

Rates to rise 2.5%

BRONWYN FARR

MAREEBA Shire Council is "living within its means" with Mayor Angela Toppin emphasising the 2.5 per cent rate increase in the 2022-23 budget is less than the CPI increase of 5 per cent.

Cr Toppin said the 2.5 per cent increase, handed down this week, did not reflect the true increase in costs faced by

council.

"The budget reinforces council's long-term financial plan with balanced budgets, fully funded depreciation, and minimal debt, providing consistent service delivery to the community, at a sustainable cost," Cr Toppin said.

A total of \$9.1m will be spent on water infrastructure upgrades and renewals.

Council has a \$52m 10-year

plan for water assets, with grants from state and federal governments.

"We know that we are on track for a sustainable future – we are living within our means," Cr Toppin said.

The budget has a record spend on parks and open spaces in recognition of the community survey conducted in 2020, with \$4.6m earmarked for projects, Cr Toppin said.

Work is set to begin on the \$1.5m splash park at the Mareeba Aquatic Centre with a completion date of early 2023.

The facility will be a new zero-depth, zero-height splash interactive play area with shade structures.

The existing 50m pool and children's pool will be heated and picnic tables and shade will be added.

A council statement out-

lined how every \$100 in rates was spent – \$40.66 on transport infrastructure, \$21.30 on parks and gardens, \$12.33 on council facilities, \$7.62 on libraries, \$4.38 on biodiversity protection, \$4.02 on local laws, \$3.41 on community engagement and tourism, \$3.19 on pools, \$1.86 on planning, and \$1.123 on environmental health, building, and plumbing.

BRIEFS

Warning on cattle

CATTLE station owners at Weipa and Aurukun have reported people entering properties and unlawfully butchering cattle. The Organised Crime Squad Rural is appealing for assistance, reminding that even if unbranded, cattle are still subject to ownership and cannot be killed or taken without permission.

Planning move fails

A MOVE by Tablelands Regional Councillor David Clifton to take planning decisions from council staff to councillors themselves was defeated at a recent meeting. Cr Clifton wanted councillors to decide on development applications rather than Infrastructure and Planning Services. The motion was lost 3-4.

Markets on the move

THE St Thomas Parents and Friends Mareeba Markets is relocating from Centenary Park to the Mareeba Turf Club from August 13. The group said there would be ample safe off-street parking, a fenced location, and scope for more stalls to be added. No dogs are allowed at the markets, which are held on the second and fifth Saturday of the month.

Precinct nominated

COOKTOWN'S recently created Reconciliation Rocks precinct has been awarded the 2022 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Queensland award for cultural heritage. The project was an initiative between the Cooktown Re-enactment Association and Cook Shire Council, with two pieces of public art by renowned sculptor Braham Stevens.

Growers field day

A HOST of peak industry bodies will be at the FNQ Growers Field Day on July 29 at Mareeba Turf Club. FNQ Growers chairman Joe Moro said the Australian Mango Industry Association, Avocados Australia, Citrus Australia, Papaya Australia, Australian Banana Growers Council, Cotton Australia, AusVeg and MSF Sugar were participating.



EWES FLASH: THERE'S A GREAT NEW ADDITION TO THIS TABLELANDS FARM

Kerry Kelly at her Topaz farm on the Atherton Tablelands with some of her flock of Australian white sheep. Picture: Supplied

BRONWYN FARR

WE think of sheep belonging to colder, dry climates and the wide brown land – but farmer Kerry Kelly is pioneering sheep production at Topaz on the Atherton Tablelands.

Only 4 per cent of the nation's population of 70 million sheep are in Queensland, with vast pastoral properties in NSW having the lion's share.

But Ms Kelly is doing something different – offering what is known as

the "wagyu of the sheep world" – the Australian white breed.

The family branched into sheep farming six years ago, buying five Australian white ewes and a ram, and they've since built the flock up to 30 breeding ewes which roam the paddocks alongside cattle.

Australian whites have meat known for the low melting point of its fat.

Nowhere has their adaptability to rain been quite so well tested as in Topaz.

"Because of the amount of rain and wet ground here we need to keep a good eye on their feet, and to clip their hooves twice a year," Ms Kelly said.

"We also need to be careful about worms, so we have six paddocks and we rotate our sheep around them."

She said there had been interest since her Australian whites became the first sheep to be exhibited at the Malanda Show last year.

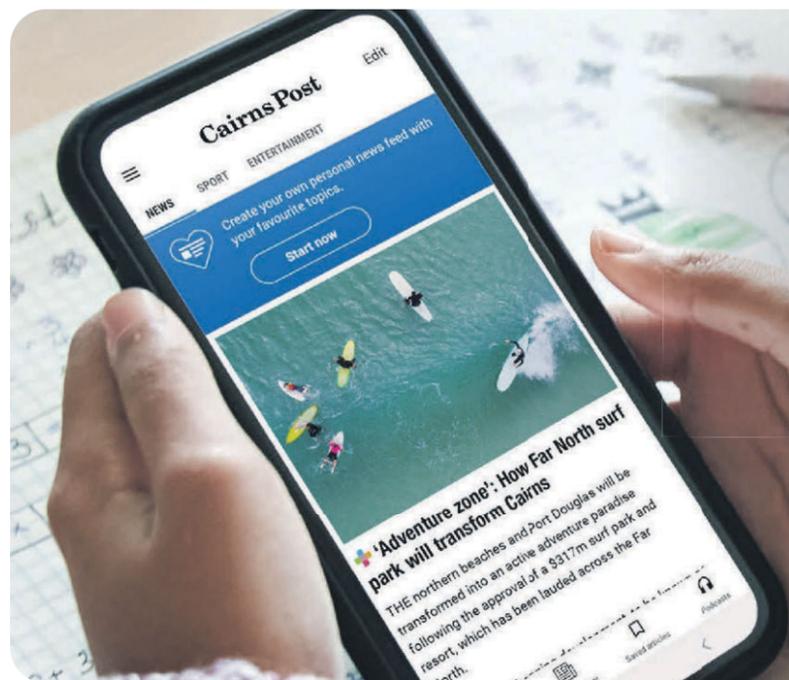
She brought sheep to the show again this year, including newly-born

twins. "I sell to abattoirs and individuals for eating and breeding," Ms Kelly said.

"Most of our ewes are due to lamb in the next month or so. It'll be 12 weeks before I wean them. In September or October, we'll have lambs for sale again.

"There are quite a few other farms with small flocks – from Ravenshoe to Julatten and Eacham.

"You've got to put some effort in to make it work up here but it's worth it," she said.



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