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BARCOO SHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERS RESPONSIBLE BUDGET FOCUSED ON RECOVERY, RESILIENCE AND COST-OF-LIVING RELIEF

Barcoo Shire Council has adopted a responsible and community-focused 2026-27 Budget that balances the need to maintain essential services and infrastructure while recognising the cost-of-living pressures facing residents and businesses across the Shire.

The Budget reflects Council's commitment to sound financial management, strategic planning and long-term sustainability, while prioritising the delivery of critical flood recovery works and investment in essential community infrastructure.

Mayor Sally O'Neil said Council had worked hard to minimise the financial impact on ratepayers while continuing to invest in the future of the region.

"Council understands that families, businesses and primary producers are continuing to face cost-of-living pressures," Cr O'Neil said.

"That is why Councillors made a conscious decision to limit the general rate increase to 3 per cent, which is below the current rate of inflation.

"Importantly, Council has also frozen fees and charges for the coming financial year to ensure we do not place additional financial pressure on our community."

Another key feature of the 2026-27 Budget is that Barcoo Shire Council remains debt-free, placing the organisation in a strong financial position to respond to future challenges and opportunities while avoiding the burden of loan repayments on current and future ratepayers.

"Council's ability to remain debt-free is a significant achievement and reflects the disciplined financial management approach adopted over many years," Cr O'Neil said.

The Budget has been developed with a strong focus on financial discipline and ensuring every available funding opportunity is pursued.

"Our organisation has worked extremely hard to keep operational costs under control while continuing to deliver high-quality services across one of Queensland's largest local government areas," Cr O'Neil said.

"Council continues to aggressively pursue State and Federal grant funding opportunities so that we can maximise external investment in our communities and reduce the burden on local ratepayers."

A major priority within the 2026-27 Budget is the delivery of the extensive infrastructure recovery program resulting from the March 2025 flood event, the largest disaster in Barcoo Shire's history.

"The reconstruction and restoration of flood-damaged infrastructure remains Council's number one priority," Cr O'Neil said.

"Over the coming years we will be delivering significant road, drainage and public infrastructure recovery projects that will strengthen our communities and help build greater resilience for future disaster events."

Council's road construction business also continues to play a critical role in the organisation's financial sustainability.

"Our road construction operations are performing strongly and continue to deliver value for ratepayers by generating returns that support Council's broader service delivery and infrastructure programs," Cr O'Neil said.

"Maintaining a productive and efficient works program allows Council to reinvest in local infrastructure and strengthen our financial position."

The Budget also includes significant investment in the replacement and refurbishment of cattle grids across the Shire, based on detailed condition assessments and proactive asset management practices.

"The grid replacement program is a strong example of good asset planning in action," Cr O'Neil said.

"Council has undertaken comprehensive inspections, condition assessments and maintenance activities across the network to identify priorities and ensure funding is directed towards the assets that need it most.

"By planning ahead and investing strategically, we can improve safety, reliability and the long-term performance of these important rural assets."

As part of the budget adoption process, Council also endorsed its new five-year Corporate Plan, which will guide Council's priorities and decision-making through to 2031.

The Corporate Plan was developed through extensive community consultation and engagement, ensuring local residents, businesses, industry stakeholders and community groups had the opportunity to help shape the future direction of the Shire.

The plan places a strong emphasis on infrastructure, community wellbeing, economic development, governance and disaster resilience.

"This Corporate Plan belongs to our community," Cr O'Neil said.

"We listened carefully to what residents told us during the consultation process and have developed a clear roadmap that reflects those priorities.

"Together, the Budget, Operational Plan and Corporate Plan provide a strong foundation for Barcoo Shire's future as we continue to recover, rebuild and create opportunities for our communities."

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