

DEBT POLICY

F&BS | 63/8/32-01 | #7821156

RECOMMENDATION:**That Council adopts the Debt Policy for 2026/27.****INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Not applicable

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an update of the Debt Policy for adoption with the annual budget. This Policy was last adopted in June 2025 and this revision includes the following updates:

- Revised planned borrowings as per the 2026/27 Budget
- Current balance and term remaining on existing borrowings.

BACKGROUND:

Council's Debt Policy sets out borrowings planned for the next ten financial years.

Each year as part of the budget process, long term financial forecasting is completed to determine required levels of long-term debt to fund Council's capital works program as well as the Working Capital Facility (WCF) limit required by Council for the upcoming financial year to manage short term cash flows.

COMMENT:

Council utilises a WCF limit up to \$120M. New long-term borrowings planned for the next ten financial years are as follows:

Year and Purpose of Borrowing	Amount	Term
2026/27 Capital Works Program	-	-
2026/27 EDQ – Mount Peter	\$15M	12 years
2027/28 Capital Works Program	\$72M	15 years
2028/29 Capital Works Program	\$62M	15 years
2029/30 Capital Works Program	\$32M	15 years
2030/31 Capital Works Program	\$29M	15 years
2031/32 Capital Works Program	\$11M	15 years
2032/33 Capital Works Program	-	-
2033/34 Capital Works Program	-	-
2034/35 Capital Works Program	-	-
2035/36 Capital Works Program	-	-

The planned repayment of existing long-term borrowings is as follows:

Year and Purpose of Borrowing	Current Balance	Term Remaining
2021/22 Borrowings	\$19M	6 years
2020/21 Borrowings	\$15M	5 years
2019/20 Borrowings	\$25M	4 years
2018/19 Borrowings	\$6M	3 years
2017/18 Borrowings	\$7M	2 years
EDQ – Mt Peter (interest-free)	\$0.3M	1 years

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended):

That Council adopts the Debt Policy for 2026/27.

Option 2:

That Council does not endorse the 2026/27 Debt Policy and puts forward proposed amendments to the policy and corresponding changes to be made to Council's capital works program.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Council's long term financial forecasting model is used to determine required and sustainable debt levels, keeping within key financial sustainability metrics.

Statutory:

Chapter 5, part 4, and section 192 of *Local Government Regulation 2012* requires Council to set a Debt Policy annually showing borrowings planned for the next ten financial years.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Debt Policy - Marked Up Version (#622911)

Attachment 2: Debt Policy - Clean Version (#622911)



Jason Ritchie
Executive Manager Finance



Lisa Whitton
Chief Financial Officer

Attachment 1: Debt Policy - Marked Up Version (#622911)

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL



General Policy

DEBT POLICY

Intent: To provide Council with a debt management strategy based on sound financial management guidelines.

Scope: This policy applies to all borrowings of Cairns Regional Council including all of the commercialised business units of Council.

PROVISIONS

The following sets out the Debt Policy for the year ending 30 June 2026⁷ as required by chapter 5, part 4, and section 192 of *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Borrowings are obtained from Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC), with the exception of capital projects funded under interest-free loan agreements with Economic Development Queensland (EDQ). Council maintains both long and short term borrowings. Borrowing approvals are subject to an annual approval process facilitated by the Department of [Housing, Local Government, Water and Volunteers Planning and Public Works](#).

Short Term Borrowings

Short term borrowings are provided through a Working Capital Facility (WCF). Council maintains a WCF to effectively manage cash balances throughout the year in order to delay the drawdown of long term debt. Any drawdowns from the facility are typically fully repaid within one year.

Councils utilises a WCF limit up to \$120 Million.

Long Term Borrowings

Long term borrowings are utilised to fund the construction of long-term infrastructure assets that provide essential services and ongoing benefits to the community. QTC Borrowings are repaid on a monthly basis. EDQ loan repayments are made annually.

Planned long term borrowing requirements are set out below:

Year and Purpose of Borrowing	Amount	Term
2025 ⁶ /26 ⁷ Capital Works Program	\$36M ⁻	15 years ⁻
2026/27 EDQ – Mount Peter	\$15M	12 years
2025/26 EDQ – Mt Peter	\$15M	12 years
2026 ⁷ /27 ⁸ Capital Works Program	-\$72M	-15 years
2027 ⁸ /28 ⁹ Capital Works Program	-\$62M	-15 years
2028 ⁹ /29 ³⁰ Capital Works Program	\$2532M	15 years
2029 ³⁰ /30 ¹ Capital Works Program	\$3529M	15 years
2030 ¹ /31 ² Capital Works Program	\$2411M	15 years
2031 ² /32 ³ Capital Works Program	\$17M ⁻	15 years ⁻
2032 ³ /33 ⁴ Capital Works Program	\$8M ⁻	15 years ⁻
2033 ⁴ /34 ⁵ Capital Works Program	\$7M ⁻	15 years ⁻
2034 ⁵ /35 ⁶ Capital Works Program	-	-

The default repayment term of new loans is 15 years however will be set on a case by case basis (up to a maximum of 20 years) to ensure best use of Council’s surplus funds. The planned repayment of existing long term borrowings is as follows:

Year and Purpose of Borrowing	Current Balance	Term Remaining
2021/22 Borrowings	\$2219M	76 years
2020/21 Borrowings	\$1815M	65 years
2019/20 Borrowings	\$3125M	54 years
2018/19 Borrowings	\$86M	43 years
2017/18 Borrowings	\$117M	32 years
EDQ – Mt Peter (interest-free)	\$0.53M	12 years
2015/16 Consolidated Debt	\$10M	1 years

Principles

- Council aims to finance capital works and new assets to the greatest extent possible from revenue, grants and subsidies.
- Financing of major infrastructure assets requires a strategic approach to evaluate the risk exposure of Council.
- Council should continually evaluate its financing options to ensure it assesses the relative risks and benefits, including the performance of its finances.
- Council will not use long-term debt to finance operating activities or re-current expenditure of Council.
- Council maintains a WCF to effectively manage cash balances throughout the year in order to delay the drawdown of long term debt.
- Council’s long term financial model will provide the basis for determination of funding options.
- Council will only enter into finance lease agreements in line with the provisions contained in the *Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982* and the *Local Government Act 2012*.



This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director Responsible for Review:

Chief Financial Officer

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 21/06/2002

CURRENT ADOPTION: 25/06/2025

DUE FOR REVISION: 25/06/2026

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

Ken Gouldthorp
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment 2: Debt Policy - Clean Version (#622911)

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