

# Ipswich City Council

# Media Release

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## Cost of living pressures eased with council budget measures

Ipswich City Council will boost its concession for pensioners, maintain its early payment discount and continue its commitment to providing free family activities, events, programs and services as its 2024-2025 Annual Plan and Budget aims to ease cost-of-living pressures on residents and ratepayers.

Ipswich Mayor Teresa Harding said providing relief for families' hip pockets was a priority, with Council focussing on tightening its own spending while still ensuring the community received the best outcomes.

"Council recognises the challenging economic climate and cost of living pressures are hitting households hard and has again kept our rate rises as low as possible without cutting services and facilities," Mayor Harding said.

"From school holiday events to the dozens of free and low-cost activities our libraries run for residents of all ages each week, we are a Council that delivers accessible, educational, and enjoyable activities.

"Our libraries had more than 800,000 visits last year, with more than 85,000 residents participating in one of our 2,000 library programs.

"Ipswich families have been front of mind during budget discussions over the past few months. Accordingly, rates discounts for ratepayers and rebates for pensioners and veterans will be maintained, and there is other relief in some of our fees and charges.

"Council has increased its Pensioner Concession to help offset rising costs and these will be automatically passed onto existing concession recipients. Pensioners on a full pension can claim an increased concession of up to \$258 per year and \$127 for the part pension.

"Discounts on early payments continue for all rate payers at \$132 per year.

"In tight financial times, council has listened to residents and is focusing on the basics – we are providing value-for-money in terms of efficient service delivery and providing many free and low-cost programs across the city."

Mayor Harding said while council had made more than \$16 million in savings in the budget, it will continue its full program of free and low-cost events, activities and facilities for all residents.

"Through our popular Active and Healthy program, we have delivered 1,200 physical activity and wellbeing sessions in the community in the last financial year.

“That’s more than 20,000 people who have taken up the opportunity to join free or low-cost exercise and wellbeing sessions and that will continue in 2024-2025.

“These free sessions can make a world of difference across the whole community – mums and bubs, seniors, and for anyone who wants to be fit and healthy.

“Our libraries are a constant source of education, entertainment and excitement for young and old, a refuge from the busyness of life, and we invest every year to keep them revitalised and relevant.

“We have put \$1 million into enhancements for our major libraries at Ipswich Central, Springfield Central, Rosewood, Redbank Plains, while we will also refurbish the popular pod at Karalee and investigate establishing another at Ripley.

“Council will also continue to produce, support and coordinate a calendar of major events and festivals for the city such as SPARK Ipswich, Galvanized – A Festival of Heritage and Christmas in Ipswich which attracted more than 100,000 residents and visitors.

“These festivals curate more than 150 events and experiences including free and low-cost favourites such as the spectacular lighting installation of St Nicholas Precinct, Planes, Trains and Autos presents Fully Charged with a celebration of all things aviation, rail and auto, plus the iconic world music event WOMI as part of SPARK Ipswich, to name a few.”

Mayor Harding said council will continue its free plant program in 2024-2025 where residents can claim free native plants to beautify and make their gardens more bird and native animal-friendly.

“Council provides a free plant program each financial year to assist residents in developing a greener and more beautiful Ipswich. As an Ipswich resident you are entitled to free plants every financial year under the program and council endeavours to give away 120,000 plants per annum,” Mayor Harding said.

“Our much-loved Ipswich Nature Centre offers a free nature experience, while our majestic conservation estates such as White Rock and Flinders Goolman conservation estates are the place to be for bushwalkers, horse riders and nature lovers.

“Our community is always our priority, caring for their well-being and providing financial help where we can in our budget. Council will continue to deliver many exciting, educational, free and low-cost events, services and programs this financial year.”

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