



Somerset
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Somerset Budget Highlights

2025-2026 Financial Year



Somerset Councillors Michael Bishop, Brett Freese, Tiara Hurley, Sally Jess, Deputy Mayor Helen Brieschke, Mayor Jason Wendt and Kylee Isidro.

Message from the Mayor

Somerset Regional Council has delivered a \$114 million budget for 2025-2026, providing essential services and infrastructure and demonstrating our focus and commitment to financial and operational sustainability.

Council has worked diligently to produce a budget which progresses significant infrastructure and road projects and provides the quality services our residents expect, all while keeping our rates at a competitive and affordable level.

Somerset is a fast-growing region and our population is forecast to grow to 42,200 by 2046 according to *ShapingSEQ (2023)*, with an additional 5,700 dwellings projected. It is essential we focus our investment in infrastructure, roads and the facilities people will need as our community evolves.

Our 2025-2026 Budget is boosted by around \$39 million in grants from the State and Federal Governments, forming 39% of our budgeted revenue. This funding reduces the financial burden on Somerset ratepayers and we are grateful for the support of our external funding partners.

Council has prioritised containing operating costs and returning the budget to a small surplus to ensure long-term sustainability.

Council manages nearly \$0.5 billion in assets which require maintenance and renewal, including 1,490kms of roads (more than the distance from Brisbane to Townsville), 228ha of parks and gardens, four libraries, three aquatic centres, four public waste facilities and many other key assets.

In the last five years prices have increased for non-residential construction (37.6%) and heavy and civil engineering construction (26.9%), while road and bridge construction prices in Brisbane have increased by 28.9%, putting pressure on Council's costs. One of the biggest escalating costs for Council is the Queensland Government's waste levy, increasing by 9% in 2025-2026.

Despite these challenges, Council has produced a budget which delivers for our community while continuing to keep the total cost of our rates as low as possible.

From 1 July 2025 the general rate will increase by 3.5%. To put this in context, an owner-occupied (urban) residential home on the minimum general rate will experience a rate increase of about \$48 for the year and, combined with utilities and levies, have a total increase of about \$93 for the year before discount. Council is offering a generous 10% discount for early payment, which is more than double the discount offered by many Councils.

We are proud to continue supporting our local economy by employing and buying locally, with 60% of total rates and charges revenue anticipated to remain within Somerset. In the last financial year we spent almost \$150,000 on donations and sponsorship, and we intend to continue supporting community groups, charities and local initiatives in 2025-2026.

My fellow Councillors and I are committed to developing a stronger, more vibrant, unified and prosperous Somerset, and we will deliver on this promise through our 2025-2026 Budget.

Mayor Jason Wendt

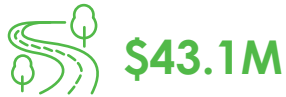


Investing in our community

Your rates account for about 34% of Council's total revenue with the remainder from investments, fees, charges, grants, and subsidies.

Council has allocated the budget to essential services across the region.

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE



\$43.1M

Roads (1490km)

- **522 kms** of unsealed (gravel) roads
- **852 kms** of sealed roads
- **117 kms** of unsealed (formed) roads



\$16M

Public infrastructure

- **187 kms** of footpaths
- **93** Bridges
- **88** commercial, corporate & civic buildings

WASTE AND RECYCLING



\$4.8M

Waste and recycling

- Kerbside waste: **9300+ tonnes** collected
- Kerbside recycling: **2100+ tonnes** sent to materials recycling facility
- Total landfill waste: **9700+ tonnes**



\$21.5M

Parks and recreation

- **9** sports and recreation facilities (indoor sports centre, showgrounds, racecourses, and sports fields)
- **3** regional aquatic centres
- **82** parks and open spaces (228ha)
- **17** playgrounds
- **56** bubbler & maintenance taps
- **492** pieces of park furniture
- **3** outdoor exercise facilities



\$3.4M

Libraries and community services

- **4** regional libraries with free membership
- **4336** active library members
- **42,159** resources (hardcopy, e-books, audio)
- More than **83,000** annual library visitors

Major Projects 2025-2026

Delivering for all of Somerset

Council has many large-scale projects underway across the region. Some will be completed in 2025-2026, while others are multi-year projects.

Lester Kropp Bridge Replacement
Villeneuve

Indoor Sports Centre Expansion
Kilcoy

Aston Park Precinct
Kilcoy

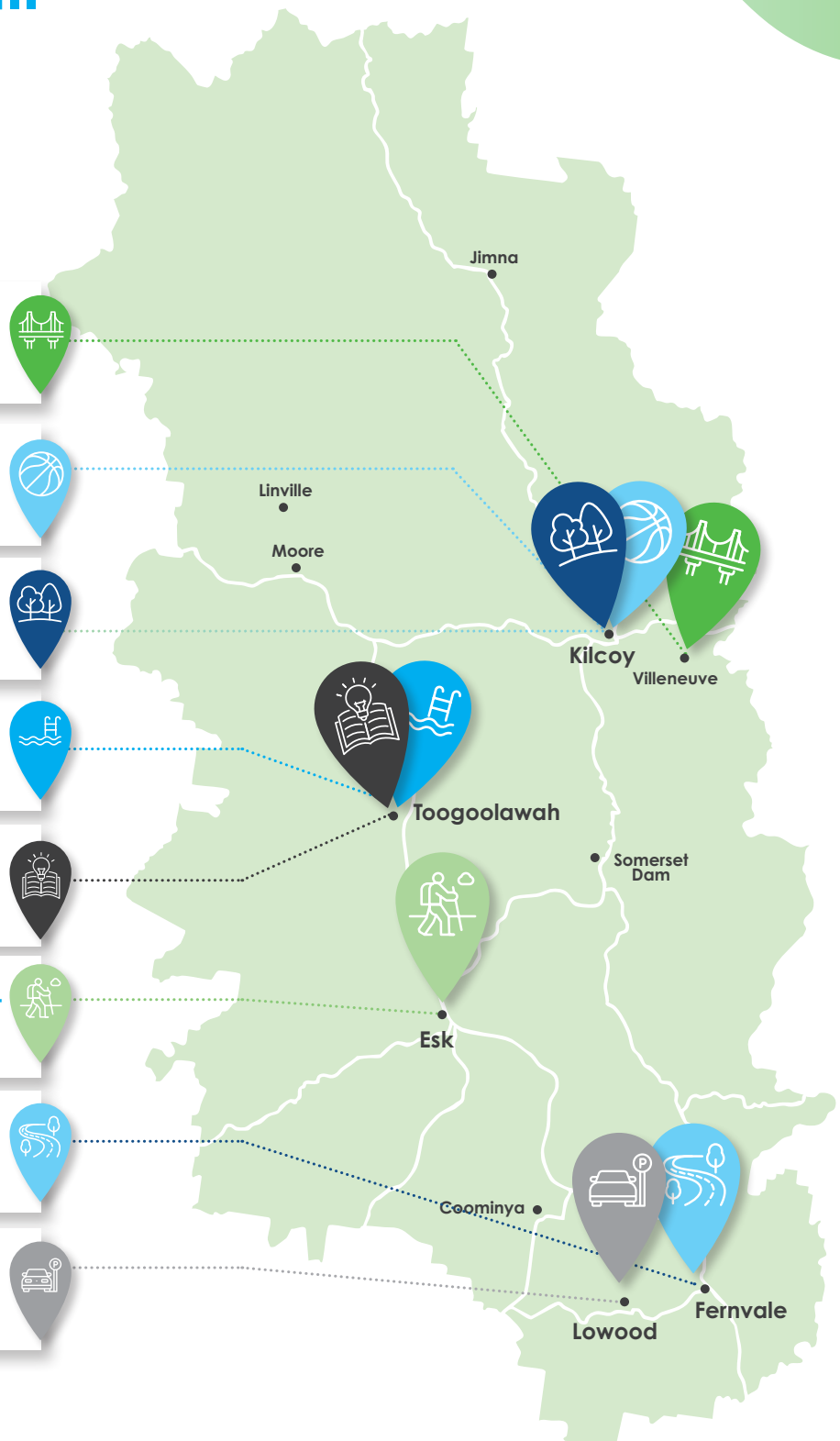
Swimming Pool Upgrades
Toogoolawah

Library and Cultural Centre
Toogoolawah

Mount Glen Rock Hiking Trails Project
Esk

Fernvale South Productivity Link
Muckerts Lane and McCulkins Lane

Railway Street Precinct
Lowood



Lester Kropp Bridge Replacement



In 2025-2026, Somerset Regional Council will begin construction on the Lester Kropp Bridge Replacement project.

The new two-lane bridge will meet current safety standards and will be south of the existing bridge, connecting Villeneuve and Mount Archer through Neurum Road over the Stanley River.

Neurum Road is a critical connection between the Somerset and Moreton Bay regions.

When the D'Aguilar Highway is closed due to works, traffic incidents or flooding, road users need a safe and reliable alternative transport route in Lester Kropp Bridge.

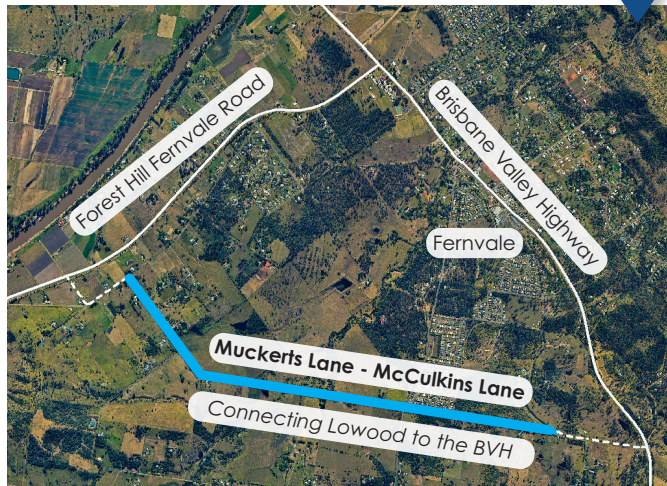
This project will significantly improve safety, reliability and economic opportunities for Somerset communities.

The total project will cost \$15.9 million for design and construction.

The Lester Kropp Bridge Replacement is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program and Somerset Regional Council.



Fernvale South Productivity Link



Somerset Regional Council is providing a sealed, two-lane road on Muckerts Lane and McCulkins Lane in Fernvale between Old Fernvale Road and Farneyview Fernvale Road.

The upgrade will provide a vital new road connection between Lowood and the Brisbane Valley Highway.

Fernvale and Lowood towns are experiencing major growth, requiring better road networks and greater access for heavy vehicles.

Widening and strengthening Muckerts and McCulkins lanes will create an inter-highway, connecting roads along the southern boundary of the Fernvale development area. This will offer traffic a 1.92km shorter drive compared to longer State-controlled routes and reduce traffic in Fernvale's town centre.

Council will spend \$10 million on design and construction for the project.

The Fernvale South Productivity Link is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program and Somerset Regional Council.



Toogoolawah Library and Cultural Centre



In late 2024, Somerset Regional Council welcomed the Australian Government's announcement of \$3.7 million towards the delivery of the Toogoolawah Library and Cultural Centre.

This project will make significant progress in 2025-2026 with a total project budget of \$5.25 million.

The new centre will include an upgraded, larger library, rooms for visiting health professionals and facilities for Brisbane Valley Rail Trail users. The 311 square metre facility will be built at the southern end of Cressbrook Street, and will have a 26-space carpark. The current 84 square metre Toogoolawah Library will be converted into a wellness hub with additional rooms for visiting health professionals.

This project is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Thriving Suburbs Program and Somerset Regional Council.



Mount Glen Rock Hiking Trails Project



In late 2024, Somerset Regional Council welcomed the Australian Government's announcement of \$1.4 million in funding for the Mount Glen Rock Hiking Trails Project.

This project will make great progress in 2025-2026, with a total budget of \$2 million.

The Mount Glen Rock Hiking Trails will be a low-impact hiking-only trail network in Esk, within 300 metres of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.

This will create a destination experience for Esk, creating more opportunities for tourism businesses and employment in Somerset.

The network will include a summit hike and ecological and cultural heritage signage, and will create a healthy and educational experience for locals and visitors.

The trails will be developed on freehold Council land under a Cultural Heritage Management Plan agreed to with the traditional custodians.

The Mount Glen Rock Hiking Trails Project is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Thriving Suburbs Program and Somerset Regional Council.

Toogoolawah Swimming Pool Upgrade



Construction has begun on the Toogoolawah Swimming Pool upgrade and is expected to complete in early December 2025.

The new Toogoolawah Swimming Pool will feature a new ramp and stairway and will be upgraded from a six-lane to an eight-lane, 25 metre pool to improve functionality and accommodate more users.

The total budget of the project is \$5.28 million.

This project is proudly funded by the Queensland Government's South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program in association with Somerset Regional Council.

Kilcoy Indoor Sports Centre Expansion



The Kilcoy Indoor Sports Centre will undergo major redevelopment in 2025-2026.

The significant expansion will involve larger gymnasium and gymnastics areas, the construction of new café facilities, allied health consulting rooms, community multi-purpose spaces, new amenities, and more carparks.

The total budget of the project is \$5.7 million.

This project is proudly funded by the Queensland Government's South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program in association with Somerset Regional Council.

Railway Street Precinct Lowood

Somerset Regional Council will continue progressing the Lowood Futures Strategy in 2025-2026 with the construction of new parking on Station Street and the design of a Green Botanic Core along the Railway Street Precinct.

Council will spend a total \$1.71 million improving the Railway Street Precinct in 2025-2026, including the detailed design for the Green Botanic Core and Streetscapes, which will be prepared for public consultation early in the financial year.

Council has received \$830,000 to build the Station Street Carpark under the South East Queensland (SEQ) Liveability Fund.

This carpark will give Railway Street workers and Lowood visitors a more convenient place to park.



New Station Street carpark

The Lowood Futures Strategy is a multi-stage project with many projects spanning many years.

This project is funded by the Australian Government, Queensland Government and Somerset Regional Council and forms part of the SEQ City Deal.

Aston Park Precinct

Kilcoy



The new Aston Park Precinct is key to the progress of the Kilcoy Streetscape project.

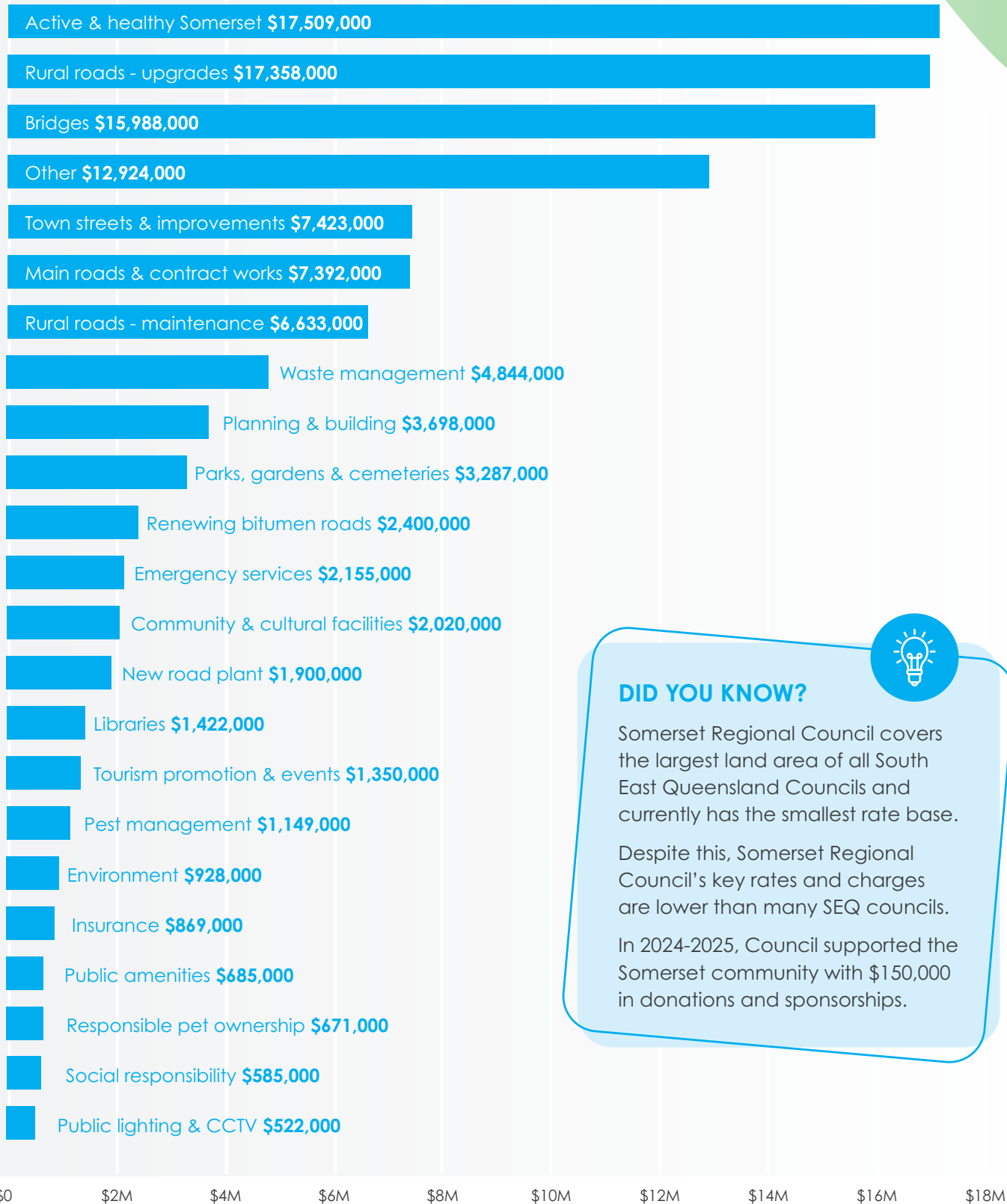
Somerset Regional Council has received \$830,000 through the SEQ Liveability Fund to build a carpark and landscaping improvements to Aston Park, with construction to take place in 2025-2026. The new precinct will make an inviting rest stop area for people visiting Kilcoy.

This project is funded by the Australian Government, Queensland Government and Somerset Regional Council and forms part of the SEQ City Deal.

BUDGET 2026

Where the money goes \$114M

Budget items



DID YOU KNOW?

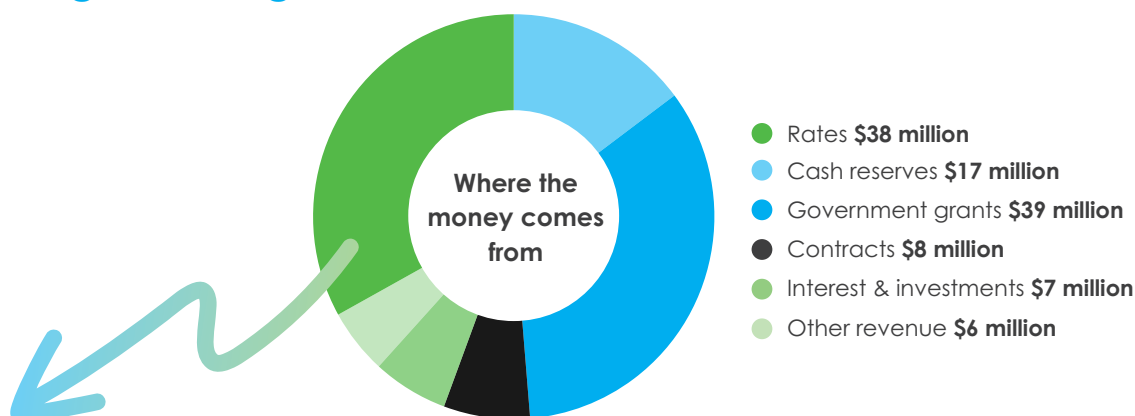


Somerset Regional Council covers the largest land area of all South East Queensland Councils and currently has the smallest rate base.

Despite this, Somerset Regional Council's key rates and charges are lower than many SEQ councils.

In 2024-2025, Council supported the Somerset community with \$150,000 in donations and sponsorships.

Funding the Budget



Rates and charges 2025-2026 snapshot

For an average residential owner-occupied property on the minimum generated rate.

URBAN RESIDENTIAL

Minimum general rate	\$985.44pa
Domestic waste	\$431.10pa
SES levy	\$37.90pa
Environmental levy	\$86.40pa
Rural fire levy	-
Gross total rates and charges	\$1,540.84pa
Net rates and charges (including 10% pay on time discount)	\$1,442.30pa
Net increase in 2025-2026 (incl.10% dis.)	\$122.68pa
Net increase/week (incl. 10% dis.)	\$2.36

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Minimum general rate	\$1,211.48pa
Domestic waste	\$431.10pa
SES levy	\$37.90pa
Environmental levy	\$86.40pa
Rural fire levy	\$42.70pa
Gross total rates and charges	\$1,809.58pa
Net rates and charges (including 10% pay on time discount)	\$1,688.43pa
Net increase in 2025-2026 (incl.10% dis.)	\$142.93pa
Net increase/week (incl. 10% dis.)	\$2.75

Excludes the State Government Emergency Management Levy.

Explaining your rates



The increase in the general rate is 3.5%.



A 10% general rates discount for prompt payment is available to residents. While this is less than has been available previously, it is more than double what is offered by most comparable councils. Council offers a 42-day payment period for discount eligibility.



The **waste management** utility charge has increased by \$39.20 to \$431.10 per year. This is one of the biggest contributors to the increase in total rates in 2025-2026 and is largely due to the Queensland Government waste levy. The waste levy applies to waste disposed to landfill, and is paid by Council as a landfill operator. The waste levy for the 2024-25 financial year was \$115 per tonne (excl. GST) and is increasing to \$125 per tonne (excl. GST) in 2025-26. This is nearly a 9% rise in costs for Council.



The **Environment** levy which is used to fund Council's Pest Management Program will increase by \$4.10 to \$86.40 per year.




The **State Emergency Services** Levy which is used to fund emergency management operating costs will increase by \$1.80 to \$37.90 per year.



The **Rural Fire** levy has increased by \$2 to \$42.70 per year.

Somerset rates compared to other SEQ councils

	2025-2026 		Rates of comparable SEQ councils (2024-2025)			
	URBAN (Cat 13)	RURAL (Cat 11)	COUNCIL 1		COUNCIL 2	
Minimum Rates Owner Occupied Residential			URBAN	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL
Minimum General Rate	985	1,211	1,239	1,379	1,385	1,317
Waste	431	431	537	537	536	536
Separate/Special Charges	124	167	600	633	123	123
Gross Rates and Charges	1,541	1,810	2,376	2,549	2,044	1,976
Discount	99	121	62	62	69	66
Net Rates and Charges	1,442	1,688	2,314	2,480	1,975	1,910
Discount	10%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%

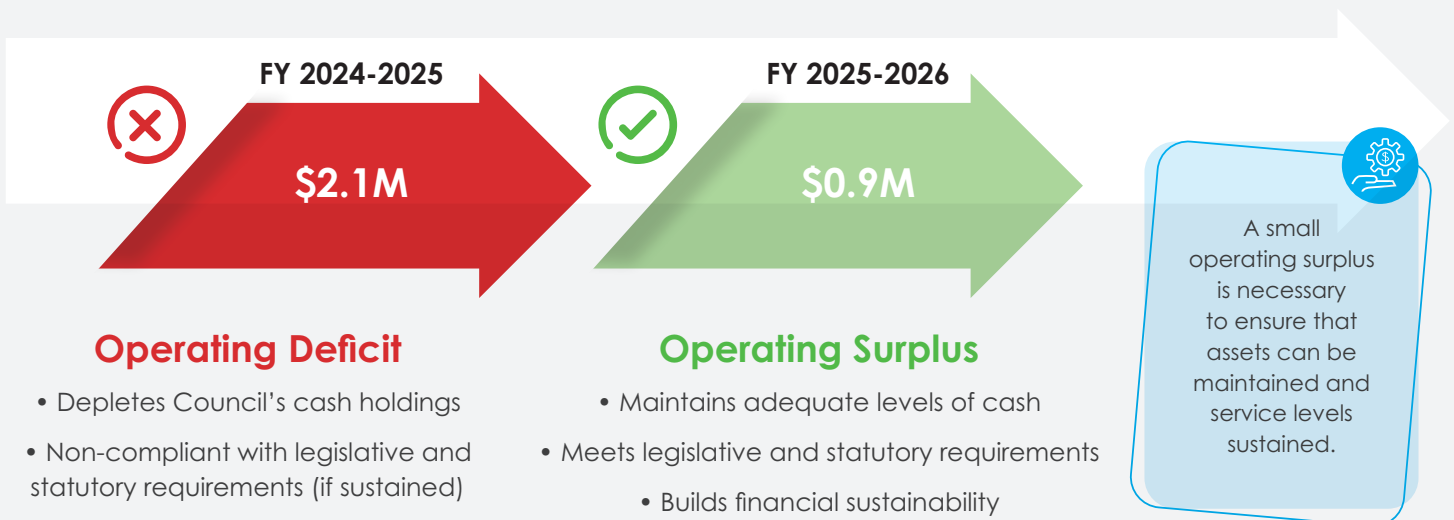
Comparative urban and rural residential rates are for properties similar to Somerset's urban (Cat 13) and rural (Cat 11) rating types.

Somerset Regional Council has produced a budget which delivers for our community while continuing to keep the total cost of our rates as low as possible.

On top of this, Council is offering a generous discount for early payment of 10%, which is more than double the discount offered by many Councils.

Balancing the Budget

Somerset Regional Council has prioritised containing operating costs and returning the budget to a small surplus to ensure long-term sustainability.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I have to pay rates?

While Council receives some grant funding from the State and Federal Governments, its main source of income is from rates which are levied on all rateable properties across the region in accordance with the Local Government Act 2009 and the supporting Local Government Regulation 2012. Council sets rates at a sufficient level to pay expenses over time. Quite simply, if our communities did not pay rates, Council could not afford to provide essential services and infrastructure.

I don't use all of Council's services so why should I have to pay for them?

Council has a responsibility to deliver services for our town centres and across our vast region. Just as income taxes are used to fund services and infrastructure across the country, rates paid by property owners fund the cost of services and infrastructure across the whole of Somerset.

They are not collected and acquitted for each local area or individual.

Under the Local Government Act 2009, a Council must represent the current and future interests of the residents of the entire local government area. As such, when considering operational and capital budgets each year, Council must consider both the needs and priorities of the region, balanced with the needs of town centres. These discussions must also consider the affordability of rates for our communities and Council's financial sustainability.

Why does property value impact the rates I pay?

Under the Local Government Act 2009, Council must levy general rates on all rateable land and under the Local Government Regulation 2012, the value of the property must be used as the basis of this calculation.

Like most councils, Somerset Regional Council uses differential rating, which means the general rates charged vary for different categories of land types and uses.

The value of each property, and the rating category of the property, is used as the basis for calculating what each property owner pays. Each rating category has a different rate in the dollar applied to the property value to calculate the general rate, which is outlined on every rates notice.

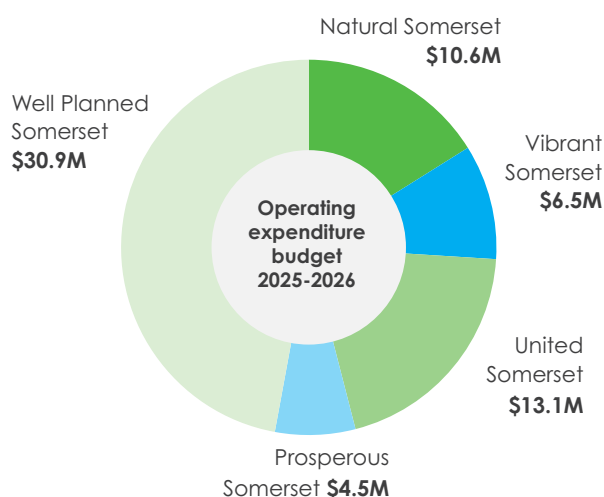
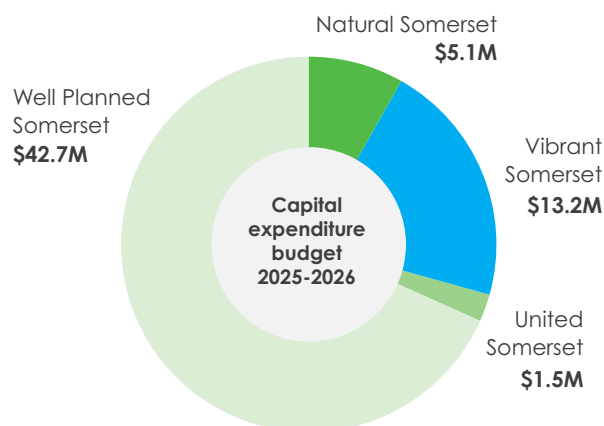
Within each rating category a minimum general rate is applied to ensure that all owners contribute a minimum amount towards the costs of delivering infrastructure and services.

Who determines land value?

Land valuations are calculated by the Queensland State Government's Valuer-General. Land valuation is usually based on site value. Site value is the market value of the land in its present state. It includes the value of any improvements made to the land including filling, clearing, levelling and drainage works. The site value does not, however, include structural improvements such as houses, sheds, and other buildings. The land valuation for each property is provided to Council. Councils do not influence the calculation or timing of the property valuation.

2025-2026 budget overview

The Somerset Regional Council Corporate Plan 2021-2026 guides the Operational Plan and Budget, which is broken down below into the five corporate values.



Budget overview according to corporate values:

Natural Somerset includes:

- Parks and gardens
- Public amenities
- Pest and animal management

Prosperous Somerset includes:

- Youth engagement
- Tourism promotion and events
- Visitor Information Centres

United Somerset includes:

- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Council administration
- Internal audit and governance

Vibrant Somerset includes:


- Libraries
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Community and cultural facilities


Well Planned Somerset includes:


- Emergency/disaster services and management
- Roads and bridges
- Development



For more information contact Somerset Regional Council:

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