

KEITH CAMPBELL

for MAYOR 2020

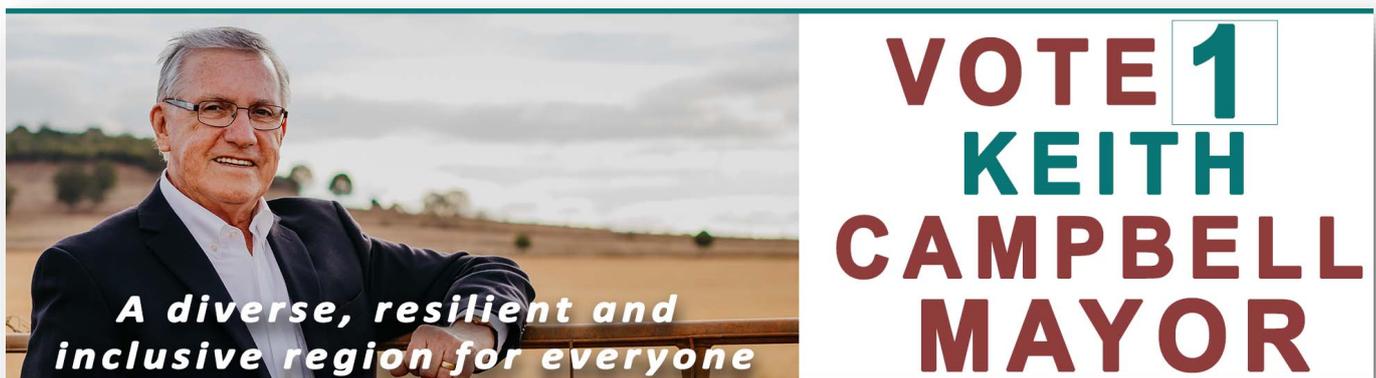
Campaign Summary



1. My theme for this election is to continue in the positive and focus on celebrating the achievements of the past 4 years. Some of the decisions that had to be made were not easy, but that's why **experience matters** in who you select as your Mayor for the next 4 years. Much has been done in the past four years to make us feel proud.
2. At the election four years ago, the South Burnett put 'new blood' into Council. I am very proud of the way that team, which included 4 new councillors, and myself as Mayor, have conducted the business of local government.
3. This past 4 years has seen a very stable period of local government in the South Burnett. There are no major issues of discontent.
4. You can trust my leadership style to continue in the same way in the next four years, quietly and methodically providing the best direction to take, considering all the unique communities and situations our residents face. This requires a skilled "people person" leader, not a one-man band.
5. I believe Council's elected representatives and administration works best and gives you the best value as ratepayers when I'm not out doing the job that someone else is doing! My style is to appoint the most appropriately qualified Councillor to the portfolio area that best suits their skills and life experience and require them to work effectively with the Senior Executive Staff and their teams to bring to Council the issues that are most important for the decisions that feed into strategy and policy. You won't see me out delivering water to field staff when they do that really well on their own, or driving around the 3500 km of roads in our region to make an individual assessment of what needs to be done. I trust the CEO and his leadership of qualified Council employees to do that, together with the Roads Portfolio Holder. And where constituents have complex issues to resolve or the hard questions to challenge Council, as Mayor I'm very happy to meet, assist and find a resolution.
6. As Mayor, my job is to provide leadership and my personal commitment over the past 4 years has been to be available 24/7 when needed. The most important job a Mayor does is to be investing time listening to what ratepayers are saying; working closely with the CEO and the General Managers to ensure the governance and accountability; strategic planning and reviewing reports and presentations and represent the South Burnett at regional forums, with state and federal government departments. By legislation, the Mayor cannot double as the CEO. It is important you check that your preferred candidate understands the limits of the role of Mayor.
7. The evidence of the past four years under my leadership has been a stable local government. The recommendations that come to Councillors for decision-making, unfortunately cannot be random 'knee jerk' responses to issues. There is a formal process to deal with these issues. The problem of one cannot be interpreted as being the issue of the entire rate base.
8. Council employs a wide variety of professional staff, among them a number of qualified Accountants, Engineers and staff with a variety of degrees. I have found by trusting the information they gather provides Council the necessary information required to make decisions to achieve the best results.

9. A financial qualification is not a mandatory success formula as Mayor, and while it has served me well in maintaining rate rises to CPI or less over the past 4 years, I have found it is the “**people focused leader**” that bring people with you on a decision-making pathway that have returned the best results for ratepayers.
10. Election campaigns usually bring out singular issues or issues that impact a specific group due to circumstance that local government may not be able to control or fix. Rates and how they are levied are usually high on that list, because there are circumstances and individual’s beliefs around “value for money” at the location they choose that play into this and are often triggers for groups calling for “Rates Reference Groups”. The issue of Rates Categories is complex and relates to unimproved property valuations. The issue of the rate in the dollar was well canvassed at the time of Council Amalgamation.
11. In the past 4 years one of the circumstances that Council does not control, and that affects rates is that the South Burnett’s highly sought after rural properties saw many unimproved valuations (provided by the State Government Department of Valuer General) increased up to 25% and higher. This wasn’t the situation across the region, as some values went down or remained the same across a broad range of rating categories. Similarly, many rate payers had a reduction in the amount they paid in rates.
12. This Council has already publicly committed to embark on a total review of the rates structure to further refine land use relative to the impact of valuations (up and down), meaning some would pay more in rates while others would pay less. This is not a decision that has been taken and would not be decided upon until affirmed through discussion with all ratepayers.
13. Dissecting the numbers, as some have done, must be presented in a form that does not alarm people. The whole picture is that we have reduced debt in the last 4 years (to 31/01/2020) by \$9 million as well as having increased the cash held in reserves. As confirmed in the media recently, this has further strengthened Council’s overall financial position to a medium rating, enabling us to manage unexpected challenges.
14. 12 years ago, at amalgamation, our Council’s financial position was deemed as “weak” by the Qld State Audit Office. We can all be proud of the journey we have made and the different pain we have all had to bear to live within our means by only borrowing for those assets that have an intergenerational purpose.
15. Let me explain “good debt”, something that an accountant would be able to explain if asked. Council’s debt is for “capital acquisitions”. These are projects that have a life span of possibly up to 70 years. It’s ridiculous (and misleading not to say so publicly) to impose that cost on ratepayers in a single year when the asset’s life span is 70 or more years. Can you imagine how much higher our rates would need to be to fund and build long-life infrastructure if we had to fund it up front? It’s called intergenerational funding and follows the same principle when we personally buy our homes or commercial properties. Much of that debt is repaid over time.
16. Examples of intergenerational funding responsibilities on which the South Burnett Council has responsibility for loan repayments include – water infrastructure, wastewater treatment plants, rubbish collection and disposal points, libraries, Town Halls, swimming pools, roads and bridge replacements. I cannot ask you to pay in full in any one year for a capital purchase that will last for 70 plus years. This debt enables council to continue delivering on all the other things that are important to residents and ratepayers.

17. Significant savings in the past four years have been achieved in a reduction of costs in wages and salaries, electricity charges, return to six monthly rating cycle, adjustment of some aspects of community grants and donations, and fuel rebates. This is a continuous process of ensuring ratepayers gain maximum value for their rates payments and this is how we've reduced our capital debt by approximately \$9 million and increased our cash reserves.
18. Grant funds already received for the current 19/20 year is budgeted to reach \$12.54 million. In the previous 18/19 financial year we received \$17.74 million. It's a myth to state that this Council is not receiving its share of Federal and State Government grants. However, all Councils in Queensland and Australia have unified to lobby the Federal Government for a greater share of the Commonwealth's Tax Distribution, through the funding stream known as Federal Assistance Grants. Only 3% of Commonwealth Tax comes back to Local Governments. An improvement in this grant revenue would make an enormous difference, however, it is a united approach, not an individual Council or Councillor that will make the difference.
19. It's a fallacy to simplify the process of procuring grants being as easy as hopping on a plane to Canberra or driving down to George Street in Brisbane, will bring home extra grant money. Informed residents will understand that Council has to commit between 40% and 50% of cash towards grants for capital projects provided by State and Federal Governments. However, the Federal Assistance Grants can be used for any purpose without a matching dollar contribution by individual Councils.
20. Another opportunity factor with grants is through working closely with our community organisations and supporting them gain grant or philanthropic funding that local government is not eligible for. This is something the current team of Councillors has been doing very well. This is why the leader of your Council can't be a "one-person" band. It's all about Council and community working together as Team.
21. Immediately after the 2016 election, I commissioned an external third party to audit and work with Council to fix the road issues that residents had long been telling Council about. Roads and how they are funded and maintained are complex to say the least. The implementation of a new management approach, I am proud to say, has seen road conditions improve and will continue to improve over the next years. Unfortunately, to bitumen seal all dirt rural roads is not going to happen for the prime reason of the enormous cost impact on rates. Perfection on roads is not attainable given the extensive length of roads South Burnett Council is responsible for with a rather small ratepayer base. In addition, roads are a continuing deteriorating asset in that as soon as they are repaired, the process of deterioration starts all over again.
22. Through the external audit, we identified that the shortfall in money to bring all roads up to the standard we'd all like, was some \$15 million. That can't be funded by ratepayers in one year, so it is being done over a period of years by preserving the 1,500 km of dirt roads and 1,500 km of bitumen roads.



We currently receive far more compliments than complaints since introduction of the new road management approach. To provide an idea the expense associated with roads, the following will give an outline of costs – they are approximate costs:

- Patrol Grade \$600/km
- Gravel resheet \$45,000/km
- Bitumen reseal \$30,000/km
- Resheet and seal \$180,000/km
- Rehab sealed road \$120,000/km
- Full reconstruction \$350,000/km
- Footpath \$120,000/km
- **Unsealed whole of life**
- Maintenance \$1050/km/annum, renewal \$4760/km/annum = \$5810/km/annum
- **Sealed whole of life**
- Maintenance \$2000/km/annum, renewal \$6600/km/annum = \$8400/km/annum

23. To support my commitment to resolve this issue, residents can follow the road maintenance program on Council's website. A continuous forward three- month maintenance program is updated regularly. This helps ratepayers also know where and when the dollars are being spent on roads. Our commitment is to ensure that every dirt road will be graded each 12 months and some 200 km – 300 km of new gravel (re-sheeting) thereby improving the long term quality of the road.
24. We have maintained continuous effort during this term to communicate with ratepayers through a wide variety of channels. We hope that you will have seen updates about Council through press releases; social media posts; radio broadcasts; listening tours across the region and everyday Councillors are out and about using their own methods to communicate and receive feedback about what is important to ratepayers. Council's own website contains an enormous amount of information and is becoming the fastest way to understand what is happening with the enormous range of responsibilities Councillors are involved in. For people who don't have access to the web, we encourage you to see one of Council's libraries for assistance.
25. We have recently revised our Economic Development Strategy and Investment Prospectus. We have prepared our region for future growth and aligning our actions to achieve this strategy in the coming term. Water is the big ingredient to make the push forward, however, there's a series of other challenges we are working on all the time, that accompany attracting new investment.
26. No one can claim to be the fount of all knowledge without having demonstrated experience, and that simply by voting for them all the region's opportunities and challenges are met. These matter are best driven by working with large groups of independent, strong and creative thinkers. The pathway forward for new economic development leading up to this election, has been well articulated by me. The **experience** that I have accumulated relating to economic development is exciting and will continue to grow our wonderful region.
27. Collectively, around the Chamber there is almost 70 years of experience learnt while serving in Local Government.
28. The Council team I lead has a deep commitment to continuous improvement and is reflected in every decision where we continue to be guided by good governance and sound business management skills.

- 29.** Successful local government is about planning together, agreeing on the plans to improve and deliver on the services and securing the financial means needed to keep making the South Burnett an affordable and wonderful place to live.

There is no such thing as providing a perfect solution to every individual resident with a wish or a small group who want something, over some 24,000 voters and a total of 32,000 residents. All requests are taken into consideration but won't necessarily be implemented just because they've mentioned it! There is a process to follow.

- 30.** I'm proud of the South Burnett Council team and I find it particularly galling when "cheap comments" are made that the bureaucrats are in control. We have worked through tough decisions together over the past 4 years, and I have found that the CEO and his Senior Staff provide excellent advice and legislative direction, but do not make final decisions. Councillors make those final decisions on matters of policy and strategy.
- 31.** Councillors do not involve themselves in operational matters, and it is important that you ask any candidate with a "list of changes" they want to make as to whether it is possible for an elected candidate to make those promises. The answer of course is No. Every decision is subjected to all Councillors for debate.
- 32.** I remain "up for the challenge of the future", and as I have demonstrated over the many years I have served in local government, I represent the whole of South Burnett, not just segments, divisions or individual wants.
- 33.** The Council Team I offer to lead following the March 28th Election will come to work on the first day knowing that there is a proven plan in place. While I'm always open to new ideas or improvements, much of the endorsement the South Burnett receives now from those authorities that oversee us, also endorse the processes the previous team of Councillors have gone through.
- 34.** I won't be reinventing the wheel by reanalysing old issues where the evidence is clear that they have improved or improvements are underway.
- 35.** The plan I represent respects that Local Government does best when it focusses on those things most important to ratepayers and residents - roads, affordable rates and rubbish removed and disposed of. Further, I respect that each community has expectations of what they would like from the dollars they pay in rates and I will continue to work with each of the different sectors to reach a satisfactory balance of priorities.
- 36.** My plan is to continue growing the South Burnett as a united region. We are no longer four individual Councils or a single town or area, we are the South Burnett Regional Council. My plan has always been to encourage each town to grow its uniqueness, while most importantly working together as a united voice on the big picture for the overall good of everyone.
- 37.** The Plan I have is visionary. It is costed and doesn't contain surprises or false promises. It requires the support of each one of us to help grow the economy of the South Burnett.

38. My Plan proposes, and I've advocated for over the past 4 years, three (3) essential elements to our growth.
- **Agriculture** and food processing need larger and affordable water allocations to enable maximum productivity for our clean and green food bowl. Success looks like bigger existing businesses and new manufacturing industries, more new jobs and a growing urban population. Driving the outcome of the current Water Feasibility Study is key to this.
 - **Energy** - Growing the South Burnett's proven energy hub. Our energy generation mix includes Stanwell's Tarong and Meandu (coal-fired) and AGL's Coopers Gap (wind) with a solar farm approved and two new wind farms under assessment. Renewable energy projects, battery storage and new technology will create and sustain jobs for the longer term.
 - **Tourism** - Supporting the continued growth of the South Burnett's existing diverse tourism and event experiences along with encouraging tourism packages that attract new visitors, support more local jobs, strengthen our economy and keep visitors here longer.
39. My vision for the South Burnett is clear. I will commit every day of the next term as your Mayor to ensuring the South Burnett economy reaches its full potential for everyone. I already hold the relationships that enable this to occur and I have proven that I am able to work across all the different political streams that form our State and Federal governments.
40. I don't start from scratch having to learn what Local Government is all about. I won't rehash issues that have been dealt with in the past. I acknowledge that my opponents all have individual business and life experience, however the essential ingredient to a functioning local government is that **experience matters** in these times.
41. I start with 21 years of **experience** – four of them as your current Mayor, 8 of them as your Deputy Mayor and 9 of them as a Divisional Councillor.
42. I am very encouraged with the progress we have made during the past four years and I envisage that when I hand over the reins further down the track, that this Region will be further progressed and the legacy created will reflect that you will have a much stronger South Burnett for the long term.
43. I would be honoured to greet you on March 29th as your Mayor for the next four years.

