



Somerset  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

# Somerset Budget Highlights FY25

## Message from the Mayor

Council has worked hard to deliver a \$95.9 million budget that offers value and responsibly addresses our community's immediate and future needs.

As part of the budgeting process Council has diligently addressed the challenges posed by the increasing cost-of-living and state land valuations for Somerset residents with a steadfast focus on maintaining the lowest possible overall rates.

As one of the fastest growing regions in South East Queensland, Somerset's population has increased by 2.1% to about 26,000 people, contributing to a significant increase (54% - \$3.22B to \$4.97B) in average residential land values, reflecting a growing attraction to our vibrant, and connected country lifestyle.

With the region's population forecast to grow to about 29,000 by 2031, Council continues to invest heavily in infrastructure, accessibility, and facilities that people need, with 30 capital projects (\$53 million) planned this year. A further 25 projects valued at more than \$4 million are scheduled, subject to government funding.

This year's budget will also be boosted by an anticipated revenue of \$32 million from government grants and subsidies (44% of budget revenue), along with other revenue sources totalling \$6.4 million, ensuring ratepayers are not solely funding the cost of infrastructure investment across Somerset.

We are proud to continue supporting our local economy by employing and buying locally, with an expected 60+% of total rates and charges revenue remaining within the local community in FY25. It is pleasing to note the region's unemployment rate has decreased from 6.9% to 4.9% since March 2023.

A further \$329,000 investment in local event sponsorship and assistance programs will help bring the community together, and boost visitation and economic activity.

Council's freeze on dog registrations for three years will save residents more than \$200,000 over the next two years, with our 15% prompt payment discount for rates providing further financial relief.

While Council has prioritised containing operating costs to ensure long-term affordability and sustainability, escalating costs of (UU) sewer and water charges (3.6% increase), insurance (8.2%), fuel/oil/materials (5.2%), and labour (6% increase) have exerted significant pressure on Council's finances.

When taking into consideration that Council manages 1,490kms of roads (more than the distance from Brisbane to Townsville), 317ha of parks and gardens, four libraries, three aquatic centres, four public waste facilities, and much more, these price hikes have an enormous impact.

Despite the challenging economic environment, Council has worked hard to manage impacts on all Somerset ratepayers, keeping the cost of key rates lower than other neighbouring regions.

This year, owner occupiers on the minimum general rate will receive a total increase in their annual rate bill, including additional levies and charges, of \$119 or less, equivalent to \$2.28 per week or less.

Acknowledging the additional rates burden for farm owners with land valuation increases that are higher than the average for their categories, Council has undertaken extensive efforts to ensure a fair outcome by:

- Keeping 70+% of farm owners at an overall change in rates of less than 10%, including 16% who will get a rate reduction.
- Increasing the number of farm rating categories from three to nine, and;
- Reducing the general rate as a percentage of official State land valuation by between 25-49%.

Even with the valuations increase for farm owners, the cost (\$28M) to maintain and build rural roads across Somerset in FY25 exceeds the total revenue raised from farming rates (\$7.7M), highlighting the challenges Council has faced in delivering a fair and equitable budget, while funding essential services.

As we move forward with this budget I, along with my councillors, am committed to fostering improved communication and engagement with the community, working towards a vibrant, well-planned, prosperous, and unified future for all residents and our region.

**Mayor Jason Wendt**





# Working together for a stronger Somerset

## Meet your Somerset Councillors



Cr Helen Brieschke  
Deputy Mayor



Cr Michael Bishop



Cr Brett Freese



Cr Tiara Hurley



Cr Kylee Isidro



Cr Sally Jess

## Investing in our community

Your rates account for approximately 35% of our total revenue with the remainder from investments, fees, charges, grants, and subsidies.

### Here are how your rates are allocated to essential services across our region.

#### Waste and recycling - \$4.5M

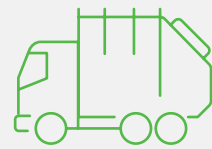
On average in FY24:



Kerbside waste  
**7000+ tonnes** collected



Kerbside recycling  
**1110+ tonnes** sent to  
materials recycling facility



Total landfill waste  
**9000+ tonnes**

#### Maintained roads (1490km) - \$27.9M



**529 Kms** of unsealed  
(gravel) roads



**846 Kms** of  
sealed roads



**115 Kms** of unsealed  
(formed) roads

#### Other public infrastructure - \$25.8M



**186 Kms**  
of footpaths



**86** Bridges



**88** commercial, corporate  
and civic buildings

#### Libraries and community services - \$2.6M



**4** regional libraries with  
free membership

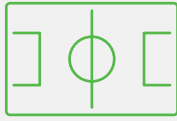


**8850** library  
members



**41,790** resources  
(hardcopy, e-books,  
and audio)

## Parks and Recreation - \$6.4M



**9** sports and recreation facilities (indoor sports centre, showgrounds, racecourses, and sports fields)



**3** regional aquatic centres



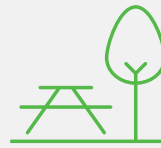
**82** parks and open spaces (228HA)



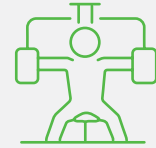
**17** playgrounds



**56** bubbler and maintenance taps

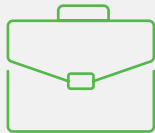


**492** pieces of park furniture



**3** outdoor exercise facilities

### Administrative/ corporate services \$10.4M



Ensuring efficient management of internal services across the organisation, its finances, and Council's property and fleet.

### Economic development and tourism - \$1.1M



Growing the local visitor economy and attracting new businesses and opportunities from both within and outside the region.

### Planning and regulatory - \$3.5M



Town planning to ensure sustainable development. Regulating compliance with state and council laws.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

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

Somerset Regional Council's key rates and charges are lower than neighbouring regions.

In FY24 Council supported the Somerset community with \$329,000 in donations, and sponsorships.



## FY25 budget overview

In line with our Corporate Plan (2021-26), Council has prioritised the funding of key projects to help us achieve our strategic goals:

### NATURAL SOMERSET (14.2% of budget)

*A place where the natural environment, scenic beauty and rural lifestyle are valued and protected.*

#### KEY PROJECTS (\$13.7M\*)

Council is investing heavily in ongoing management of pest plants and animals, including lantana and fire ants, as well as our waste management programs

- Lowood recycled water pipeline (\$1.9M state funded)
- Dingyarra Street flood mitigation/drainage project – (DRF) (\$1.9M)

### VIBRANT SOMERSET (8.5% of budget)

*An integrated and welcoming place with something for everyone.*

#### KEY PROJECTS (\$7.9M\*)

Council is investing in cultural and recreational assets with improvements in operating hours of pools and libraries which build on great new assets like Lowood Pool.

- Saturday library opening hours at Kilcoy and Lowood
- Community event sponsorship

### PROSPEROUS SOMERSET (4.3% of budget)

*A place that embraces economic opportunities.*

#### KEY PROJECTS (\$4.2M^)

Council is investing in new resources to help deliver a bright economic future including appointment of a Place Project Manager, Trails Officer and an Economic Development Officer.



*The Somerset region, with its unique identity and proud heritage, is vibrant, cohesive, and connected, providing the foundations for a prosperous rural lifestyle.*

## **WELL PLANNED SOMERSET (73.2% of budget)**

*A place where planning and design look to the future.*

### **KEY PROJECTS (\$70.2M\*)**

Council is investing in critical infrastructure that connects our people and communities for the long-term. Marquee projects include:

- Muckerts/McCulkins Lanes construction (\$10.0M – HVSP)
- Scrub Creek Road Bridge construction (\$4.7M – DRFA betterment)
- Upgraded crossing on Patrick Estate Road (\$3.7M – DRFA betterment)
- Lester Kropp Bridge (Neurum Road) replacement (\$6.7M - BRP)
- Widening roads – Ivory Creek Road \$3.9M, Lowood Minden Road \$2.1M, Toogoolawah Biarra Road \$5.5M, Main Street at Lowood \$2.6M and Clarendon Road \$1.3M (PACP/TIDS).
- Reduction in unsealed roads by 1.5% (10 km).

## **UNITED SOMERSET (12.7% of budget)**

*An active place which values participation.*

### **KEY PROJECTS (\$12.2M<sup>^</sup>)**

Council is investing in new resources to help deliver better coordination and communications with the community including:

- Two new communications professionals.
- Increased legal budget to allow Council to appropriately manage development (\$0.7M)
- Increase cyber security expenditure to keep the community's data safe.
- Increased team training and safety expenditure to help Council attract and retain great people working for our community.

\* Operating and capital expenditure

<sup>^</sup> Operating expenditure

HVSPP = Australian Government Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program

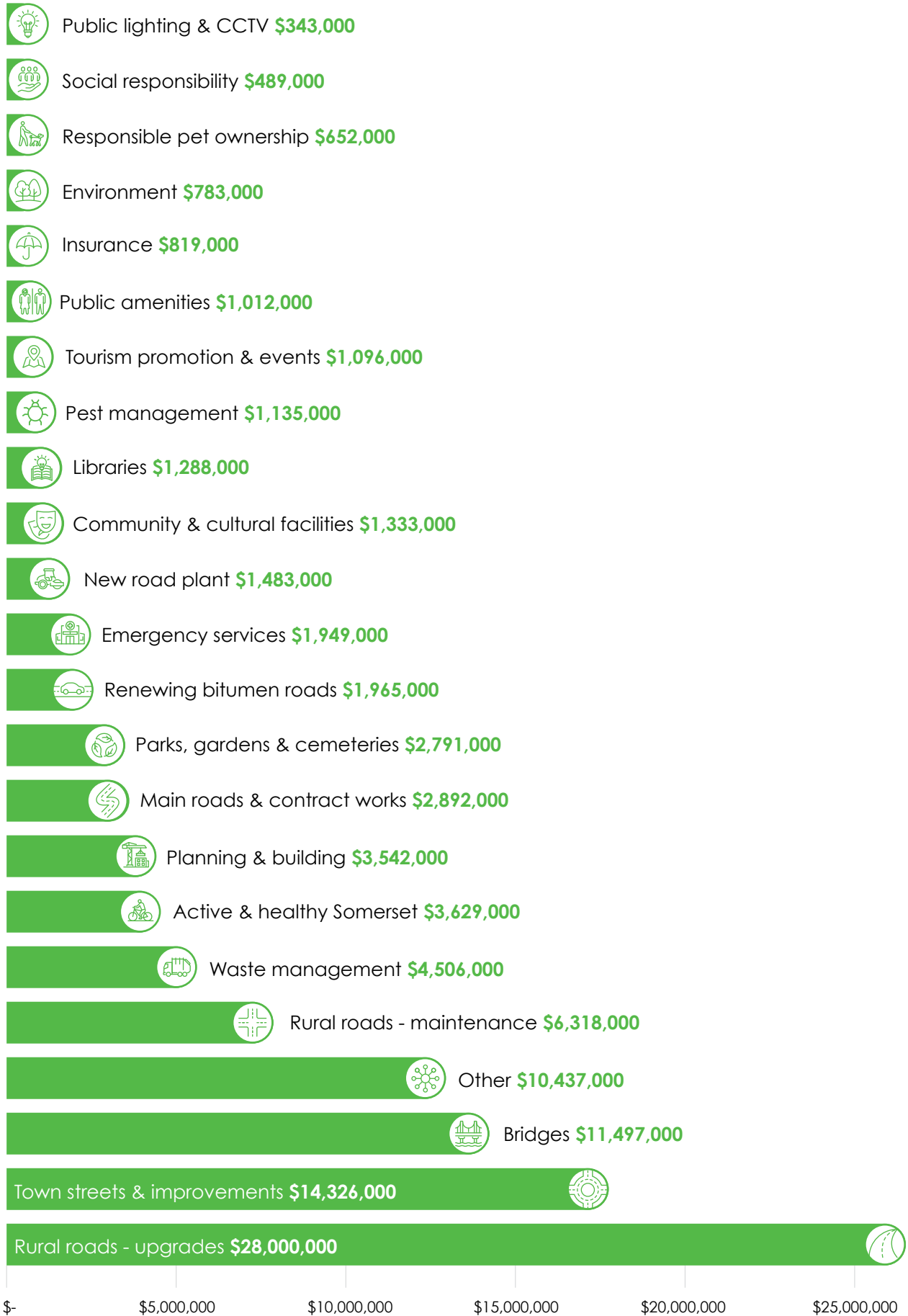
DRFA betterment = State/ Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Betterment Program

BRP = Australian Government Bridges Renewal Program

PACP = Australian Government Preparing Australian Communities Program

TIDS = Queensland Government Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme

## Y25 - Where \$96 million goes







### **DID YOU KNOW?**

In FY25 Council expects to raise \$32M in capital grants to support capital projects in our Somerset.

Council now has solar panels on 26 Council buildings returning anticipated savings of \$2.6 million.

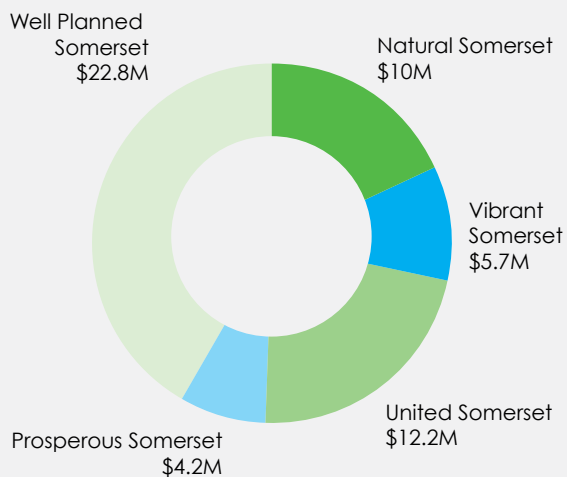
In the past 12 months, Council has overseen record local investment in infrastructure and services of more than \$100M.



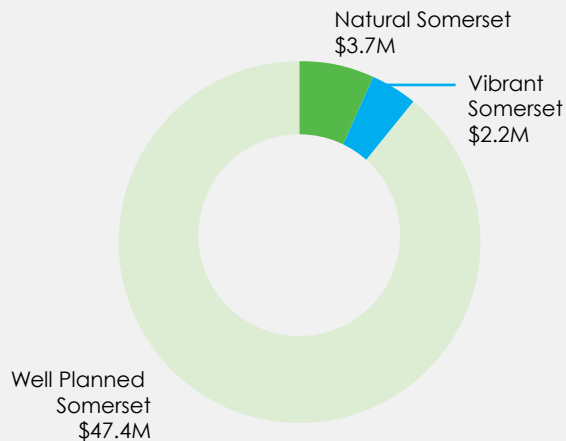


## FY25 budget overview

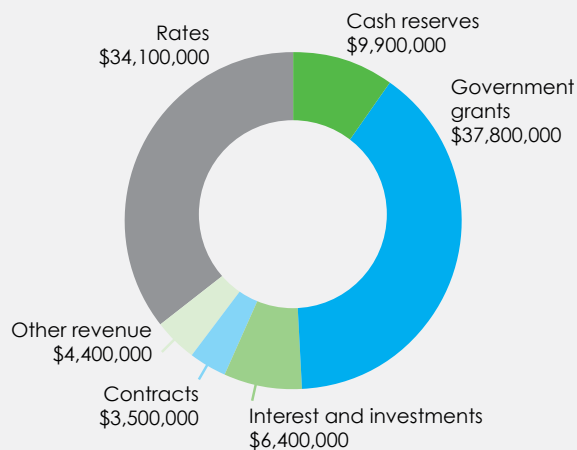
Operating expenditure - budget FY25



Capital expenditure - budget FY25



## Where the money comes from



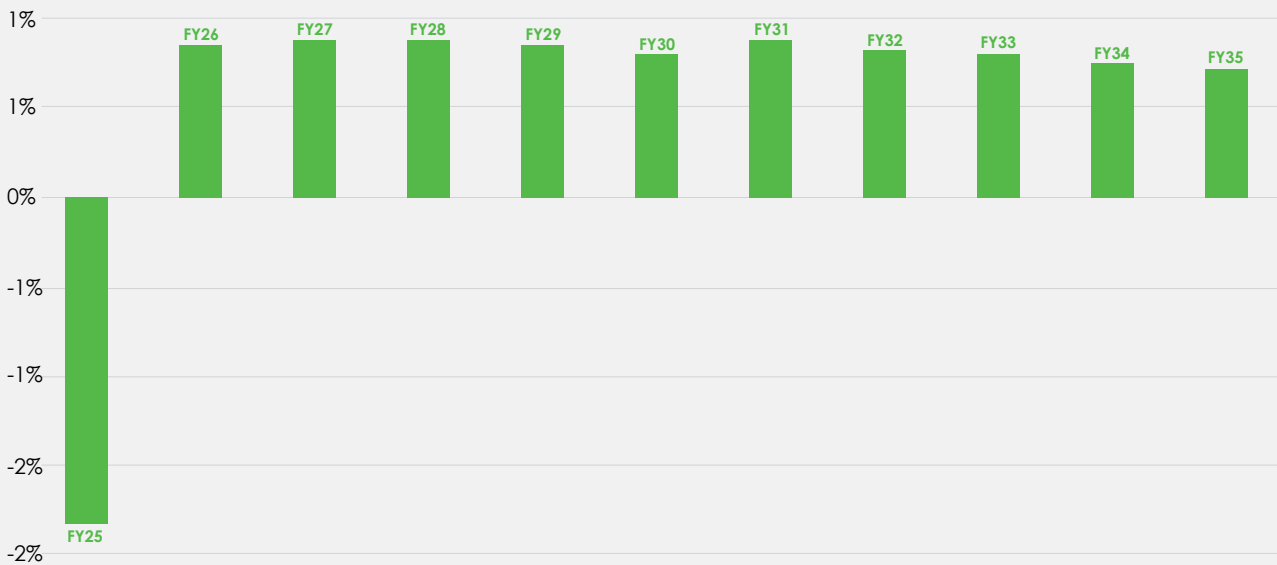




### Operating surplus ratio

Council needs to operate sustainably and meet State Government financial sustainability measures and targets over the long term. Council is confident that while the FY2025 budget shows an operating loss of around 2% of operating revenue, it will produce operating surpluses for future years.

Operating surplus ratio - net operating surplus divided by total operating revenue - target >0%



## Rates and charges FY25 snapshot

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

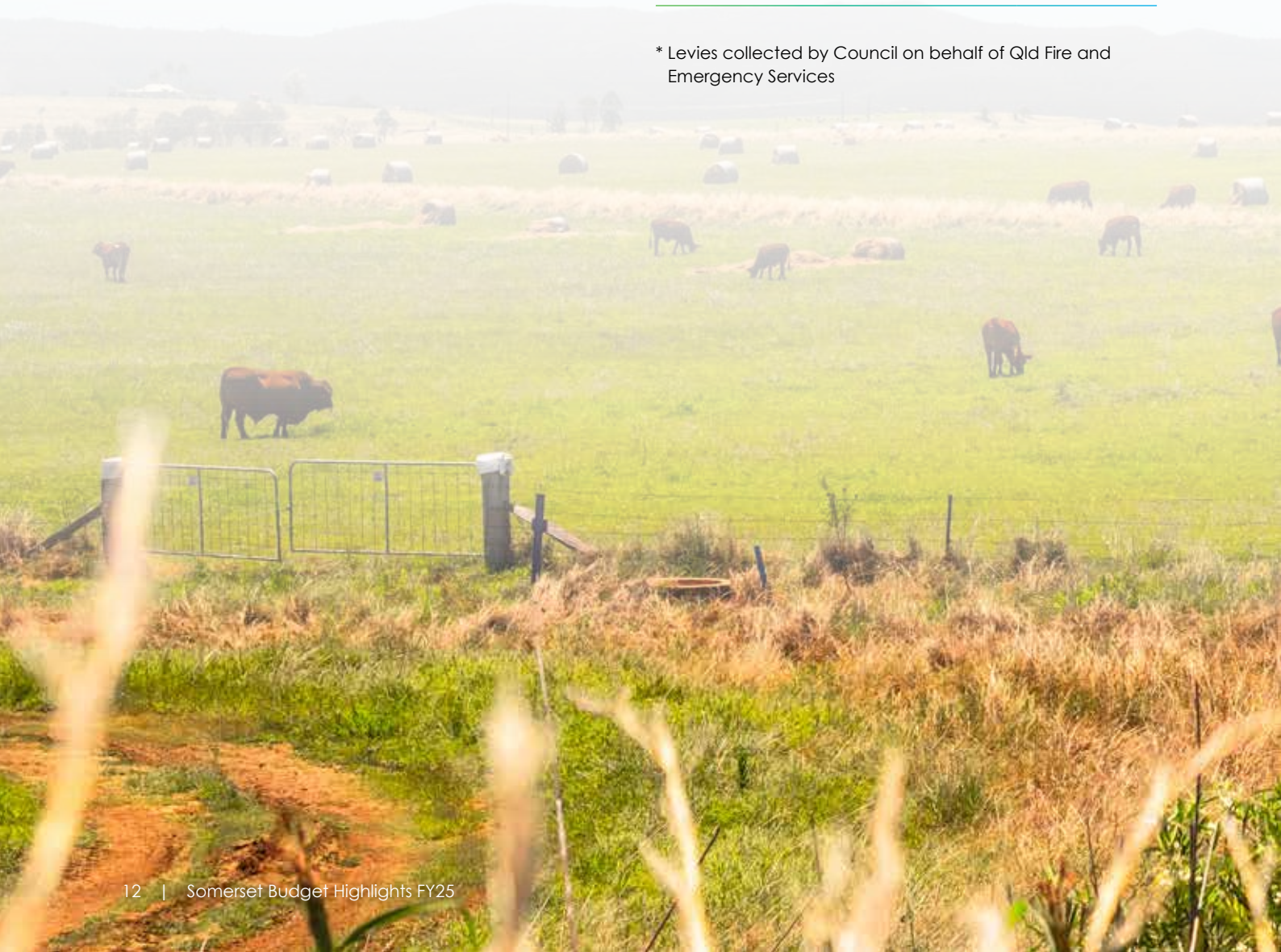
### URBAN RESIDENTIAL

Minimum general rate	\$952.14pa
Domestic waste	\$391.90pa
SES Levy	\$36.10pa
Environmental levy	\$82.30pa
Emergency Management Levy	\$119.00pa*
Gross total rates and charges	\$1,581.44pa
Net rates and charges (incl. 15% pay on time discount)	\$1,438.62pa
Net increase in FY25 (incl. 15% dis.)	\$106.38pa
Net increase/week (incl. 15% dis.)	\$2.05

### RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Minimum general rate	\$1,170.48pa
Domestic waste	\$391.90pa
SES Levy	\$36.10pa
Environmental levy	\$82.30pa
Rural fire levy	\$40.70pa
Emergency Management Levy	\$119.00pa*
Gross total rates and charges	\$1,840.48pa
Net rates and charges (incl. 15% pay on time discount)	\$1,664.91pa
Net increase in FY25 (incl. 15% dis.)	\$118.39pa
Net increase/week (incl. 15% dis.)	\$2.28

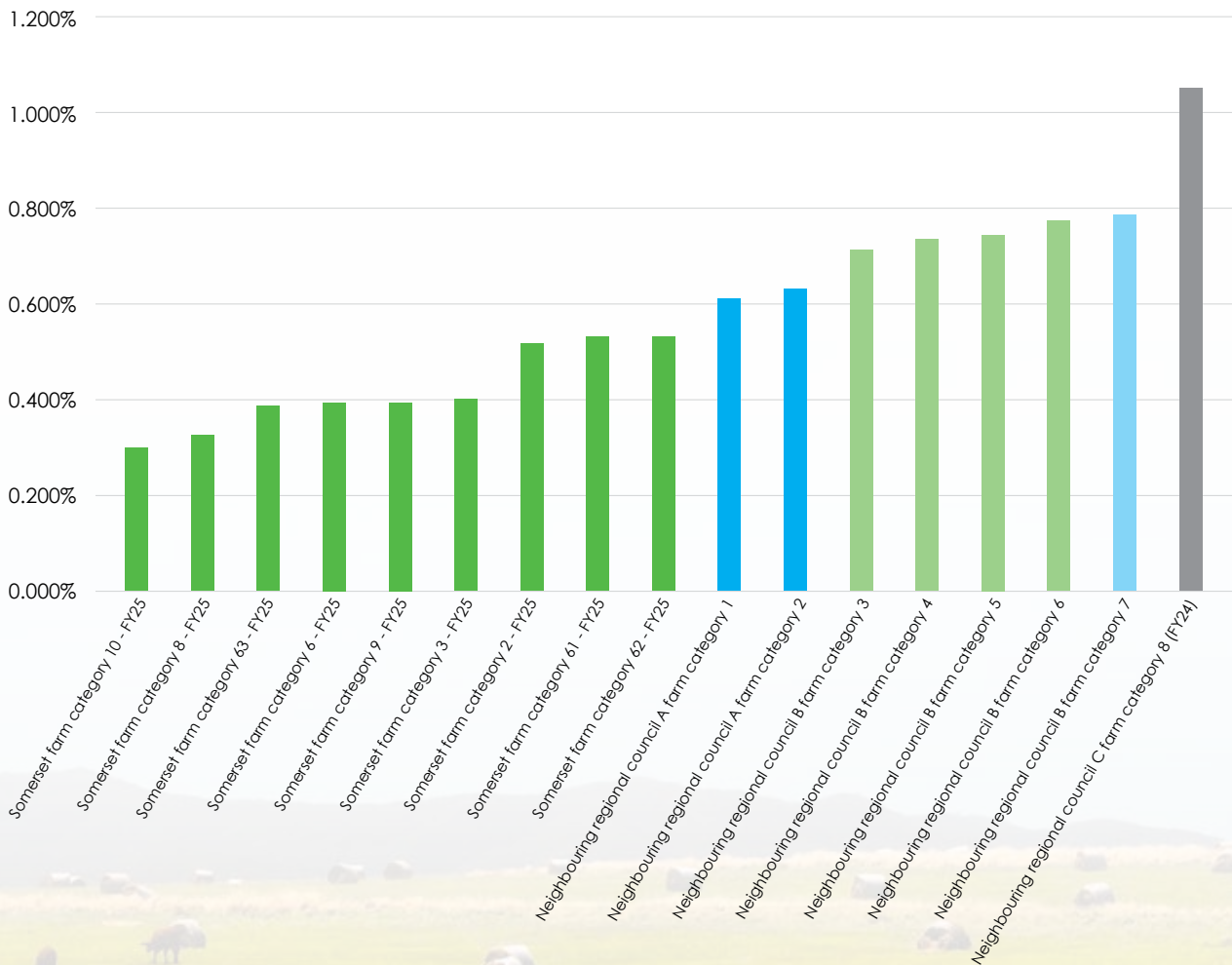
\* Levies collected by Council on behalf of Qld Fire and Emergency Services





## General rates comparison for farming properties

FY25 general rates for farming properties as a percentage of land valuation before discounts (Somerset prompt payment discount is 15%)







**For more information contact Somerset Regional Council**

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 **somerset.qld.gov.au/budget**