



2026/27 BUDGET STATEMENT

**MAYOR
ANDREW
SMITH**
18 JUNE 2026



MAYORAL BUDGET STATEMENT

Across the Western Downs, there's a lot we can be proud of.

We are a region that shows up for each other.

A region that keeps moving forward - through growth, through challenges, and through changing times. That spirit has shaped the Budget we have delivered today.

This Budget is not just about numbers.

It's about being strong in how we continue to support our communities, strengthen our economy, and plan responsibly for what comes next.

Today, I present the 2026-27 Budget on behalf of my fellow Councillors.

This is a carefully considered Budget.

Like households and businesses across the Western Downs, Council is dealing with rising costs.

At the same time, external funding has tightened.

So we have had to make some tough decisions.

We have reduced discretionary funding and focused where it matters most - on essential services, maintaining our infrastructure, and continuing to deliver for our communities.

This year's Budget totals \$324.3 million dollars.

It includes \$116.6 million dollars for 122 capital projects and \$207.7 million dollars in operating expenditure to support the services our communities rely on every day.

We have also worked hard to secure \$34.7 million dollars in external funding to help reduce the cost burden on our ratepayers.

Everyone in this room knows this has been a tough Budget.

We understand that cost of living pressures are real.

And we know that any increase in rates is felt by households and businesses.

For us to continue to deliver safe, reliable services across a region as large and diverse as ours, a rates adjustment is necessary.

The average increase across all categories is 7.16 per cent, with the average residential rate increase sitting at around \$1.46 per week.

We've worked hard to keep this as balanced and fair as possible, while still meeting the needs of our growing region.

We are also responding to updated land valuations across the Western Downs, which will impact ratepayers differently.

We have had to make some important changes to how we fund services.

Utility charges have been adjusted to better reflect the real cost of delivering water, waste, and wastewater services.

And we are moving towards a clearer user-pay approach to ensure fairness across our community.

At the same time, we will continue to offer a 5 per cent discount on general rates when paid on time.

This Budget is about balance.

Balancing responsibilities with investment.

Balancing today's pressures with tomorrow's opportunities.

A key priority remains our local road network.

We are investing more than \$26 million dollars into roads, stormwater, and transport infrastructure across the region.

And just as importantly, we will continue to strongly advocate to the State and Federal Governments for increased investment into the 2,200 kilometres of national highway and state-controlled roads in our region.

Because our roads don't just connect our communities - they drive our economy.

Water also remains our most critical resource.

This year, more than \$13.5 million dollars has been allocated to water supply, treatment, and wastewater infrastructure.

At the same time, we will continue advocating for long-term water security solutions to support future growth across the Western Downs.

We are continuing to invest in the places and spaces that support strong, connected communities.

More than \$35 million is being invested in community development, including parks, recreation facilities, community infrastructure, and events.

This includes upgrades to Thomas Jack Park in Dalby, improvements at Chinaman's Lagoon in Miles, and continued planning for the Chinchilla Aquatic Precinct.

We are also investing in showgrounds, saleyards, community halls, and local facilities that are at the heart of our towns.

Supporting local events and community initiatives remains a priority.

Events like the Chinchilla Melon Festival, Tara Festival of Culture and Camels, and Words Out West continue to showcase our region and support local businesses.

Through our grants and funding programs, we will continue to empower community groups to deliver initiatives that bring people together.

This Budget has been developed with our community front of mind.

It reflects a commitment to strong financial management, fair outcomes, and the continued delivery of essential infrastructure and services.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their leadership, collaboration, and commitment to achieving the best outcomes for our region and its people.

And to our Council staff - thank you for the care and dedication that has gone into preparing this Budget.

The Western Downs is a region with a strong future.

This Budget ensures we are living within our means, investing where it matters most, and continuing to build a region that is connected, resilient, and full of opportunity.

Thank-you.