



Mount Isa Budget 2018–19

Mayor Budget speech July 27, 2018

It is my honour to present the 2018–19 Mount Isa City Council budget.

This is my third budget as Mayor.

Designing the annual budget is one of the most complex and important duties we have as elected representatives.

We have a responsibility to lead, to listen and to plan for the future of our community.

There are challenges and constraints. As a council we have a large geographic area of responsibility, a small rate base, and residents struggling with high living costs.

After lengthy deliberations and consultations, ably assisted by this Council's senior executives and managers, I am pleased Councillors are today adopting a budget that's fair, affordable, and takes our city forward.

The 2018–19 Budget includes spending of just over \$57.5 million, with a budgeted overall rates revenue increase of 3 percent.

The average Mount Isa residential ratepayer using 490kL of water can expect to receive a small decrease in council rates and charges for the 2018-19 financial year.

The Council will continue to offer generous concessions for eligible groups and individuals including pensioners who may eligible for up to \$280 in concessions on their council rates and utility charges.

It must be remembered that Council is affected by outside influences in the same way as the average household and business, namely through increased service costs for utilities and materials.



This year we need to deal with the Mount Isa Board's decision to increase its annual fixed water supply charge, which has risen by \$1.6 million to \$10.54 million.

Wherever feasible, Council will look inward to meet these additional funds to minimise the impost on ratepayers.

Council will not be undertaking any additional borrowings for the financial years 2019 to 2027.

It will fully fund its capital program from government grants, asset sales and through constraining operational expenditure.

Despite a forecast deficit this year, our underlying financial position is very sound, and the budget is forecast to be in surplus once again from 2019.

Water charges

In keeping with current Queensland legislation and community feedback, this budget introduces a simpler way of charging for water.

Council will be levying an access charge as well as a tiered consumption charge based on water usage.

The new system is simpler. Costs are now more transparent and more controllable.

Mount Isa Tier 1 water consumers using up to 950 thousand litres (950kL), Camooweal residents, and commercial properties will pay just 87 cents for every thousand litres (1kL) of water they use.

Low to average water consumers using up to 490 kilolitres of water per year, with a 20-millimetre water meter, will see a slight saving on their annual rates and charges.

Safe and healthy communities

Our number one priority as a Council is to establish safe and healthy communities.

We want a city that has a strong sense of identity and supports everyone who works, lives, plays and visits here.

This budget provides \$234,000 for Community events and \$137,000 for Community grants and event sponsorships.

We want to encourage social inclusion, celebrate our diversity and promote the best elements of our unique lifestyle.

We'll be developing an events strategy and calendar, working collaboratively with MIETV Traditional Owner groups, sporting associations, cultural and community groups.

The refurbishment of Splashez and Playway Park are the latest in a series of projects to beautify and enhance our built and natural environments, giving everyone more incentives to get outdoors and be active.

This is important to the liveability of our city and to the health and wellbeing of everyone who chooses to call Mount Isa home.

Connectivity is another community necessity in this digital age. For this reason, we have adopted the Smart City Solutions framework and intend to secure funding for free public Wi-Fi hotspots and smart water metering.

Public safety is another essential. This budget includes funding for new energy efficient LED street lighting and additional security cameras at strategic locations around the city.

Economic development and jobs

This Council is resolutely committed to developing a prosperous and diverse local economy.

The budget includes \$150,000 to progress the city's economic development strategy.

The strategy, launched last year, is working to diversify Mount Isa's regional economy, creating opportunities to build and strengthen local industry and most critically, to create jobs.

Making Mount Isa's voice heard within government and industry board rooms is an essential part of our strategic approach.

To that end, we have led the formation of the Australian Mining Cities Alliance and the Mount Isa to Tennant Creek Cross Border Commission and participated in key northern Australia development forums.

We're attracting the support of senior state and federal ministers and policy-makers from key agencies such as Geosciences Australia, which has made the search for minerals in the North West Minerals Province a key priority.

We also influenced the establishment of the Australian Senate Inquiry into the high price of regional airfares and are actively working to boost the number of tourists and visitors coming to the north west.

In November, the Council will host a major two-day industry forum in Brisbane, promoting our region and its huge wealth-generating potential to stakeholders, investors and decision-makers from around Australia.

The resources sector will feature prominently. But it'll also explore opportunities to establish Mount Isa as a service hub for health, education, tourism, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and transport.

Infrastructure

The third core priority area for Council is the delivery of efficient and innovative services and infrastructure. We need to continually invest to ensure our city functions and meets current standards.

More than \$18 million is committed in this budget to maintaining our extensive network of local roads and bridges.

More than \$6 million is allocated to water and sewerage infrastructure, including stage one of the Buchanan Park recycled water project.

Upgrades are also planned for the Civic Centre, Mount Isa CBD, Outback at Isa, Camooweal Hall and the Camooweal and Mount Isa Cemeteries.

The animal pound facility, now Council owned, will also undergo extensive refurbishment thanks to a \$440,000 Works for Queensland grant.

The facility is being redeveloped in to a multifaceted animal management centre. Works include new exercise yards, a dog training area, and facilities for visitors and volunteers.

Conclusion

Councillors, this budget has region wide benefits and maintains this Council's strong financial position. I commend the budget to you and ask for your endorsement.