

# Ipswich Mayor Teresa Harding 2022-2023 Budget Speech

30 June 2022

My fellow Councillors, CEO, residents and ratepayers of Ipswich, it is my honour to table the Ipswich City Council 2022-2023 Budget and Annual Plan.

This is the third Budget handed down by this Council but undeniably the toughest.

From the start of our Budget planning just six months ago, so much in Ipswich, and indeed the world, has shifted.

After two years of a punishing COVID pandemic that has wreaked havoc on our health system, our economy and our way of life – 2022 has tested us even further.

In February, South East Queensland was once again hit by devastating floods.

But a very different flood to 2011 – a rain bomb that sat over the south-east and refused to relent, causing rivers and creeks to rise rapidly.

While the City of Ipswich was fortunate to suffer no loss of life during this disaster, the impact on our homes and businesses, parks and roads, and our ability to bounce back physically – and mentally – was immense.

It seemed the rain had only just stopped falling when a significant weather event in May was followed by another, but thankfully, less severe flood.

Nevertheless, the damage was done and the city had to once again embark on a long road to recovery.

Council led the clean-up removing almost 10,000 tonnes of waste from across the city, giving residents free access to our recycling and refuse centres and providing free kerbside collection and skip bins for residents, businesses and community groups in need.

There were more than 8,500 visitors to Riverview and Rosewood Recycling and Refuse Centres, and Council's kerbside collection crews collected at least 1,000 tonnes of waste directly from affected properties.

More than 290 skip bins, around \$150,000 in hire fees, were delivered free of charge to assist Ipswich businesses clean up after this disaster.

Our recovery and rebuild however is a much tougher challenge - and one that will take the city many months, if not years, to overcome.

In the immediate aftermath of the floods, more than one hundred roads had to be repaired and reopened, as well as around a hundred sporting and recreation facilities.

Council has filled more than 3,000 potholes since the floods, and has set aside a further \$1 million in this Budget to fix 6,000 more in the next year.

The Ipswich Civic Centre suffered significant water damage requiring extensive repairs, the Lobb Street Bridge was repaired not once but twice, and Colleges Crossing was all but destroyed.

While ensuring the safety and speedy recovery of the City of Ipswich is our highest priority, it comes at a significant cost to Council.

To date, Council has spent more than \$5 million on flood recovery – and this Budget will deliver another \$30 million to get our city back on its feet.

But, at the same time we were starting our recovery, the world started to feel the financial pressures caused by the War in Ukraine, the ongoing impacts of COVID 19, interruptions to fuel supplies, and a global supply and trade shortage.

These global factors are making life in Ipswich more expensive and putting pressure on the hip pocket for our residents and businesses.

While Council is not immune to these pressures, today's Budget balances the cost of living pressures we are all experiencing with the investment needed to boost our flood recovery and increase essential services.

Today Council delivers a record \$621 million budget for the people of Ipswich, underpinned by a total rate rise of 4.49 per cent for residential properties.

This represents an average increase \$1.48 cents per week for residents - and is supported by an average commercial rate rise of 3.45 per cent.

And while it has been a tough few years for our communities, this Budget also paves the way for our bright future ahead.

In a first for council, we are easing the cost of living pressures for the most vulnerable members of our community through a new part-pension concession.

From tomorrow (1 July 2022), residents who receive a part-pension will be eligible to receive a pensioner remission of \$120 per annum.

This will bring immediate financial relief to around 3,500 part-pensioners, and put \$430,000 back into the pockets of those who truly need it.

Council is also building for our future, as Ipswich continues to maintain its position of Queensland's fastest growing city.

Our city is set to welcome a further 310,000 residents, more than doubling our population in the coming decades.

To manage this growth sustainably, it will require significant investment in our roads, transport and infrastructure across all levels of government.

Ipswich City Council is taking on this challenge - investing heavily in its three-year capital plan and delivering more than \$470 million of significant projects between now and 2025.

\$229 million of this will be invested in Ipswich in the next 12 months to upgrade our local road networks, improve our parks and sporting fields, and deliver strategic transport projects to keep our communities moving.

For our fastest growing areas of Ipswich, this will see planning and design work delivered for vital upgrades of Ripley and Fischer roads in the Ripley Valley, busy School Road in Redbank Plains and a further \$15 million towards the construction of Redbank Plains Road.

Across our established suburbs, more than \$32 million has been set aside for rehabilitation of sealed and gravel roads, plus new and upgraded kerb and channels.

Today's budget will also see Council invest in the first stages of the delivery of the Ipswich to Springfield Central Public Transport Corridor, contributing \$500,000 towards a \$10 million tripartite commitment to make this critical transport project shovel ready.

This project is a critical element in addressing significant transport underinvestment throughout Ipswich, and will finally connect our growing suburbs to fast, reliable and affordable public transport.

And, as we sit in the Chamber today, outside Tulumur Place is alive with school holiday activity as we continue to invest in a thriving CBD to restore the beating heart of our city.

While it wasn't the decision of this Council to embark on this ambitious project, we've had no other option than to deliver the best possible outcome and greatest financial return for the people of Ipswich.

This month saw the first two tenants open in the Nicholas Street Precinct - Gelatissimo and Terry White Chemmart - with many more to follow in the next 12 months.

As we watch a once derelict mall transform into one of South East Queensland's premier dining and entertainment precincts, I am proud to say that this is owned by and for the people of Ipswich.

Environment and sustainability remain a high priority for Council, particularly when it comes to one of our biggest challenges – waste.

Council is committed to transitioning the city away from landfill and towards a circular economy with a \$6.3 million contribution towards a council-owned Material Recovery Facility – in partnership with Redland and Logan councils.

We are also prioritising our local waste collection for a growing Ipswich community. Council will invest another \$10 million to upgrade and expand Council's waste truck fleet to ensure - as our region continues to grow - so are the services we deliver to the Ipswich community.

This is in addition to an overall commitment of \$11 million to protect and improve our natural assets over the next 12 months.

Our much-loved White Rock-Spring Mountain Conservation Estate suffered significant damage during our recent weather events. So as part of Council's rehabilitation work, we will deliver a boardwalk and lookout to see this iconic estate built back even better.

And of course, we know just how much the community takes pride in its own open spaces – our local parks, sporting fields and even our own footpaths.

It has been extremely difficult, through the impacts of COVID 19 and a significant wet season, for our contractors to continue to meet the high level of service Council sets for its mowing and maintenance.

Therefore, Council will deliver an additional \$1.7 million for an expanded in-house mowing and open space maintenance team.

This will create jobs for additional 21 staff over the next few months, and put Council back in control to ensure we are continuing to meet the community's expectations when it comes to mowing.

These are indeed tough times for Ipswich and there is no denying this has been a tough budget to develop in the midst of mounting external pressures.

However, we as councillors are tasked with delivering a Budget that manages the challenges of today while continuing to plan for tomorrow – and I believe we have achieved that today.

And of course, every budget and annual plan is the result of months of hard work and deliberation.

I would like to thank the Deputy Mayor and my fellow councillors for their leadership in delivering this Budget, as well as our CEO and her team for the support they have offered us along the way.

This Council has delivered a sound and solid Budget for Ipswich that continues to deliver on our visions and ambitions for the future.

Thank you, I commend the 2022-23 Budget and Annual Plan to the Chamber.