

Myths vs Facts

New Hervey Bay Library, Council Administration Centre and Public Plaza

Developing Hervey Bay's City Centre – The Facts

There have been many myths and inaccuracies spread about the revitalisation of the Hervey Bay City Centre redevelopment.

It's important the facts and correct details about the project are available to enable informed opinion.

Myth: How can Council afford to pay for this project? Is that why rates are going up?

Fact: No rate rise can be attributed to one project. Council develops its budget each year after determining the overall level of community services and facilities to provide.

We are facing challenges with our operational budget – the day-to-day costs of running Council, and the new building has no impact on this year's operational budget.

Council is receiving \$40 million from the Australian Government towards this project through the Hinkler Regional Deal. The rest of this important capital works project will be funded through a combination of Council's general revenue and land sales.

A report by independent economic consultants, the AEC Group, found that there was a "clear need for change" and doing nothing was not an option.

AEC Group found that constructing a new library and administration building will cost the Council and the community less than upgrading existing facilities. It also delivers the most economic and social benefits.

Myth: Why don't Council build more offices at Tavistock Street in Torquay instead?

Fact: Building more offices in a residential suburb doesn't help revitalise the Hervey Bay City Centre, it doesn't deal with the fact that our current library

is not big enough for our growing population, and it wouldn't allow the university to expand.

The sale of the Tavistock Street site will help offset the costs of the new centre and potentially help address the housing availability crisis in our region. About 50 residential housing blocks, up to 200 units or about 120 homes in an over-50s lifestyle community development could be built on the site.

The relocation has been on the drawing board since 2001, local business groups support it as the number one project to help grow the economy, and the Australian Government funding through the Hinkler Regional Deal means it can finally become a reality.

Myth: But wouldn't it cost less to expand on the existing site rather than construct a new building?

Fact: An independent economic report found that constructing a new building would cost less than upgrading existing facilities.

AEC Group's analysis found that building a new library and administration centre is between \$42.5 million and \$53.6 million cheaper than the alternative option.



Myth: Why is Council spending all this money on a new building for itself?

Fact: The new building will be a community and civic hub where individuals, professionals and families can come to learn, socialise and benefit from centralised Council services.

More than three-quarters of the development will be community space. There will be a new outdoor public plaza where there could be events, markets and live music, while there will also be flexible community spaces that can be used day and night. The new library will be double the current library's size to cater to our growing population and help lift our region's overall education standards.

Myth: What's wrong with the existing library? Why do we need a new one?

Fact: The current library has about 225,000 visitations a year and is only half the size it should be to meet Australian and Queensland library building standards.

By improving the library's floor space and design, we can build on our programs, cater for our growing population and help improve education outcomes in our region.

The new library provides an opportunity to ensure that collection items are reachable without excessive bending or stretching, and to provide suitable space for wheelchairs, mobility aids and prams to manoeuvre between aisles.

By building a new library in a new location, the university will have the opportunity to expand into the existing library space and potentially offer more courses.

Myth: With all the challenges facing the building industry, isn't the cost of this project going to keep blowing out?

Fact: Building contractors and tradies have been under pressure for many years. This pressure has increased since COVID-19 surfaced with supply chain challenges, materials/labour shortages and global events like the war in Ukraine all leading to increased costs for the building industry.

This has led to some increases since the early estimates from November 2021, but the contract has now been awarded for a price of \$108.7 million, with the project funded by a \$40 million Australian Government commitment, Council's general revenue and land sales.

The contract has been awarded as a Guaranteed Maximum Price tender, which provides costs certainty and protects against future cost overruns.

Council will also share in any cost savings if the cost falls below the Guaranteed Maximum Price.

Myth: Where is everyone going to park?

Fact: While parking studies have shown there are a significant number of existing community car parks in the area, Council is investigating additional on-street parking options and will develop a new car park near the current library site and the Hervey Bay PCYC.

Council is also actively exploring additional parking options within the Hervey Bay City Centre.

Myth: Why is Council building this centre in an area that is prone to flash flooding?

Fact: Council's extensive flood modelling is being considered in the building's design and construction, with the building to be designed to sit above a one in 500-year flood. The site did not flood in a severe weather event last year that saw more than 100mm fall in Hervey Bay in less than 24 hours, as the site has a flood detention basin behind it to hold back rain surges.

It's important to understand that a Disaster Resilience Centre is used primarily for training, education, and planning for disaster events. Responses to disasters will be coordinated from the centre when appropriate, and at other times, could be coordinated through virtual video conferencing.