



Mayor's Address – 25 June 2025

I'm pleased to present the 2025–26 budget, focused on the core responsibilities of local government. It reflects responsible financial management and affordability for all our residents and businesses.

Council remains debt-free and financially strong, consistently delivering quality, cost-effective services - from water and sewerage, roads, and waste management to arts and culture, and clean, functional public amenities like parks, gardens, halls, and cemeteries.

Lean, Efficient & Cost-Conscious

Every dollar matters. Like household budgets, contractor, equipment, and material costs are rising for local government. Most of Council's revenue comes from local rates, and we have again actively pursued external funding to reduce the cost to ratepayers. With other levels of government tightening their budgets, we're protecting our modest cash reserves, focusing on maintaining \$672 million of our existing assets, and carefully assessing the long-term costs of any new projects and works to limit the costs now and into the future for ratepayers. The Queensland Audit Office ranks Goondiwindi Regional Council as one of Queensland's most financially stable. This stability is a testament to our commitment to financial prudence, which will serve the community well with the inevitable unknown and uncontrollable factors ahead for all.

The average general rate increase for 2025–26 is 4% (after discount). The operational budget is \$53.89 million, and the capital budget is \$24.74 million. Importantly, we've secured \$28.09 million in external funds to reduce the burden on ratepayers and fund essential projects.

Our small admin team supports residents and complements our outdoor staff, who comprise 65% of our workforce and maintain vital services across parks, water, waste, sewerage, and roads.

A Whole of Region Approach to Services and Projects

Our commitment to every resident across the region - from Gore to Weengallon and Billa Billa to Texas - drives our budget investments. This commitment is reflected in our allocations for essential services:

- \$4.3 million to maintain our beautiful parks and gardens.
- \$550,000 for delivering library services across the region.
- \$1.85 million towards maintaining and upgrading sporting facilities, including our three regional pools.
- \$1.05 million to operate and upgrade community halls, facilities, cinema and museums.
- \$2.041 million investment dedicated to rural services, including tackling invasive pests, managing stock routes and reserves, and \$1.05 million to continue replacing Council's wild dog check fence.

Road Network Prioritised

We're dedicating \$21.71 million in 2025-26 to enhancing the road network. However, we face increasing pressure as deteriorating national and state roads divert traffic onto our local infrastructure without additional funding. Council will continue to advocate for increased state and federal funding to address the estimated \$30 million shortfall for high-priority repairs on state and federal highways. Highlights of Council's local road investment for 2025-26 include:

- \$130,000 for Riverton Road Heavy Vehicle Access Improvements
- \$850,000 for Goondiwindi Town Common Road Pavement Rehabilitation
- \$400,000 for Kildonan Road Edge Repairs and Rehabilitation
- \$240,000 for Kioma Road New Floodway
- \$100,000 for a New Floodway in Inglewood
- \$250,000 for the Daymar Weengallon Road Seal Extension
- \$100,000 for Inglewood and Texas Area Shoulder Re-sheeting
- \$318,700 for Yelarbon Keetah Road Widening
- \$40,000 for Improvements to Yelarbon East Sawmill Road
- \$1.9 million for Road Reseals
- \$1.9 million for Gravel Road Re-sheeting

Tackling Water, Sewerage and Waste

This year, Council will invest \$17.8 million in water and sewerage infrastructure and service delivery. This includes \$9.85 million in capital works improvements across Talwood, Yelarbon, Goondiwindi, Texas, and Inglewood. Notably, a multi-year \$4 million project for Texas sewerage infrastructure improvements continues, with approximately \$1 million of work to occur this financial year. The Texas sewerage project is the single most significant investment this Council has ever made for a sewerage project and will allow us to meet our regulatory requirements and the expected long-term community demand. There is also \$450,000 for upgrades at the Talwood Water Treatment Plant and \$350,000 for Stage 1 of the McLean Street water main renewal.

There is again a surge in waste management costs to approximately \$4 million. Our investments in this area are focused on improving efficiency and reducing illegal dumping costs, including \$28,000 towards surveillance at rural transfer stations. An additional \$100,000 to limit accessibility to only Yelarbon residents at their transfer station to assist in reducing illegal dumping, and \$75,000 will be invested in Inglewood to increase the capacity and manage waste better at the Inglewood Waste Facility.

Whilst residents improving waste habits will assist with keeping costs down, Council is actively advocating to the state government for changes to their current one-size-fits-all waste regulations that are too costly for regional areas.

Key Initiatives Delivered Across the Region

Council is proud to strengthen its partnerships with local community organisations, with over \$560,000 to support community groups including through our community donations, grants, tourism and regional arts grant programs. Central to this commitment is our dedication to supporting the arts. We continue to prioritise significant funding for a wide array of arts initiatives and will proudly support numerous events throughout the year. These investments not only enrich our cultural landscape but also enhance the overall quality of life for everyone in our region and attract numerous visitors each year to our region.

Council remains steadfast in our ongoing commitment to addressing housing issues within our community. We are committed to providing efficient and timely planning advice and approvals, and our door is always open to opportunities to diversify and expand the local economy. Our fundamental role is to support, not impede, development, fostering an environment for economic growth.

Council is also the local regulator for numerous state government functions, including building approvals, animal management, and food licensing. In these regulatory areas, our focus is to support and educate our residents, helping them navigate the requirements set by other levels of government with clarity and ease.

Some of the other highlights of the 2025-26 budget include:

- Upgrading the drainage plan for Yelarbon and \$80,000 for sealing the road between Burrell and Kaboon Streets.
- In consultation with the local community, \$35,000 will be used to improve the median strip in Talwood.
- In delivering on the Inglewood MacIntyre Sports Complex Master Plan, Inglewood residents will see over \$400,000 invested into the facility, including the relocation of the gym and pop-up irrigation for the oval.
- To benefit locals and tourists, \$150,000 will be invested in refurbishing public toilets in Texas. The Texas cemetery will receive a new \$30,000 columbarium and planning has commenced for an upgrade to the Texas Memorial Hall kitchen.
- In addition to numerous water and sewerage upgrades, Goondiwindi residents will also see \$204,000 invested into the lighting of Brennans Road Walkway, \$250,000 towards upgrading the change rooms at the Goondiwindi pool, and \$50,000 towards expanding the capacity of the Goondiwindi cemetery.

My fellow Councillors and I firmly believe in a balanced approach. This budget prioritises responsible financial management focused on our core responsibilities and keeping cost increases minimal. By focusing on our core business and delivering these services well, we make our region a better place for families to live, visitors to enjoy and an easier place to do business.

The Honourable Cr Lawrence Springborg AM
Mayor, Goondiwindi Regional Council



GOONDIWINDI REGIONAL COUNCIL BUDGET 2025-26

Addendum: Challenges with Australian Government Financial Assistance Grants

The Commonwealth provides the Financial Assistance Grant, which is distributed annually to local governments across Australia. There are two separately identified components to the Financial Assistance Grant: the General Purpose Grant and the Identified Road Grant.

Since this budget was tabled, the Commonwealth Government has announced that it will bring forward the payment of half of our 2025-26 Federal Assistance Grants into this current financial year (2024-25). This payment is not reflected in the figures above. While advance payment sounds generous, it creates significant problems for local governments. It masks the underlying financial challenges by distorting the current year's balance sheet, creating an artificial cash surplus and exacerbating any deficit in the next financial year when all the planned projects are to be delivered and expended.

This council's view is that the grants should be received and delivered in the financial year that they relate to. This enables consistent planning and provides certainty in the future. It also provides a clear picture for ratepayers and other levels of government of the true challenges councils face.