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Mayor's speech | Budget 2021/22**24 June 2021, 9:00am**

My fellow Councillors, Acting CEO, residents and ratepayers of Ipswich, it is my honour to table the Ipswich City Council 2021-2022 Budget and Annual Plan.

Today is an important day for Ipswich, not just for now but for our future.

When you elected your new Ipswich City Council just over a year ago, we were well aware of the significant challenges that were facing the Ipswich community.

Amidst an unprecedented global pandemic, we all promised to undo years of financial neglect of previous administrations. We undertook the task of leading Ipswich out of its tumultuous past, and into a new era of good governance, financial management and a focus on our community.

We committed to giving you the local government that you can rely on.

As we've negotiated our way through the worst of COVID-19, Ipswich City Council has been there every step of the way for those hardest hit by the pandemic.

Over the past fifteen months, we've distributed more than \$1.2 million in COVID relief directly to small businesses, sporting groups, artists and community organisation to see them through a tough 2020.

We're righting the wrongs of the past by establishing Ipswich City Council as a leader in Australia for transparency and openness.

From the Transparency and Integrity Hub which gives residents unprecedented access to the way Council spends your money, to livestreaming Council meetings and publishing agendas and minutes

and publishing our 3-year capital works program for public scrutiny. So, you can hold us to account.

We are the Council that has brought the Nicholas Street Precinct back on track and will see our new administration building – 1 Nicholas Street – open to the public on Monday, 3 months ahead of schedule.

We've also taken strong action in Ipswich City Council's war on waste, through the delivery of the Waste and Circular Economy Transformation Directive.

We're putting residents first as we face private waste operators head on, driving industry best practice, promoting a strong compliance culture and ensuring we're minimising the negative impacts of waste on our community.

But our job is far from done.

Today, our city is home to more than 230,000 residents. By 2041, the city will swell by another 330,000 residents, more than doubling our population in the coming decades.

We are Queensland's fastest growing city.

The growth we are experiencing presents both challenges and opportunities for Ipswich City Council. It requires strategic investment to ensure our city can grow sustainably in the future.

And so today, we adopt the Ipswich City Council Budget for 2021/22.

It's a Budget that considers the challenges of today while planning for the opportunity that our city's growth will bring in the coming decades.

Specifically, Council is investing heavily in the infrastructure that connects our city and keeps our economy moving.

This is driven by a significant investment of \$54.5 million to maintain, upgrade and continue to expand our road network.

This investment is not just in our new and growing areas of Ipswich but will also ensure our established suburbs continue to flourish.

This includes the roll out of a \$22 million, three-year kerb and channel program which is set to revitalise streets across Ipswich – a commitment that represents a 69 percent boost compared the previous two years average spend.

It also sets aside a \$4.6 million boost to upgrade and maintain our rural roads - a 40 per cent increase on the past year's expenditure.

This investment will ensure, as our city grows, we will grow together.

To better prepare for growth, we are also fast-tracking our major works schedule, including some of the biggest road projects in council history. \$7.5 million for Redbank Plains Road and \$12.8 million for the duplication and upgrade of the Springfield Parkway and Springfield-Greenbank Arterial.

Council is also committed to fighting for the transport investment we need from other levels of government to protect the liveability of Ipswich.

The Ipswich to Springfield Central public transport corridor will link our booming suburbs, from Springfield Central, through Redbank Plains, Ripley, Deebing Heights, Yamanto to Ipswich to ensure our residents have access to jobs, education and services.

Council has committed a one-off \$500,000 for the options analysis for the I2S project, at an overall cost of \$2.5 million.

With an additional \$1 million on the table from the State Government, we'll continue to advocate for the necessary investment from the Commonwealth to advance this vital project.

Your new Council is also taking action to protect one of our greatest asset, our environment, with significant steps in this year's Budget and beyond to ensure our beautiful green spaces and waterways are secured for future generations.

This includes a significant \$11 million investment in parks, sport and the environment to ensure we protect the liveability and lifestyle we enjoy today – and for our residents of the future.

Council has also taken the bold step to increase its Enviroplan Levy from \$46 to \$51 annually, creating an additional \$425,000 for Ipswich's environmental assets.

This will see almost \$1.3 million invested back into our prized and pristine conservation estates, such as White Rock – Spring Mountain, Mount Grandchester, and the Flinders Goolman conservation estates.

Council is also committed to getting back to basics and are ensuring we're delivering a city our residents enjoy and are proud to call their own.

From an increased investment in mowing of half a million dollars, \$3.9 million to manage our local sporting fields, \$1.1 million to expedite pothole repair, and \$3.3 million to maintain our five swim centres and popular Orion lagoon.

As we've seen from the Federal and State budgets, as well as our neighbouring councils across the region, financially times continue to be tough.

With this in mind, your new Council has spent many months debating and shaping the \$532 million Budget we hand down today.

For the first time in a long time, we have a clear and strategic plan for our city's future.

The 2021-22 Annual Plan in conjunction with iFuture, our new five-year Corporate Plan and 20-year community vision, is guiding our Council's decision making in a collaborative, open and transparent way.

iFuture is built on feedback on what matters to the community. The project brought together the diverse voices of our communities, with 18,000 residents given the opportunity to shape our city's future.

Through good governance and long-term planning, we have limited the rate rise for Ipswich residents to one of the lowest in South East Queensland at just 2.75 percent.

This represents an additional cost of 94 cents per week for the average rates bill.

While we understand that any rate rise will be felt by residents, Council believes it has found a balance between limiting the financial impact while ensuring we're investing in Ipswich's future.

Council's 2021-22 Budget is the second from this Council. It is strong and strategic, and one that can give the community considerable optimism about the future of Ipswich.

When this Council was sworn in in April 2020, the community told us loud and clear that they wanted their Council to listen to them.

That is our commitment - to listen to our community, to operate in an open, transparent and honest way, and deliver a Council you can rely on.

Leading our city is a significant responsibility. It's not one this Council takes lightly. We recognise that every cent of ratepayer funds must represent an investment in a better future.

Today, Council is delivering on its commitment to invest in a bright and prosperous future for the City of Ipswich.