

Options Available for Ratepayers Affected by Bushfires

The purpose of this document is to inform ratepayers and other stakeholders affected by the recent bushfires of the options available with regard to the payment of Council rates.

The Council derives a large proportion of its revenue from Council rates and this is required to provide services and infrastructure to residents. While the rating legislation and regulations do not allow for the Council to abandon rates and charges that have been levied, Lithgow City Council is able to provide residents who have been affected by the recent bushfire crisis with the following assistance for the remainder of the 2019/2020 financial period and further if required.

3rd Quarterly Rate Instalment payments

The Council is legally required under the Local Government Act 1993 to levy ratepayers for the 3rd quarterly rate instalment by the 31 January 2020.

In recognition of those ratepayers affected by the bushfires, the Council has implemented a number of assistance options including:

1. Arrangements to Pay

For those ratepayers affected by the bushfire who are unable to pay their rates because of pending insurance claim payouts or other hardship circumstances, it may be permissible to pay outstanding rates and charges over an extended period of time. Interest penalties will not be charged during the period of the arrangement.

Requests to pay in this manner will be considered on a case by case basis by contacting Council's Revenue Section on 6354 9999.

2. Waste Management Service Charges

Council levies a Domestic Waste Management Charge for the provision of domestic waste services to ratepayers. Where a ratepayer's home has been destroyed or if you cannot live in your home due to fire damage, the ratepayer can apply in writing to seek a pro rata adjustment reduction to the domestic waste management charge levied. Please contact Council's Revenue Section on 6354 9999 to discuss your circumstances and the information required for your application.

3. Pensioner Concession Rebates

The Council provides pensioner concession rebates of \$250 at the beginning of each financial year. Any changes or adjustments to the rebates are normally processed on a quarterly basis. However, for any pensioner currently receiving a rebate on their rates who has been affected by the bushfires, there will be no adjustment or review to their existing rebate until the end of the 2019/2020 rating period.

4. Changes of postal address

The Council processes numerous changes of postal address and other ratepayer information and any request for change is normally required to be made in writing. It is recognised that in the short term this is not workable or convenient for bushfire affected ratepayers.

Therefore it will be permissible for bush fire affected residents to ring Customer Service on 6354 9999 and provide a verbal request for the postal address for correspondence and notices to be changed.

5. *Rural Fire Service Volunteers*

As many of the Rural Fire Service volunteers are self-employed there will be instances where they are experiencing difficulties in being able to keep up to date with payment of Rate and Sundry Debtor Accounts.

To assist with budgeting, arrangements to pay on an interest free basis over a period of time, can be offered to affected customers. Requests should be referred to the Revenue Section to enable the appropriate notations to be included on individual rate and debtor accounts.

6. *Small Businesses*

Given that the current bushfire crisis has been ongoing for some time we may also receive enquiries from small businesses who have or are experiencing financial difficulties.

Once again Council is able to offer arrangements to pay over a period of time on an interest free basis.

All requests should be referred to the Council's Revenue Section so notations can be included on rate and debtor accounts. They can be contacted through Council's Customer service Centre on 6354 9999.