



# News from your Local Councillor

## Cr Mark Edwards

### Sound financial position a comfort to the community

Our fourth and final budget for this Council term has delivered welcome relief for our ratepayers.

Over the past four budgets the combined headline rates increase is lower than the rise in CPI in that time.

The collective outcome of those budgets is that our community can take comfort in the knowledge that Council has its finances in order.

Council has stopped borrowing, reviewed our staff numbers, cut needless spending (including perks for Councillors), made sure we spent funds carefully and looked for other ways to generate income besides rates. It has been hard work and the dedication of Council staff cannot be underestimated as they have been the ones who have delivered.

Council is now poised to deliver a third-straight budget surplus. We have more than \$100 million in cash - more than twice our debt, which we are paying off at a tremendous rate.

We have not borrowed any new funds in the current term nor do we plan to borrow in the future.

Again and again we have delivered some of the lowest rate rises in south-east Queensland and our



*BUILDING: Member for Bowman Andrew Laming, Mayor Karen Williams and myself at the site of the new \$1 million bay islands resilience centre on Russell Island, where work is progressing. Council is contributing \$500,000 to this vital community project.*

financial position is very strong. Council is able to deliver services and infrastructure to the community from the income we receive without looking at rate hikes or borrowing; something I believe our community expects.

An example of our financial ability is our approach to the State Government's recent increase in the price of bulk water by 10 percent. We managed to absorb most of this cost.

We have positioned Council to provide for the islands and the City in years to come.

More than \$9 million will be spent on island infrastructure projects over the next year, more than has been spent in any previous year.

I have high expectations of what Council can deliver to the islands in coming years such as sealing all the gravel residential roads and providing infrastructure and services to the islands that enhance our life.

I am passionate about the islands, our community and the potential that is before us.

### Green seal program a huge success

The green seal roads program has been a great success in delivering a dust-sealed road at a lower cost.

I am constantly being asked by residents to do their street next.

That is great because it tells me the community is happy with these roads because they go down quickly, minimise the dust and improve the quality of life.

However, as a Councillor I don't have the say on which roads are covered. This is the decision of the road engineers who determine what

roads are best suited for this type of construction.

Last year, about 9km of roads were sealed on the islands for \$1.5 million, which under the previous construction method would have delivered only 1.5km of road.

This year, a huge construction program totalling more than \$9 million is being delivered to the islands, however the bulk of that money is for the Macleay Island foreshore reclamation and carpark. This is urgent work which must be done however the consequence

of that is a limitation on the roads budget for this year. But challenges can also be opportunities and I hope to work with officers to look at newer road-delivery techniques that can stretch that budget to try to match last year's road delivery.

There are many unsealed roads on the islands and while some may never be sealed as no one lives on them (such as some roads on Russell Island), I believe it is possible to put a program in place over the next four years to green seal all our residential roads.



## Feedback favours new Translink agreement



*ON THE MOVE: The islands' Translink deal is up for renegotiation.*

Our passenger ferry transport is part of a TransLink agreement which was initiated as a two-and-half-year trial.

That agreement is being renegotiated by Council officers, TransLink and the ferry operators, with an announcement expected soon on whether the TransLink deal will discontinue, change in structure or remain unaltered.

From my perspective and the feedback I have received, TransLink is a desired service and most people want it

to continue. There are, however, elements around the agreement that I would like improved for the benefit of all residents and ratepayers who contribute to the levy.

I have made my thoughts known to the negotiating officers who I believe will work for the best achievable outcome.

It won't be long until we will have a clear understanding of whether Translink will continue with our island ferries and, if so, under what conditions.

## Tourism plan promises much-needed boost

The recently adopted Redland City Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020 shows how Council can partner with local tourism businesses to build a viable and sustainable industry that will deliver jobs and infrastructure.

The Southern Moreton Bay Islands will play an important part in lifting tourist numbers under this five-year action plan to support the tourism strategy.

Having identified the current tourism assets in the City, the strategy identifies opportunities and the gaps that need to be filled. The key to this process is industry operators working with Council to help facilitate some of the outcomes.

The 84-page document has pinpointed a raft

of opportunities and how we can take advantage of them.

Our island advantage is not only our community but also the natural beauty of the islands and the surrounding waters. However the report clearly identifies challenges that need to be overcome.

The lack of infrastructure for visiting boaties to tie up and stay overnight on the islands and the lack of low-tide access are areas that need to be addressed.

The good news is that Council has committed to an action plan which details a range of initiatives throughout Redlands that will help resolve or provide the infrastructure needed. One of those actions includes a feasibility

study to provide at least one jetty or floating pontoon to cater for boaties and visitor access. The study will determine the size, scale and best location and this will require the involvement of the Council and the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Another exciting action is for the improvement of bus services on the islands. This will involve discussions with existing and potential operators to develop a bus service route and timetable.

The action plan will also look at tourism packaging services and how this could be marketed. It contains many more initiatives and is worth downloading from the Council website.



### Inquiries

All general Council inquiries can be made on 3829 8999.

## Keep in touch

Why not join the hundreds of residents who have already contacted me for help with an issue?

You can email me anytime at **mark.edwards@redland.qld.gov.au** or call me on 0407 695 667.

Warm regards,

**Cr Mark Edwards**

Division 5 - Islands