy procurement policy that gives preference to local suppliers because it is more important than ever to back local business.
- We have rolled out more than a million dollars in asset maintenance to local tradies as part of a new \$4 million package.

- We have supported 630 community groups and clubs who were eligible for \$8.5 million in infrastructure and hardship grants... That's fourteen times more grants in the past 4 months, than we would ordinarily issue in an entire year.
- We know everyone's financial circumstances are different and that this has been a stressful time. Council has taken a decision not to require any proof of financial hardship to enter into a payment plan to pay your rates. And, no interest will be charged on overdue rates before the end of September 2020.

### **Federal and State Funding**

Thankfully, both the State and Federal Governments are supporting the region with further funding to stimulate the local economy and work with us to create local jobs.

The State Government has provided \$10 million and the Federal Government has provided \$5 million. We will continue to work with both levels of government to fast track these projects.

### **Sport and Recreation**

But our work doesn't end there. This year's \$220 million capital works program will see investment in sport and recreation increase by more than 40 per cent. That's up from \$34 million in 2019-20 to \$49 million this financial year.

If coronavirus has taught us anything, it's the community's appreciation of outdoor spaces and activities.

We believe it is essential to continually improve these facilities as our region grows, so that the focus on our lifestyle remains.

### **Transport Infrastructure**

We will ensure infrastructure keeps pace with population growth. Our investment into roads and transport networks is \$31.5 million more than last year. That includes:

- A bridge at Youngs Crossing Road over the North Pine River;
- A major \$8.5 million intersection upgrade along Oakey Flat Road in Morayfield;
- \$8 million in improvements to the intersection of Brays Road and McClintock Drive in Murrumba Downs;
- \$5 million for improved flood immunity at the intersection of Henry and Dohles Rocks Road in Griffin; and
- \$4.5 million to renew a section of Old Gympie Road in Dakabin.

### **Petrie Mill**

We will invest \$25 million to continue developing The Mill at Petrie, a 460-hectare greenfield site that will play a driving role in our economic future.

As I announced at the start of the new Council term, a new board will soon provide strategic oversight to guide the use of council-owned land at The Mill. This board will be vital in attracting business investors and helping to drive economic recovery across our region.

## **Other Investment**

We're also increasing our investments in parks, libraries, arts, waste management, community grants, and the environment. We know that residents want certainty about essential services and funding for community events. And, of course, to be able to get back to our beloved galleries and libraries.

## **Jobs**

In tough economic times, we know that certainty around employment is essential and we anticipate the capital program will support 3,000 jobs through direct and indirect employment.

Our capital works program will deliver vital community infrastructure and provide certainty for many indirect jobs in cafes, service stations, hardware stores and many of the thirty-three thousand small businesses across Moreton Bay.

Small business is the engine room of Moreton Bay's economy. That's why a new Economic Development Strategy is well underway in-line with the commitment I made at the start of this term.

We have also commenced work on an expression of interest process for council-owned land that can be activated by the private sector, creating economic and social opportunities as we chart a course to recovery. I look forward to announcing more on this in the coming months.

We also know that our \$1 billion tourism sector is an important economic driver and job-generator in our region. That's why this Budget provides \$250,000 for a new fast-tracked tourism strategy to:

- Investigate the Hinterland's relatively untapped tourism potential,
- Explore how Moreton Bay can become the most accessible tourism destination in southeast Queensland; and
- Investigate major capital investment required to support our growing tourism industry

Central to this is an ambitious plan to make our hinterland region the new must-see destination in southeast Queensland, because we know it's *Better than the Bruce*.

As we chart a course to economic recovery, I've said that I want to make sure no one slips through the cracks. Which is why we are making an unprecedented investment into both infrastructure and activities to support community clubs and organisations.

I am pleased to announce that following the Budget, we will ramp-up our enormously popular Healthy and Active Moreton Program. We will expand this program by over 35 per cent to directly employ local fitness instructors and activity coordinators. This will help maintain jobs, allow locals to get active outdoors and enjoy our beautiful region.

### **New Initiatives**

Amid our laser-focus on job creation and economic stimulus, the budget also includes a range of new initiatives.

We have heard loud and clear from locals that they want their way of life protected, this means creating homes for wildlife while we continue to create homes for humans.

A hallmark of this Budget is the expansion of our Infrastructure Charge to now include the environment.

This initiative will fund our environmental land buyback program so that Council can purchase strategic parcels of land, including for koala habitat, complementing the state government's latest koala mapping.

We have increased the infrastructure charge from \$78 to \$84, which is included in the total overall average rate increase of 2 per cent.

The Region's part-pensioners on fixed incomes have been calling out for support with their rates for many years. So, for the first time, we will provide them certainty by introducing a \$100 rates remission in addition to the rebate provided by the state government.

This will support approximately 8,800 part-pensioner property owners across the region. Full pensioners will continue to receive council's \$250 rates remission.

I will write to all part pensioners to ensure they are aware of Council's support.



## **Conclusion**

This budget articulates a course for recovery.

I want to thank all councillors for their collaborative efforts around this budget. I particularly want to thank the hard-working council staff, many who have worked long hours to ensure we get the balance of projects right, we create local jobs and maintain good financial management.

As I have said, we must redouble our efforts to provide certainty at this uncertain time - to see our region boom again, to create new jobs, deliver improved infrastructure, and support the lifestyle our residents love.

Through responsible and targeted spending we will not only see our region through a global pandemic, we will also ensure Moreton Bay emerges as the envy of other south-east Queensland Councils.

I'd like to thank residents for their determination while times are tough, but we know Moreton Bay is tougher. And together, we will bounce back better than ever! ***Ends***