

## MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, April 24, 2020

### Council adopts Hardship Policy in response to COVID-19 pandemic

Waratah-Wynyard Council has adopted a Financial Hardship Policy amongst a range of support and stimulus measures after it was passed unanimously at the April Council meeting on Monday, April 20.

Because of imposed restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Council recognises there are cases of genuine financial hardship requiring respect and compassion in special circumstances and the policy provides a suite of temporary measures including:

- Negotiation of payment arrangements for period of between 3 and 12 months (period to be approved on a case-by-case basis)
- In extenuating circumstances, providing for the postponement of rates and charges for between 3 and 12 months (period to be approved on a case-by-case basis)
- Putting on hold legal action for all overdue debts to allow ratepayers and customers time to contact Council to enter a special payment arrangement if needed
- The ability for customers to apply to the General Manager to waive fees

“Some members of our community will experience financial hardship due to the restrictions imposed on the community in response to the crisis,” Waratah-Wynyard Mayor Robby Walsh said.

“We are all in this together, so whatever we can do as a Council to help alleviate some of the financial pain associated with the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, we will.”

Council also endorsed the following:

- 0% increase to the general rate in 20/21
- 0% increase to the fees and charges schedule in 20/21
- A dedicated community assistance grants package that aims to stimulate activity in a targeted area, likely to total \$100,000 in the 20/21 financial year
- Waive all food licence fees to applicable businesses in 20/21
- No charge entry to the waste transfer station for locals for cars/station wagons for the disposal of domestic waste. This initiative can commence following the current restrictions on movement throughout the North-West Coast and will be reviewed at the end of the current financial year
- An extension of the early payment discount period for the 2020/21 rating year to 31 October 2020. This will allow ratepayers an extension of time to take advantage of the early payment discount.

Council's role during this crisis are numerous and include:

- to ensure the health and safety of employees

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- to fulfil its emergency response role
- to continue to provide, as far as possible, essential services to its community
- to work with other levels of government and those within the industry to form a sectoral response
- to implement measures as enacted by State and Federal Government
- to alleviate the financial burden on the community through stimulus measures
- position the Council and community for economic recovery

These measures are the first steps in addressing some of Council's support program and Council has committed to having a report as part of each monthly agenda until 30 August 2020 to allow review of the stimulus and support measures to ensure their appropriateness.

**Authorised for general media distribution by Shane Crawford, General Manager, Waratah-Wynyard Council on Friday, April 24, 2020.**