

Ipswich City Council
2011-2012 Budget Speech
Delivered by Mayor Paul Pisasale
June 27, 2011

Budget 2011-2012 – moving forward together

This budget continues to deliver the mechanism to lead the way in partnership with the people of Ipswich.

The start of 2011 was one of the toughest times our city has experienced as we were hit with the worst and most costly natural disaster in the city's history.

The floods of January 2011 caused \$120 million damage to the city infrastructure – this does not include the losses of business and individual properties.

However our city and its people rose to the challenge where we came together as one and showed everyone what the Ipswich spirit is made of.

We are now with time heading for a full recovery, with the knowledge many people still need our support and assistance.

We also know that families are also under pressure from increases in the cost of living.

Since being elected mayor in 2004, myself, councillors and staff have worked hard to deliver improved efficiencies to help keep annual rate rises to an absolute minimum, and at the same time keep our city moving forward and be the envy of many other cities.

We have always had the goal of keeping increases at or near inflation and delivering a city we are proud to call home.

During the drought it was a particularly tough time to keep increases in check, but we did it.

Now the flood has given us our biggest challenge yet repairing roads, bridges, drainage, parks, buildings and other community infrastructure.

In bringing down this budget two decisions had to be made - To keep rates under control while fixing damaged infrastructure to bring our city back to normal, and to keep Ipswich on the path to growth while looking after our people.

We must strive to get the balance right, and even though the flood caused the community a lot of pain both physically and emotionally, it is time to continue to move forward and look to a positive future.

Last month we celebrated the official opening of the new \$30 million world-class parkland Robelle Domain in Springfield Central – it was a tremendous day for Ipswich.

Robelle Domain has already won its first award - the Australia Institute of Landscape Architects Queensland 2011 Design Award in Landscape Architecture was awarded to Vee Design, and I'm sure there are many more awards to come.

Ipswich is still growing at a rapid rate. It is vital we manage the increase in population based on the right amount of infrastructure, conservation and sustainable development.

Latest state government population forecasts confirm Ipswich is the fastest growing city in Queensland.

The next 10 years indicates 5% growth, annually.

This means the population will grow from the current 175,000 to almost 287,000 by 2021, an increase of 64%. This budget keeps us on track to manage growth.

Sustainable growth

We welcome growth – as long as it is managed in a sustainable and efficient way.

Ipswich is at the heart of south east Queensland and our future is being secured with the continued record spending on major infrastructure by the state and federal governments, and the establishment of regional offices.

Work is already underway on the passenger rail line from Richlands to Springfield Central due for completion in just two years, while the Ipswich Motorway is due for completion in around 18 months. Our thanks to the state and federal governments for this investment in our growth.

A sustainable future must be built around efficient public transport which encourages people to get out of their cars. Great cities are built around people, not cars.

More than ever Ipswich is part of the solution to housing population growth in south east Queensland.

Master-planned communities like Springfield, and in the near future, Ripley Valley, will confirm our vision of “live, work and play” is more than a slogan, but an action in Ipswich.

Creating jobs

The lifeblood of any community is based on creating jobs.

Ipswich leads the way in developing business and industry opportunities with 43% of available industrial, business and aerospace land in south east Queensland. What was once considered a liability is now one of our city's greatest assets.

Ipswich City Council is committed to encouraging new business investment and promoting employment growth. To further strengthen our commitment and support for new investment council's Office of Economic Development will now report to directly to the CEO and Mayor.

The Office of Economic Development provides valuable assistance to new and existing businesses seeking to establish or expand in Ipswich.

A strong Ipswich CBD

This budget continues our journey to create a CBD that serves our city, south east Queensland and its people.

It is just over two years since Ipswich City Council established Ipswich City Properties Pty Ltd to buy and take control of the future of our city heart.

A large amount of work led to a partnership with Leighton Properties and the unveiling late last year of a 3D model of the site occupied by Ipswich City Square shopping complex.

The first stage of the redevelopment will focus on the corner of Bell and Brisbane streets with demolition works due to start by Christmas.

Next year the first of up to 4 high rise towers will flag the beginning of the biggest change to our city centre in more than a generation.

This is the start of bringing our city heart back to its former glory, by embracing our heritage and developing a sustainable-focused city.

Coles will announce later this morning that Ipswich has been chosen as the preferred site for their biggest supermarket ever to be built in Queensland.

Coles will replace on the old store between Brisbane and Limestone streets that was hit by the flood with a new state-of-the-art supermarket more than twice the size of the old one and raised to be flood-proof.

I want to thank Coles for their commitment, investment and confidence in the future of Ipswich Central as a major regional centre in south east Queensland.

City finances

Budget 2011-2012 builds on the many achievements of the past year, and keeps Ipswich moving forward.

However it could not come together without consideration of the flood repair bill.

We need to do the equivalent of three years of work in less than two years.

More than half the general rate increase this year is for further flood recovery work.

All damaged council roads and 90% of damaged parks will be fully rebuilt by the end of 2012.

Council has received substantial financial help from state and federal governments under existing natural disaster arrangement; however it does not cover the total repair bill.

Despite all Mother Nature could throw at us, our finances are still in great shape.

We continue to deliver budgets which are strong on growth but very responsible in terms getting the balance right for residents and our city.

To get back to normal in a reasonable period of time it is important we have everything repaired, the sooner the better, so we can focus on our bright future.

This budget is what is needed to get our city back on track and not lose any momentum from all the hard work of the past few years.

Again this year we present a solid and responsible budget which leads the way in south east Queensland by –

- not cutting services to the community
- not cutting staff through forced redundancies, and
- not borrowing excessive amounts of money

It continues to keep Ipswich and its people the main priority.

For category 1 residential owner occupiers the average increase in the differential rate will be 3.52% or 71 cents per week - this is just under the Brisbane March quarter CPI.

Flood recovery work will make up 1.88% or 38 cents per week of the above amount.

Without the flood and the anticipated additional repair costs over and above that funded from state and federal funds, the general rate increase would have been 33 cents per week or 1.64%.

The additional 38 cents per week allows Council to borrow \$28M specifically for flood repair work.

The net increase for residential owner occupiers for all council services including the state government fire levy, cleansing charge and environmental levy will be 4.9% or \$1.26 per week.

In 2011-2012 we bring in another record budget of \$570 million - an increase of \$141 million over last year.

Again this year a flat rate discount of \$120 per year applies for payments made in full and by the due date.

Residential owner/occupiers will have rises capped at 7.5% before discounts or remissions.

Remissions of up to \$245 per year apply for those on the full aged pension.

This budget positions Ipswich to continue to move forward in providing services and infrastructure for the community.

Council finances are in excellent shape. The net debt position will be \$189 million, which represents only 6.61% of assets.

This week marks one year since water and sewerage was handed over to Queensland Urban Utilities.

Much has been said about water assets and if we should take back control of water.

While the option has been put before us by the state government, it is simply too hard and costly to unravel Queensland Urban Utilities. Like Brisbane, we have made the decision to stay with QUU, and fight for a position on the board.

Weekly garbage and fortnightly recycling services will cost 75 cents a day or \$272 per year.

Recently council closed our own landfill as it had reached capacity and now uses a number of private landfills.

This charge also covers the cost of council sending waste to private landfill facilities operated by Veolia, Transpacific, and Thiess.

Kerbside Cleanup

In the coming 12 months the popular kerbside cleanup will make a welcome return.

This time we will do it differently. Rather than have a citywide pickup over a few weeks, it will be organised by Division in consultation with the local councillor.

Our aim is to also be innovative and to work with employment service providers in helping unemployed people gain important workplace skills.

Rubbish will be removed on a suburb by suburb basis over the course of the year. Information will be made available once the program commences.

The introduction of the voluntary green bins program for garden waste begins from September 1 and will help to reduce the amount of rubbish we send to landfills in the future. The cost for each green waste service will be \$12.50 per quarter.

This will be good for the environment and help keep wheelie bins increases to a minimum.

Riverview and Rosewood transfer stations had a record year partly because of the January flood.

Just over 144,000 vehicles went across the weighbridges and 34,228 tonnes of waste was received.

Nearly 19,500 (59%) tonnes of this material was diverted from landfill and recycled.

The good news is there will be no increase in the fee for use of the transfer stations.

City works

As mentioned earlier, flood repairs to council infrastructure will be in the range of \$120 million – this includes roads, parks and buildings.

Capital expenditure on roads and drainage projects in 2011-2012 will be another record at \$100.4 million.

Included in this amount is \$4.2 million for flood planning, improvements to flood-prone crossings and the development of the ALERT system to provide roadside warnings to motorists that the road ahead is closed.

Major projects in 2011-2012 include:

- Kerners Road deviation to provide a direct link between Deebling Heights and Yamanto - \$9 million this year which will follow early works already completed. Works will include extra turning lanes and traffic lights at the intersection of Warwick Road and Hall Street.
- Collingwood Drive extension to allow direct access to Woodlinks State School. The cost of stage 1 is \$9 million with \$2.5 million allocated this year.

Streets Ahead

This successful program is in its sixth year. It targets older areas of the city for kerb and channelling upgrades and road surface improvements.

Projects are allocated across all Divisions.

Since the program began a total of 76 streets have been upgraded.

A total of \$2.2 million has been allocated to the Streets Ahead program this year.

Safe City

We are determined to continue to support the fight against crime. As a community we tackled these issues head-on in the 1990s when the first Safe City cameras were installed by council.

We have built a public safety surveillance system in Ipswich that is regarded as the best in Australia and world-class.

Crime has been reduced by 78%.

Safe City remains the model others follow because of our strong partnership between council, police and the business community.

The Safe City network of 190 cameras is monitored 24/7 from a state-of-the-art control room.

Later this year cameras will be installed in Redbank Plains and Bundamba taking the total to more than 200.

New in 2012 will be a \$400,000 investment in cameras for Rosewood and a fibre link upgrade. The federal government is contributing \$250,000 to this project.

Parks and natural environment

Ipswich is proud to boast about our 500+ parks in city and rural areas. They offer more than just a place to have a picnic or take a walk. They also contribute to making a healthy environment and preserving precious conservation areas.

A total of \$12.8 million is allocated towards the maintenance and operations of parks and recreation facilities.

A further \$3.6 million towards the \$7 million total cost for Stage 2 of River Heart Parklands. This project is jointly funded by the Australian Government.

Stage 2 will include a new zero-depth water play area in the vicinity of Bob Gamble Park.

The entire riverbank between the David Trumpy Bridge and Bob Gamble Park will be enhanced with landscaping, new boardwalks, seating and electric BBQs.

The successful flood-resilient design principles used in Stage 1 of River Heart Parklands will be extended east under the road bridge.

The Enviroplan levy increases by \$1 per year.

From this levy over \$2.5 million will be spent on management and operation of more than 6000 hectares of conservation areas.

This land is now preserved for future generations to enjoy and is owned by the people of Ipswich.

A further \$4 million will be spent on acquisition of key parcels of land for extending conservation areas – this is in addition to \$6 million allocated last year.

Ipswich is regarded as a leader in partnering with rural landowners to establish Voluntary Conservation Agreements.

There are now 103 agreements in place, covering a total of over 8000 hectares.

We're also very proud of the 864 hectares of urban bushland reserves in suburban areas close to where people live. There's also 553 hectares of parklands.

Up to \$600,000 is set aside for maintenance of council reserves with a further \$176,000 allocated to river catchments management and Healthy Waterways.

Keeping streets clean, tidy and well-manicured enhances pride in the community.

A total of \$6 million has been set aside for mowing and maintenance of our streetscapes.

In 2011-2012 a further 80,000 square metres of streetscape will become council's responsibility.

Sport is always a priority in the budget. The highlights in 2011-2012 include:

- \$10 million for operations and maintenance of 343 parks and sports grounds
- \$3.65 million for the Stage 1 of the new Tivoli Sportsground complex which will include a new multi-user clubhouse, recreational areas with BBQs, new internal bitumen road access, car park and playground
- \$875,000 allocated for management and operations of swim centres

- \$2 million for lighting and upgrades to the Ivor Marsden Memorial Sports Centre. This will allow West Moreton Cricket Club to host major cricket carnivals
- \$1.7 million for redevelopment of sports grounds

Already announced last month is council's commitment and support of the V8 Supercars for the next three years to the "Ipswich 300" at Queensland Raceway. This partnership has been entered into with Events Queensland.

Recreational facilities for use by community groups represent an important part of the budget by providing community centres and sporting clubs a place to call home.

Langley Park Hall and surrounds will receive significant funding of \$990,000.

Camira Friends and Neighbours and other community groups will have access to the new look hall which will have a number of improvements including –

- A larger indoor community space which doubles the size of the existing hall
- Improved amenities; and
- Upgrades to kitchen facilities

Promoting exercise and healthy lifestyle activities and a sustainable Ipswich has attracted \$3.2 million in the budget this year. This program consists of pedestrian safety and disability improvements and cycle safety upgrades.

Major projects include:

- Construction of Stage 2 of the Brassall Bikeway from Workshops Street to Vogel Road via the former historic railway corridor. This is supported by state government funding of \$412,500.
- A total of 67 new bus shelters
- Safety improvements along Brisbane Terrace Goodna

New in this budget - \$200,000 has been allocated to commence making improvements to the make the city more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Ipswich – a global city leading the way with a digital economy

Ipswich keeps winning national and international awards.

The most recent was the awarded by the USA-based Intelligent Community Forum for our leadership in transforming the local economy from traditional industries to the digital economy.

Ipswich will lead the way as one of the first 20 sites to rollout the National Broadband Network.

We have dedicated resources to work with the federal government and businesses to facilitate the rollout of optic fibre cable in Ipswich.

Our intention is to undertake various economic and community initiatives in partnership with the Commonwealth to encourage uptake and application of the vastly improved broadband speeds.

Ipswich – a city with heart and soul

We are a city with a proud past. Coal mining dates back to 1843 when the first mine beside the river at Redbank began operation.

In its heyday coal mining in Ipswich and Rosewood employed 1900 workers and produced 58% of the states coal output.

The first recorded death was in 1882 as no records were kept the first 39 years.

To date 184 miners lost their lives in mining accidents.

Our mining heritage will be acknowledged with a memorial to those miners.

The idea has been warmly received by all councillors following a presentation made on behalf of a group of former mine workers.

Today I can confirm council's commitment of \$100,000 towards the project.

The location of the memorial will be determined in consultation with a community committee.

The committee will undertake further fundraising and seek sponsorship to meet the total cost estimated at \$300,000.

Ipswich – a cultural and creative city

Culture and the arts are at the core of any successful and creative community.

Ipswich Civic Centre is looking better than ever with the recent upgrades to the Cunningham Room and the installation of a new lift.

The July to December program is sure to have many sell-out performances and attract an increasing number of patrons from outside the Ipswich area.

Later this year international artists Herman's Hermits and a Festival of Russian Ballet will be in Ipswich.

A showcase of talented Ipswich performers will take to the stage –

- Ipswich Seniors Concert Group present Send in the Clowns
- Ipswich Musical Theatre will bring us Oliver; and
- Ipswich Orpheus Chorale will revive Oklahoma

Cultural events include Waltzing Our Matilda by Opera Queensland.

There's plenty for children as well including Ben 10.

The Ipswich Art Gallery is currently closed until late July for replacement of the flooring in the main hall and refurbishment of the children's gallery.

When the gallery reopens we can look forward to new exhibitions including Eamon O'Toole's Motorsport.

Living heritage

The former Baptist Church in Brisbane Street is set for a \$1.5 million transformation with the assistance of the Australian Government into a modern performing arts centre with a focus on young people.

This decision has been based on community feedback which has shown there is a demand for a facility of this type in our city.

It will be fully refurbished and fitted out with a sophisticated sound and light system.

Ipswich City Council will manage this community facility. Tenders are being called now with works programmed for completion early next year.

The successful Awards for Excellence in Design and Heritage enters its 20th year in 2011.

These awards publicly recognise, promote and reward excellence in the design and construction of new developments, the conservation of heritage places include the environment and student awards for research and projects throughout Ipswich.

Ipswich libraries – a place for lifelong learning

Ipswich libraries are the most visited service provided by council and play a vital role in education.

Last year more than 480,000 individual visitors came into our libraries.

Online more than 280,000 people logged on.

Some 1.2 million items were borrowed and 30,000 new titles added.

New this year – free Wi-Fi access for library members during opening hours – at the Ipswich city branch.

Libraries and learning partners across Australia are making 2012 the National Year of Reading

Ipswich library, which opened its doors at the current location in 1994, will undergo a mini face-lift beginning next month.

Furniture and shelving will be reorganised to provide more open spaces.

Free internet access, which has proved very popular and will be moved to the ground floor.

The main city library will be closed this weekend to allow for the changes to be made.

Ipswich library continues to lead the way with a comprehensive free IT training program including classes specifically tailored to seniors - Silver Surfers.

The annual Poetry Feast continues into its 9th year in 2011 and receives tremendous support from the community and sponsors.

Each year this competition encourages budding poets and poetry writing for all ages.

It also generates positive publicity for Ipswich Australia-wide.

One of our aims is to also develop stronger cultural ties with China and the city of Changde which has a rich cultural background.

In addition to hosting the biennial Poets' Festival, Changde features a four kilometre long poem wall which is engraved with more than 1500 poems and paintings.

Ipswich – leading the way as a caring community

Ipswich City Council strongly believes in supporting the community to enrich and enhance our lives by belonging to a caring community.

This in turn boosts pride and well-being.

Council appreciate the great work of community organisations. We will maintain the program of community donations and support.

We will also work in partnership with new community groups. A special thanks to the thousands of volunteers who help make our city a better place.

The annual free open day for Ipswich residents at the Workshops Rail Museum gets whole lot bigger this year.

It now becomes the 2011 Annual Workers Reunion and Heritage Faire which includes the open day for Ipswich families.

A large crowd is expected at The Workshops on Sunday August 24.

Popular events will continue with a strong commitment to multicultural events including NAIDOC week.

New initiatives in 2012 include –

- An Indigenous youth leadership program
- An Indigenous youth sport and cultural day
- City volunteer awards celebration; and
- The establishment of an African's women's group

Responsible pet ownership

From July 1 a new partnership agreement between Ipswich City Council and the Animal Welfare League will further increase awareness of responsible pet ownership with the aim of achieving zero the number of healthy cats and dogs which are euthanized.

A total of \$1.8 million is allocated for animal patrols, inspections and investigations.

Discover Ipswich

Tourism is making an increasingly important contribution to the Ipswich economy.

A new promotional DVD will be produced highlighting new and exciting attractions in the region.

Ipswich City Council will work in partnership with Lockyer Valley and Somerset Regional Councils to develop a regional destination brand with assistance from Brisbane Marketing.

Ipswich – moving forward together

Our city is clearly on the right path for sustainable growth and a desirable place to live and invest.

My thanks again this year to all councillors who have worked hard on their portfolios and Divisions and the role they played during the flood.

Our Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and all Council staff are also deserving of recognition for their continued efforts in delivering for our city.

Improved efficiencies are giving residents better value for money, while Ipswich City Council's customer service is being recognised for its consistent high quality.

This budget builds on the hard work of previous years and sets Ipswich on the path of continued success.

We are all ambassadors for our great city.

Let's spread the positive news together.

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