



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

# LORD MAYOR'S BUDGET SPEECH 2025-26





## **Budget Speech 2025-26**

Madam Chair,

I rise to present the 2025-26 Budget on behalf of Brisbane's 1.3 million residents.

It's a Budget that's all about striking the right balance.

The balance between keeping costs down and keeping Brisbane moving.

If you're expecting a big-spending, cash-splash – a short-term sugar hit. Think again.

If you're expecting the kind of irresponsible and inflationary Budget we've seen from other levels of government. Think again.

Or if you're expecting ever-increasing debt, forcing higher costs onto future generations. Think again.

I can tell you now, this is not that kind of Budget!

Because we know it's not Council's money we're talking about, it's residents' money.

It's not our money – it's your money!

I've told you what this Budget isn't about.

Let's talk about what it is about.

This is a Budget that's about the three Rs of local government.

And on top of that, it's about another R too – one that no other council in Australia has ever delivered before.

That fourth R stands for Rapid Transit.

Four Rs – Roads, Rates, Rubbish and Rapid Transit.

Of course, I'm referring to the rollout of our game-changing Brisbane Metro Bus Rapid Transit system.

So, it's a Budget about better roads and public transport, keeping rates down and reducing waste-to-landfill.

We made some very clear commitments to the people of Brisbane at last year's Council election.

We promised we would keep investing in the projects and initiatives that keep Brisbane moving as our city grows.

We promised to relieve the upward pressure on rates by reducing spending and keeping the Budget balanced.

We promised to create more to see and do as we make our lifestyle even better.

And we promised to help create safer suburbs.

Today, I present a Budget that delivers real, tangible progress on all of these commitments.

This is a Budget that builds on our commitment to keep Brisbane moving.

With ...

- investment in critical road projects, like Beams Road;
- trialling new AI technology to make our existing roads and intersections work better;
- more than \$90 million for smoother and safer roads across Brisbane;
- the biggest boost to bus services in more than a decade, together with the introduction of Brisbane Metro services on both the M1 and M2 routes; and
- we're partnering with the Federal Government to plan for the next stages of Brisbane Metro.

This is a Budget that continues to make Brisbane's lifestyle even better.

With ...

- bold plans to protect and enhance Mount Coot-tha;
- a big boost in support for festivals and events;
- a citywide rollout of green bins to every house that wants one; and
- more CCTV cameras to help residents feel safer.

It's a Budget that delivers 85 per cent of all investment in our suburbs.

**Most importantly right now, it's a Budget that delivers the cheapest residential rates in south east Queensland.**

Madam Chair,

Our team has a strong track record of delivering game-changing projects that have helped transform Brisbane into Australia's hottest destination.

A place where more and more people want to live.

A place where more and more people want to visit.

A place that is the home of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

A place that keeps getting better.

We've delivered transformational tunnels and road projects that are vital for keeping our growing city moving

We've delivered the state-of-the-art Brisbane Metro, a bus rapid transit project that other levels of government are now eyeing off as a sensible solution to public transport.

We've delivered new destination parks like Bradbury Park and Hanlon Park, which make living in our suburbs even better.

Madam Chair,

This Budget continues planning for the next chapter of Brisbane's transformation.

Plans that will help create a city that is better connected, a city with even better services, a city with even more destinations so residents and visitors have more to see and do.

It plans for the expansion of Brisbane Metro so more people get access to turn-up-and-go services.

It plans to protect and enhance Mount Coot-tha so more people in the future can enjoy Brisbane's premier natural playground.

It plans the revitalisation of our beautiful bayside areas around Wynnum.

However, importantly, it strikes the right balance between planning, delivering and keeping costs down.

## **Economic Outlook**

Madam Chair,

The latest growth figures show the national economy is barely keeping its head above water.

Growth in the March quarter was just 0.2 per cent, a result impacted by disasters along with the ongoing challenge of high interest rates.

Households across Brisbane have welcomed the interest rate cuts that have come so far.

Some believe the Reserve Bank's decisions are a sign it believes it may have the inflation tiger by the tail.

Yet given the RBA used words like “uncertainty, unprecedented and unpredictable” 134 times in its latest update, it’s far too early to declare the inflation crisis over.

While households have welcomed interest rate cuts with open arms, their day-to-day costs remain high.

High power bills, high grocery bills, high petrol bills.

Councils like ours have endured similar cost increases in recent years.

In the past few years, the price of many of the basic resources Council needs has skyrocketed.

This includes:

- a 40.6 per cent increase in concrete, cement and sand;
- an 18.4 per cent increase in building construction costs; and
- an 18.7 per cent per cent increase in road and bridge construction

These are just a few of the cost increases that have placed enormous pressure on Council’s day-to-day activities.

Meanwhile, the support councils like ours traditionally receive from other levels of government is shrinking.



Federal revenue has grown 83 per cent over the past decade while assistance for councils has increased only 13 per cent for the same period.

Since 1996, total financial assistance grants provided to councils by the Federal Government have plummeted from 1 per cent of tax revenue to just over half of one per cent.

Meanwhile, new and more inventive ways are being dreamt up by Canberra – along with the former Labor State Government - to syphon taxes out of Brisbane and into other areas.

For example, the 2023 Federal Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program Stage 4B deliberately excluded Brisbane from a share of \$250 million.

We didn't receive a cent from the first round of the \$350 million so-called Thriving Suburbs program.

Some of this failure comes down to the fact that Brisbane had three Greens Federal MPs until recently.

They didn't advocate for any road funding, or any projects to unlock housing supply, or any support for our community clubs.

In fact, they did the opposite. They opposed road upgrades like the Moggill Road Corridor upgrade.

They continued to oppose virtually every new housing development they came across – all in the midst of a housing crisis.

This short-lived experiment with the extreme Greens Political Party has been a dismal failure for the community.

But the results in the recent Federal Election mean brand new Labor MPs in Brisbane have a big task.

To get Brisbane residents their fair share.

They must remember they weren't elected to represent the Albanese Government in Brisbane.

They were elected to represent Brisbane in the Albanese Government.

In reality, Federal Governments don't really build infrastructure, and they don't build homes either.

It's local and state governments that build these things.

The Federal Government collects most of the money – 81 cents out of every tax dollar we all pay - but they can't deliver results unless that funding flows to other levels of government.

While our share of the revenue pool is shrinking, councils are increasingly being lumped with the responsibilities of other levels of government.

The LGAQ estimated there's been a 378 per cent increase in this cost shifting.

It's little wonder the Federal Parliament's interim report into local government sustainability found the role of councils had "expanded exponentially beyond rates, roads and rubbish" yet "local government financial sustainability and funding frameworks were being impacted by evolving infrastructure requirements, service delivery obligations and cost shifting".

We can only hope the Federal Government listens when the final report is released.

## **Cyclone Alfred**

Madam Chair,

I'm enormously proud of how this Council performed during Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

The challenges faced by residents during this event were as extreme as they were unique.

Yet as a community, we worked together and our Council was there for residents every step of the way.

Before the event, our Council distributed a staggering 527,400 sandbags and issued hundreds of Brisbane Severe Weather Alerts.

Then after the event, we:

- completed 3,119 tree jobs;
- filled 1,919 potholes;
- collected 6,465 tonnes of green waste;
- picked up kerbside flood waste from 890 locations;
- distributed food waste bins to 776 sites;
- repaired 269 sets of traffic signals;
- cleaned 62 kilometres of bikeways; and
- removed fallen trees and other debris from 1,981 parks.

While Council really stepped-up, Tropical Cyclone Alfred came at a cost.

The estimated impact on Council is forecast to be more than \$76 million.

It's still unclear how much of this will be recovered through national disaster funding arrangements.

To date, only \$3.2 million in Federal and State funding support has been confirmed.

However, I can confirm today this Budget DOES NOT include a cyclone levy like we've seen introduced elsewhere.

The significant events of Cyclone Alfred have also meant our crews were temporarily diverted from many of their business-as-usual tasks.

Yet their effort was nothing short of extraordinary.

Highly respected former Queensland Governor and Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, in his review, agreed.

Mr de Jersey made this very astute observation when he wrote, and I quote:

*“Speaking to people in the street after the event, word was that Council did a good job”.*

## **Keeping costs down**

Madam Chair,

These are challenging times for councils across the country.

Most councils across Queensland are under financial pressure.

In fact, it's never been tougher to be in local government.

But Madam Chair, this is a challenge we're 100 per cent up for.

If we followed the script of those opposite, we would have simply kept spending more and more.

I referred to our election commitments earlier.

But they weren't the only promises made at last year's election.

The Green/Labor Coalition of Chaos made some promises too.

They made \$3.5 billion worth of unfunded promises which would have massively driven up the rates and rents of every single Brisbane resident.

This would have driven up Council spending by at least 20 per cent.

In contrast, we were upfront with Brisbane residents about our plan to reduce spending by 10 per cent.

To be clear - that's a 30 per cent difference between our responsible commitments and the reckless spending proposed by the Green/Labor Coalition of Chaos.



And if residents happened to miss the public announcements about our sensible savings, Labor and the Greens made sure people knew about them too.

They spent a lot of time and a lot of money telling people.

In the end, on this side of the Chamber, we should be grateful to Labor and the Greens, because they did us a massive favour.

They completely misread the mood of Brisbane residents.

People right across Brisbane had already been making difficult adjustments to their own household budgets in the face of rising costs.

Residents were making tough decisions to reduce their own spending and cut costs to keep their heads above water.

Small businesses were doing the same.

Labor and the Greens chose to rail against spending reductions when virtually everyone was doing it in their own homes and businesses.

And fast forward to today, there are now several other councils in our region taking the same approach that we did in telling their residents that it's critical to rein in spending.

Because we took decisive action in late 2023 and throughout last year, we're now in a better and stronger position to be able to keep costs down for residents.

Because we made sensible savings at a time of massive global inflation, we can now offer the cheapest residential rates in our region.

Madam Chair,

Our residential rates aren't just a little cheaper than other councils.

They're a lot cheaper.

They are at least \$240 per year cheaper, and as much as \$563 cheaper.

And that's BEFORE many of those councils have released their latest Budget!

I am happy to update the Chamber at a later time.

Because of our sensible savings program, the average Brisbane owner occupier will pay just \$1.14 extra a week in general rates, or an increase of 3.87 per cent over the year.

That's right. Just \$1 and 14 cents.

Under our plan, we'll also work to drive down net debt by more than 20 per cent from \$3.7 billion this year to \$2.9 billion in 2028-29.

We'll also make one of the most generous pensioner rebate schemes in Queensland - if not Australia - even more generous.

The rebate will increase by \$50 a year.

That means Brisbane pensioners will be able to receive a rates rebate of up to \$1298.

We'll also continue Council's \$60 on-time payment discount, which delivered \$16 million in savings to Brisbane households last year.

Our popular free off-peak travel for seniors, which saved them \$3.3 million last year, will continue on Brisbane's buses, CityCats and ferries.

Our rebate for composting equipment will save households more than \$500,000 on tumblers, worm farms, dehydrators and in-sink food disposal systems this year.

And I know this is the one many of you are waiting for ...

I can confirm we will be continuing our incredibly popular \$2 Summer Dips.

Madam Chair,

We will, however, be introducing a new rating category for inner-city apartments, many of which are now some of the most expensive homes in the entire state.

This new category will begin from October 1 and apply only when a new resident purchases the property.

Existing unit owners will be excluded.

Currently, about 90 per cent of apartments pay Brisbane's existing minimum general owner occupier rates of just \$228 a quarter or \$304 a quarter for investment properties.

That means many multi-million-dollar apartment owners are paying less than \$1,000 per year in general rates.

This is despite living in the part of our city which has access to incredible, high-quality services and infrastructure.

To address this imbalance, we will increase the base rate by \$25 a quarter from October 1.

Once again, this will only apply to newly purchased properties from October 1 in the CBD and city frame area.

To be crystal clear, existing apartment owners will not be impacted by this change.

But for anyone who thinks this is a bit steep, I can confirm that even with this new rates category in place, our minimum general rates will still be less than any other council in south east Queensland.

## **Story Bridge**

Madam Chair,

About a year ago, I wrote to Federal Infrastructure Minister Catherine King seeking funding for a business case for a long-term restoration project for the Story Bridge.

The bridge is 85 years old and was only built to last 100 years.

At around the time of the bridge's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday – 20 years out from its centenary – we started planning for a long-term restoration so it could last another 100 years or more.

Since I've been Lord Mayor from 2019, we've invested more than \$80 million as part of a significant maintenance project.

But as anyone who owns an old Queenslander home knows, you can keep up with all the maintenance by painting the walls, fixing the floors and plugging the leaks.

But age ensures a restoration is inevitable and you'll eventually need to replace the roof, renovate the kitchen and redo the stumps.

As the Story Bridge Restoration Committee found, Council has been a good steward of the bridge for decades.

With the support of the Federal Government, we're now undertaking that business case to develop a staged restoration project.

Much of the bridge's restoration isn't needed for many years.

In fact, there's 15 to 20 years of life left in the structure, so we have ample time to undertake this project in stages.

That's the calm and sensible approach we are known for.

And it's in stark contrast to the hysteria and scare-mongering those opposite are trying to whip-up.



I'm confident all levels of government will back the long-term restoration of the Story Bridge once the business case is complete.

But before then, there's work to be done and this Budget will provide more than \$18 million for the Story Bridge.

This includes \$6.9 million for the manufacturing and installation of a replacement decking for the Story Bridge footpaths.

We've been monitoring the footpaths closely for years and have received a range of advice.

The most recent report undertaken following Cyclone Alfred was that the paths would need to be replaced in the next two to five years.

But safety must be a priority, so we are undertaking this work now.

We will install replacement decking as quickly as possible over the coming months so we can get the paths open for pedestrians and cyclists.

This Budget also includes an additional \$6.2 million towards further bridge works, building on the \$80 million already invested in recent years.

This is part of a five-year project we began in 2020 which includes ongoing concrete, gantry and steel work.

Of course, there's also the \$5 million investment in the jointly funded business case we've previously announced.

## **Mount Coot-tha**

Madam Chair,

I'm fond of describing Brisbane as the most Australian place on Earth.

We have an incredible mix of:

- a vibrant inner city with world-class entertainment precincts;
- safe and spacious suburbs, which are great places to live; and
- nature right on our doorstep with parks, waterways and bushland areas that are easily accessible.

The jewel in the crown of Brisbane's natural attractions is Mount Coot-tha.

A lookout which offers panoramic views of the city and beautiful Moreton Bay.

Nature walks, bike trails and picnic areas with a quintessential Australian bush backdrop just a stone's throw from our city.

56 hectares of incredible botanic gardens that feature more than 200,000 plant species from around the world along with the Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium.

There's also the Mount Coot-tha Quarry, a site which has incredible opportunity for a transformation in the long term.

With Brisbane riding a wave of international popularity as a tourism destination and the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games coming, now is the time to start planning more to see and do in our city.

We have South Bank, the city, Howard Smith Wharves, and Fortitude Valley for locals to enjoy and visitors to explore.

But I believe Mount Coot-tha presents an incredible opportunity for new nature-based destinations and attractions, which is exactly what international visitors are looking for.

That's why we will be entrusting responsibility for protecting and enhancing the Mount Coot-tha precinct to the Brisbane Sustainability Agency.

Brisbane Sustainability Agency is already leading the transformation of Oxley Creek into a world-class lifestyle and leisure destination.

The agency will develop a long-term master plan for Mount Coot-tha, which will include ways to protect its most precious natural areas and create new activities and attractions.

Mount Coot-tha has so much untapped opportunity as an eco-tourism destination.

There are opportunities to enhance the summit.

And there are ways we can reimagine and revitalise the planetarium and tropical dome so they become even bigger tourism destinations.

There is also the opportunity presented by the quarry.

While we now expect the Mt Coot-tha Quarry to continue to operate for at least another decade, we need a plan for its long-term future post-quarrying.

While the Mount Coot-tha Quarry is a long-term prospect for our city, Council's old Pine Mountain Quarry site is a much more immediate opportunity.

The quarry site is about 30 hectares and adjoins Whites Hill Reserve.

Our plan is to complete the rehabilitation of the disused section of the quarry to boost koala habitat, as well as adding some new walking tracks.

The remaining area at the base of the quarry will continue to be used as a Council depot in the short to medium term.

This would expand on the success of Whites Hill Reserve, which is home to a growing population of koalas as well as a very active sports and recreation area.

I've asked Brisbane Sustainability Chair Nigel Chamier and CEO Tracy Melenewycz to start planning the Pine Mountain transformation project.

## **Green bin rollout**

Madam Chair,

It's no secret that we plan to roll out more green bins citywide.

We announced last year we were seeking funding for the bins from the new Crisafulli Government.

This came after years of delays and dithering from the former Labor Government.

Contracts that have already been debated and passed through this Chamber show we have locked in the supply of green bins.

In fact, the stockpiles of green bins we now have at our Resource Recovery Centres ready for the rollout are so large you could probably see them from space.

So, I've watched with much amusement in recent weeks as those opposite fell over each other trying to claim credit for our roll out of green bins.

They're like sports spectators patting themselves on the back after a victory. All they did was spend the match yelling at the TV.

Madam Chair,

Our Council already has a proud track record when it comes to rolling out green bins.

In recent years, we cut the cost to less than \$1 a week, which helped increase the uptake.

There are now 170,000 green bins in Brisbane, which is about half the eligible homes.



We're now going to roll out green bins to every eligible house.

This also means renters who want a green bin will now be able to get one.

Residents who don't need one can opt out.

I can also confirm we will NOT be cutting red bin collections from weekly to fortnightly to accommodate the green bin service.

That's what those opposite proposed during last year's Council election and that's what was rejected by Brisbane residents.

Instead, we're scrapping the itemised quarterly green bin charge and will create a new Universal Waste Charge.

For the 170,000 households who already have a green bin, there will be no extra cost.

For the remaining households, the annual waste charge will increase by \$49.52 with the majority of this - \$33 - being the cost of the former Labor State Government's 'bin tax' – also known as the waste levy.

If you removed the impact of the State Government's 'bin tax', Council's waste charge for houses that don't have a green bin would

only have increased by the normal annual amount - 3.87 per cent, or around \$4 a quarter.

The 'bin tax' really was a Trojan Horse tax on south east Queensland residents.

It was introduced under the guise of stopping interstate waste going into Queensland landfills.

South east Queensland residents were promised households would not be hit with the costs.

Yet the former Government backflipped on this promise.

They put in place a plan to continually increase the levy and at the same time, reduce the rebate to councils, forcing households to pay more and more each year.

This presents a wicked problem for south east Queensland councils.

Higher costs for councils mean higher costs for households.

Now, we've received some State funding to buy new wheelie bins, but not a cent to help us collect the green waste or process it.

As the levy costs continue to increase and the rebates councils receive continue to decline, the impact on households will continue to grow.

More household green bins will help reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfill.

But they certainly won't stop it entirely.

Those opposite can celebrate themselves all they want for the green bin rollout.

But their party is also the architect of the 'bin tax' and their broken promise is the real reason why the waste levy is hitting households.

And their big solution was to cut red bin collections from weekly to fortnightly.

I certainly welcome the Crisafulli Government's review of Queensland's waste strategy.

I'm confident it can lead to common-sense solutions and an alternative to landfill, such as a local energy-from-waste treatment plant, not just a bigger 'bin tax' on Brisbane households.

**Making Brisbane's lifestyle even better**

Madam Chair,

Brisbane has an incredible range of parks, playgrounds and dog off-leash areas.

We also have some of the best coffee and food, as well as an incredible climate.

We're going to help bring that all together with our Coffee Carts in Parks plan.

This was a promise we made at the last election.

And I know how incredibly popular this policy is going to be.

As I've travelled around Brisbane, people continually tell me how excited they are about this plan.

We've mapped out more than 100 locations in Brisbane parks where coffee carts and food trucks will be allowed.

We've also undertaken the work needed to build a new online booking portal.

Like many families, I'm excited about the prospect of being able to grab a coffee while watching the kids play in one of Brisbane's fantastic parks.

Madam Chair,

Along with sports clubs, local festivals and events are really important for bringing Brisbane's community together.

From Acacia Ridge State School Community Christmas Carols to Wynnum Manly Jazz Festival, Brisbane's events showcase our culture, our diversity and our multicultural community.

They also provide free and affordable fun to all corners of our city and for people of all ages.

However, we recognise many community groups are doing it tough.

They're run by volunteers, and some don't know whether they'll return next year as costs continue to escalate.

So, I am announcing today that all 128 events approved for funding under our Suburban and Multicultural Festivals program will receive a funding boost of 25 per cent.

No exceptions, no new applications. Just a funding increase for each and every one of them, because that's what they deserve.

Madam Chair,

The eyes of the world will be on Brisbane in 2032 for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I know the world will fall in love with this beautiful sub-tropical city that we call home.

While we're not responsible for delivering Olympic venues, our commitment to the International Olympic Committee is to make Brisbane look even better.

It's what we do every day, but we're going to be doing even more of it in the lead up to the Games.

So, I am announcing today a two-year \$1.9 million plan to plant new trees along key transport corridors.

We're finally able to start this work because we finally know where Games venues are going to be.

Brisbane already has the best tree canopy cover of any Australian capital city.

Fly over the likes of Sydney and Melbourne, you'll see the difference.

By starting now, we'll give the trees the best chance to grow and mature before 2032 and make Brisbane look even better when the world is watching.

Madam Chair,

Our inter-departmental working group has already been incredibly successful at linking homeless people to support and services.

I want to thank Premier David Crisafulli for his strident support for getting people out of unsafe tent encampments and into safe accommodation.

According to Department of Housing figures, prior to this joint working group, only 20 per cent of people engaged with their Crisis Response Team.

That figure has more than doubled to 42 per cent.

Madam Chair, the Green/Labor Coalition of Chaos takes the heartless approach of turning a blind eye to people living in unsafe tent encampments.

On this side of the Chamber, we support people getting into safe accommodation and homes.

While delivering emergency accommodation is not a Council responsibility, our administration has always taken an active role trying to come up with solutions.

It's what we did when we proposed and put money on the table to repurpose the Pinkenba Quarantine Facility, which Labor and the Greens opposed.

It's why we also continue to fund the very successful Pathways out of Homelessness program.

We've also budgeted to waive more than \$3 million in infrastructure charges to help deliver more than 300 social and community homes.

We also know there's no one-stop solution to housing the homeless.

So today I am announcing our Council will provide a one-off \$500,000 donation towards expanding the services already offered by the amazing people at Emmanuel City Mission in South Brisbane.

The aim is to support them in providing a nighttime shelter for our city's most vulnerable



Fully activating this facility will cost several million dollars.

Our injection of funds will kick start the night-time provision of services – adding to their existing daytime offering.

After talking to Housing Minister Sam O'Connor, I'm hopeful our Council's contribution will also lead to State Government and additional private sector funding for Emmanuel City Mission.

An overnight shelter is a missing piece in the puzzle that will help rough sleepers out of parks and doorways and into the safe environment they deserve.

Madam Chair,

This year we will also invest in a range of important community facilities because we know how important these places are to keeping Brisbane's residents healthy and happy.

We'll roll out our Community Spaces Initiative.

These spaces in the north, south, east and west of Brisbane will help community clubs safely store things like barbeques, marquees and sporting equipment.

I know there are club volunteers who would be storing this kind of equipment at home because their small organisation doesn't have a safe premise to put it and can't afford the cost of commercial storage.

We'll also undertake works at the Valley, Newmarket, Runcorn and Parkinson pools.

This includes a range of works like the remediation of the Valley's grandstand to installing a new baby change amenities block at Runcorn.

We'll also commence the design works to improve the Pallara and Ellen Grove district parks, along with finalising the exciting master plan for the Wynnum, Manly and Lota foreshores.

Pallara is one of the fastest growing parts of our city and we are not only investing in ensuring that these new residents have great sport and recreation opportunities, we're also partnering with the Crisafulli Government to ensure investment in drainage in Pallara keeps pace with its growth.

We'll finalise the design and start delivering the new Brighton Foreshore, which is federally funded.

We're also delivering upgrades and improvements to Rocks Riverside Park, New Farm Park, Mt Gravatt Outlook Reserve and the Brisbane Koala Bushlands at Burbank.

A major upgrade will also be planned for Carindale Recreation Reserve - which is a large destination park - in line with our commitment at last year's election.

## **Keeping Brisbane Moving - Building better roads**

Madam chair,

The Labor Opposition has talked a bit lately about congestion.

They're trying to make cheap political mileage out of a bogus congestion report.

The report didn't even know where Brisbane began and where it ended.

Yet what was Labor's policy during last year's election?

**According to the Labor candidate for Lord Mayor, "Congestion is not going to be dealt with by building more roads."**

Yet in the next breath, they promised \$1 billion for unspecified road upgrades.

No real details. No explanation of where the money would come from.

But hey – what's a billion dollars to the Labor Party? Loose change to them!

So, do they believe in road upgrades or don't they?

Brisbane residents can be forgiven for the confusion around Labor's approach.

The reality is that they don't. Not really.

Their view is identical to their Coalition of Chaos partners, the Greens.

The only road projects the Greens have ever supported are road downgrades.

They love taking away traffic lanes. Removing parking. Lowering speed limits across the board.

And so, this helps explain why Labor Councillors are so conflicted here.

They need Greens preferences. They would need the Greens to form an Administration, yet they know how unpopular the Greens' attitude towards motorists really is out there in the real world.

We will continue to remind Brisbane residents from now until the next election that when it comes to tackling congestion, the Green/Labor Coalition of Chaos doesn't believe in better roads.

Our record shows we do.

We believe in building new and improved roads to make it easier for residents to get around.

We've recently completed the Moggill Road Corridor Upgrade - an incredible outcome compared to the old Indooroopilly Roundabout.

Our record also includes new tunnels that are now critical to keeping Brisbane moving and a range of major upgrades, like Kingsford Smith Drive, a project those opposite also opposed.

This year we're undertaking the next stage of the Beams Road Upgrade, which includes widening the roadway and improving connectivity for pedestrians.

We're also making a start on several improvements in and around Toowong.

We're adding signals to the Toohey Road and Esher Street intersection to improve safety and reduce delays.

After a seriously wet start to the year, we're increasing our spending on resurfacing to make our roads smoother and safer.

And we'll be undertaking new and improved bikeway connections on Prebble Street in Wishart and Shafston Avenue in East Brisbane, along with upgrades to the Stretton State College Car Park in conjunction with the State Government.

Madam Chair,

We live in one of Australia's fastest-growing capital cities.

More than 600 people a week are moving to Brisbane.

While we clearly support investing in new and improved roads, the smart thing to do is to also make the most of our existing network.

To do that, we also need to make the most of new technology.

That's why during the election, our team committed to trialling new AI traffic technology on key Brisbane corridors.

This year's Budget includes \$4.4 million towards this four-year project.

Smart technology has helped improved traffic flow in other parts of the world where it has been trialled and introduced.

We know Brisbane traffic drops by five or six per cent during school holidays, but it feels like much more.

What that demonstrates is that even a small change can lead to a big improvement in travel times.

We've already held an industry briefing, which attracted interest from around the world.

## **Keeping Brisbane Moving – Improving Public Transport**

Madam Chair,

While on the topic, we will also be reminding Brisbane residents that those opposite wanted to cancel Brisbane Metro.

That's right.

Brisbane's critical new network that takes our city from public transport to mass transit was opposed by those opposite.

What was their alternative?

I'm not sure even they know.

Regardless, Brisbane Metro has already been a raging success, exceeding all our expectations.

Brisbane residents are loving this new form of transport – Bus Rapid Transit - and are clearly telling us they want more.

The state-of-the-art, fully electric Brisbane Metros are the most accessible buses in the world.

We've launched M2 services between RBWH and UQ, and M1 linking the city to Eight Mile Plains will be next.

Five-minute frequencies will be followed by three-minute frequencies when the Adelaide Street Tunnel opens later this year.

24-hour services will operate on weekends.

Brisbane Metro is the critical catalyst that allows us to introduce Brisbane's New Bus Network, the biggest transformation of Brisbane's bus network ever.

More services, to more places, more often.

In fact, combined, Brisbane Metro and the new bus network will deliver an additional 160,000 trips a year.



50 cent fares are great, but what people really need to make the switch to public transport is frequency.

And we are delivering it.

Madam Chair,

To support Brisbane Metro and the new bus network, our Council is investing a record \$210 million towards our public transport subsidy.

Over the past decade, our investment in public transport has more than doubled.

Not only are we the only Council that has introduced a game-changing Bus Rapid Transit system and millions of new services, but we're also the only Council that invests in subsidising public transport.

Without our investment, bus services in Brisbane would be radically reduced, with the impact on congestion unacceptable.

Madam Chair,

It's clear the Brisbane Metro concept has captured attention.

There are State Government plans for a similar electric bus rapid transit solution for the Sunshine Coast in time for the 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

I've even read talk about connecting the Gold Coast Airport with a Brisbane Metro-style service.

Who would have thought? A GC Metro.

But what I'm focused on is our plan to expand Brisbane Metro.

In our Race to Gold plan, we outlined a blueprint to take Brisbane Metro north to Carseldine, south to Springwood, east to Capalaba and into the Brisbane airport.

It was a bold and ambitious blueprint.

While those opposite want to cancel Brisbane Metro, their federal colleagues couldn't disagree more.

They're helping fund the business case to take Metro to more places across Brisbane, a project that could be a game-changer for the way residents get around in future.

## **Conclusion**

Madam Chair,

Our Budget is the result of some incredible hard work from a talented team who dedicate their time every day to making Brisbane better.

I want to thank Deputy Mayor and Finance Chair Fiona Cunningham, members of Civic Cabinet, as well as our Councillors.

I want to thank our new chief executive officer, Dr Kerrie Freeman, Divisional Manager Anne Lenz, Chief Financial Officer Mark Russell and Narelle Ballini, Emma McCarthy, Arlette Griffiths-Smith, Jenny Dowd and Elizabeth West.

From my office, I also want to thank Steven, Nathan, Michael, Aaron, Hannah and Ruth.

Every Budget is challenging. Every Budget is about choices.

Our choice is to put Brisbane residents first.

Our choice is to strike the right balance between keeping Brisbane moving and keeping costs down.

Our choice is to deliver on our promises.

Our choice is to focus on the four Rs – Roads, Rates, Rubbish and Rapid Transit.

Our choice is to deliver a balanced Budget that sets us on a path to lower net debt.

Our plan is sensible and affordable.

It will keep Brisbane moving.

It will ensure Brisbane retains the cheapest rates in south east Queensland and the state's most generous pensioner rebate scheme.

It continues planning for the next phase of Brisbane's exciting transformation with a new Mount Coot-tha master plan.

It continues our ongoing commitment to the suburbs.

Every Budget is about choice.

Our choice is to spend only what we can afford.

Our choice is to plan and deliver the new parks, playgrounds and precincts to make Brisbane's lifestyle even better.

Our choice is to help households with the high cost of living.

Our choice is to keep Brisbane moving.

Madam Chair,

I commend this Budget to the Chamber.






*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

**Brisbane City Council**  
GPO Box 1434, Brisbane Qld 4001

Every effort is made to ensure that  
information is correct at time of publishing  
©2025 Brisbane City Council

 [brisbane.qld.gov.au](https://brisbane.qld.gov.au)  
 3403 8888

 /BrisbaneCityCouncil  
 @brisbanecityqld  
 @brisbanecitycouncil