
2019/20

BUDGET SPEECH

Address to Council

3 June 2019

Councillor Matt Constance

Corporate Services Spokesperson

Councillor Matt Constance - 2019/20 Budget Speech

Thank you Mr Acting Mayor.

This Budget is a blueprint for the economic success and brighter future for all our residents - through responsible spending, strategic infrastructure investment and disciplined fiscal settings.

Moreton Bay Region has a long and proud history of delivering consecutive operational surplus Budgets - and today we again deliver on that record - with our ninth consecutive operational surplus Budget.

It has become the Hallmark of a Moreton Bay Regional Council Budget that we deliver an operational surplus and certainly this is the benchmark that distinguishes us from many other Councils in Queensland.

Mr Acting Mayor, I am excited to announce today that this Council will end its term with less debt than when it started. Which is a remarkable achievement.

On the 30th of June 2016 Council's actual debt was just over \$390 million.

By the 30th of June 2020 we will have a forecast debt level of \$370.1 million - down \$20 million from the start of this term.

Mr Acting Mayor I want to applaud everyone sitting around this table for their discipline and determination over the current term of Council to make this possible.

It is difficult to pull the right economic levers at the right time, such that you can stimulate growth while simultaneously paying down debt.

But we have achieved that, and I thank each of you for your contribution to making that strategy work.

We plan to deliver an operating surplus of \$76 million.

That surplus means council can reinvest in community infrastructure that we would otherwise have to borrow for.

In 2019/20 borrowings will amount to \$25 million, exceeded by expected repayments of \$33.9 million

Mr Acting Mayor, you are looking at an excellent set of books and I'm sure everyone will agree it puts us in a strong financial

position.

We, as a council, have worked hard to achieve the right balance in this budget.

We have been conservative when it comes to rates and charges, yet we continue to deliver the significant infrastructure projects to meet the current and future needs of this region.

It hasn't always been easy, but the rewards have been great.

Especially when you look at region building projects like the opening of the Redcliffe Peninsula Railway Line and the construction of the university in Petrie which will open to students early next year.

Now we can look to the future with optimism and this Budget is strategically designed to deliver for the region by investing in our future.

We're one of Australia's fastest growing regions - with a population bigger than the ACT and almost double the city of Hobart.

By 2036 we'll have as many people in the Moreton Bay Region as they have in the entire state of Tasmania.

Mr Acting Mayor, as a resident of the mighty Hills district, I can tell you there's one thing I'm not willing to sacrifice in the face of population growth.

And that's lifestyle.

So I want to reiterate this Council's support for the comments Acting Mayor Charlton made about the increasing priority we need to give to investing in the sustainability and liveability of Moreton Bay Region.

I note his comments about a massive \$54.3 million investment in our environment Budget this year and I can confirm that this is an increase of more than \$3 million on last year.

This directly responds to community feedback and demonstrates that we listen to what our communities want Council to deliver.

Other highlights of the 2019/20 budget include a \$34.1 million spend on sport and recreation, more than \$17 million has been allocated to our libraries, arts and history and more than \$24

million will go towards our region's waterways and coastal areas.

Council will also invest more than \$58 million in waste management and \$1.8 million for disaster management this financial year.

But having a big vision for the future of this region doesn't mean we've lost sight of the little guy. It doesn't forget our pensioners, our residents with disabilities or our families.

This Budget acknowledges that many people in our region are struggling with genuine cost-of-living pressures.

I'm pleased to be able to say that we have successfully kept our rate increase as low as possible - in fact it's less than CPI.

CPI in Brisbane currently sits at 1.5% and our average total rate increase for owner-occupied houses will be 1.46%

That works out at \$21.32 per annum, or just 41 cents per week.

This demonstrates our commitment to keeping the cost of living in the Moreton Bay Region as low as possible, while also maintaining our strong and stable economy.

This Council knows how to live within its means, without penny pinching from the most vulnerable in our community.

Which is why we are standing by our residents on a full pension and providing them with much needed relief from the financial stresses they face.

Council will continue its pensioner remission scheme - an initiative which delivers a rates subsidy of \$250 per annum to the nearly 16,000 pensioners who choose to call the Moreton Bay Region their home.

There'll also be no increase in the residential waste management utility charge - because this Council believes in providing the best standard of service to our residents

I'm also pleased to announce today that there will be no increase in the regional infrastructure separate charge.

Mr Acting Mayor, council has worked hard to achieve the delicate balance involved in keeping rates and charges low in the face of rising cost-of-living pressures, while also delivering region-building and job-creating infrastructure projects that cater to the rapid growth of our region and ensure a bright

future for our community.

I wish to thank all of the councillors for their commitment to delivering a strong and sustainable budget that caters to the diverse needs of our large community.

And on behalf of my fellow Councillors I'd like to thank the council staff who have worked tirelessly over the past few months to prepare this budget who have assisted councillors to deliver a strong, balanced and economically responsible budget.

I would like to especially thank Keith Pattinson for his many years of service to this council and dedication to the budget process. Keith has been a guiding light and a code breaker, deciphering legislative change and mentoring many councillors including myself. Thank you for your patience and knowledge.

Can I say that as a father of four, this Budget gives me hope for the future. Tonight I will be able to say hand-on-heart to my children that thanks to the decisions we're making today, they will enjoy a smarter, greener, and better connected Moreton Bay Region.

I can tell my kids that this region's brightest days are ahead as we continue to deliver for the region and invest in the future.

I commend this budget.

Thank you.