


Financial Assistance Policy – Drought, Bushfire, COVID 19

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1 OUTCOMES:

- 1.1 Council will provide relief to ratepayers impacted by natural disasters and pandemics, and ease the process to apply for financial assistance under the Financial Hardship Assistance Policy.
- 1.2 This Policy establishes the scope of financial assistance to be provided and the modified terms to apply for hardship relief to residential and business ratepayers.
- 1.3 Council's hardship provisions are extended to ensure access for employees who have lost their jobs, businesses that have closed or have been restricted trade, or whose income has been substantially affected and property owners who provide rent deferral or reduced rental arrangements to business tenants, or whose rental income has been substantially affected.
- 1.4 That same relief continues to apply for farmland rate properties as a consequence of the drought, and other properties damaged or destroyed as a consequence of the bushfires.
- 1.5 This Policy applies for the period the QPRC Local Government Area (LGA) remains drought declared, bushfire impacted (including the bushfire recovery period) or economically locked down as a consequence of pandemic, as nominated by Government Order or Declaration.
- 1.6 This Policy is intended to improve access to the existing provisions of the Financial Hardship Assistance Policy.

2 POLICY:

- 2.1 General – Rates and Charges
 - a. Maximum period for approved payment arrangements extended to 2 years.
 - b. Interest charges to be waived on all approved payment arrangements.
 - c. Recovery action to be deferred upon application.
- 2.2 Drought Assistance – Rates and Charges
 - a. Applies to farmland ratepayers owning any parcel of land which is liable for the payment of South East Local Land Services rates.
 - b. Applies business ratepayers that directly supply the agriculture sector in the LGA.
- 2.3 Bushfire Assistance – Rates and Charges
 - a. Applies to ratepayers owning any parcel of land in the LGA listed on the Bushfire Impact Assessment schedule
 - b. Applies to business ratepayers that relied directly on visitor trade traversing the Kings Highway
- 2.4 Pandemic Assistance – Rates and Charges
 - a. Applies to residential ratepayers whose employment ceased as a consequence of the pandemic crisis and who require access to Government JobSeeker or JobKeeper payments.
 - b. Applies to business ratepayers whose business closed, or income has substantially decreased as a consequence of Government Orders during the pandemic crisis.
 - c. Applies to property owners who provide rent deferral or reduced rental arrangements to business tenants, or whose rental income has been substantially affected as a consequence of Government Orders during the pandemic crisis.
- 2.5 Other Assistance - Drought and Bushfire
 - a. Council will subsidise private works on farm properties related to access and dams reinstatement, and not charge the normal margin on cost of works, where those works are within the capacity of normal Council works programs.
 - b. Council will waive waste disposal fees for waste transfer stations in the LGA for general building waste and debris generated as a direct result of bushfires, subject to that material not being contaminated with any form of asbestos matter and

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where the costs are not otherwise recoverable by the owner through insurance or other external funding sources.

- c. Council will subsidise DA/inspection fees for rebuilding of destroyed homes, structures and infrastructure.

2.6 Other Assistance - Pandemic

- a. Council will waive, reduce or defer rents for commercial and community operators leasing Council property who can demonstrate financial distress due to the coronavirus, in line with Commonwealth/State Government codes.
- b. Council will waive footpath hire and related fees for business.
- c. Council will provide and subsidise Council-initiated online training, marketing and other support programs to local business.

3 LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS AND/OR RELEVANT STANDARDS

3.1 Council may provide financial assistance in accordance with s356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

7 REVIEW

- 7.1 This policy may be reviewed and updated as necessary if:
- legislation requires it, or
 - Council's functions, structure or activities change.