



SOUTHERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

In accordance with Section 277E of the Local Government Regulation 2012 it is not practicable for the public to attend the meeting because of health and safety reasons associated with the public health emergency involving COVID-19.

The meeting will therefore be closed to the public, with only Councillors and staff essential for the functioning of the meeting in attendance. Consistent with Council's legislative responsibilities, the minutes of Council's meeting will be made available for inspection by the public on its website.

Dear Councillors

Your attendance is hereby requested at the Special Meeting of Council to be held in the Warwick Town Hall, Palmerin Street, Warwick on **Friday, 15 May 2020 at 2:00PM.**

Notice is hereby given of the business to be transacted at the meeting.

Jane Stroud

ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

13 May 2020

ORDER OF BUSINESS:


1.	ATTENDANCE	1
2.	APOLOGIES.....	1
3.	DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	1
4.	EXECUTIVE SERVICES REPORTS	2
4.1	COVID-19 Economic Recovery.....	2

1. **ATTENDANCE**
2. **APOLOGIES**
3. **DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

4. EXECUTIVE SERVICES REPORTS

4.1 COVID-19 Economic Recovery

Document Information

 Southern Downs REGIONAL COUNCIL	Report To: Special Council Meeting	
	Reporting Officer:	Meeting Date: 15 May 2020
	Acting Chief Executive Officer	ECM Function No/s:

Recommendation

THAT Council release Stage 1 of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Package incorporating the following:

- Extend the payment period for water and sewerage levies issued in April 2020 up until the end of June 2020;
- Waive interest on overdue rates and charges calculated at 30 June 2020;
- Suspension of debt recovery activities for all outstanding rates and charges;
- Refund of fees and charges for forward bookings for community events which were cancelled as a result of COVID-19;
- Waiving of fees for temporary event permits up until 31 December 2020;
- Suspension of charging of interest on outstanding rates and charges;
- Extension of the period of time that can be entered into for existing payment arrangements;
- Accelerate the processing of payment of all invoices, wherever possible meeting a fourteen day timeframe;
- Waiving of food license fees for 2020/2021;
- 50% reduction in all development assessment fees for any new applications, extensions to existing applications and operational works applications fees for 2020/2021;
- Moratorium on the application of the Invasive Pest Control levy for 2020/21;
- Refocus the community grants program on COVID-19 recovery actions arising from the recovery plan for 2020/21;
- Waive the rental accommodation license fees and caravan park permit fees for 2020/2021.

Report

Southern Downs Regional Council is committed to supporting the community through the current COVID-19 global pandemic.

On 23 March 2020 the Southern Downs Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) moved to “Stand Up” status to prepare for the potential impact that COVID-19 will have on our community. Furthermore, on 24 April 2020 the LDMG moved the group’s recovery arm of the LDMG into “Lean Forward” status and preparation on how Council would support the community through its own initiatives and also collation with other agencies commenced.

The Coronavirus pandemic has disrupted life around the world and added a new set of challenges for governments, businesses, families and the entire community. To deal with the far reaching impacts of COVID-19 a staged approach is required by Council in order to support the community, and Council will continue to implement further initiatives as recovery moves forward. Longer term

possible announcements will focus on accelerating capital works projects specifically designed to inject money into the local economy and align with Federal and State Funding opportunities.

It's important the first stage of Council relief as well as subsequent further stages are not duplicating support from other levels of government, but rather are ensuring those who aren't already receiving assistance are given the vital help they need.

Economic Recovery Package

Council has developed the first stage of its Economic Recovery Package to provide financial relief to those in our community who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the impacts of COVID-19.

In order to provide immediate benefits to residents of the Southern Downs the Economic Recovery Package has been broken into two (2) stages:

Stage 1

- Extend the payment period for water and sewerage levies issued in April 2020 up until the end of June 2020;
- Waive interest on overdue rates and charges calculated at 30 June 2020;
- Suspension of debt recovery activities for all outstanding rates and charges;
- Refund of fees and charges for forward bookings for community events which were cancelled as a result of COVID-19;
- Waiving of fees for temporary event permits up until 31 December 2020;
- Suspension of charging of interest on outstanding rates and charges;
- Extension of the period of time that can be entered into for existing payment arrangements;
- Accelerate the processing of payment of all invoices, wherever possible meeting a fourteen day timeframe;
- Waiving of food license fees for 2020/2021;
- 50% reduction in all development assessment fees for any new applications, extensions to existing applications and operational works applications fees for 2020/2021;
- Moratorium on the application of the Invasive Pest Control levy for 2020/21;
- Refocus the Community Grants Program on COVID-19 recovery actions arising from the recovery plan for 2020/21.
- Waive the rental accommodation license fees and caravan park permit fees for 2020/2021.

Stage 2

Council is in the process of preparing a detailed recovery plan for each of the following sub groups:

1. Human and Social.
2. Economic.
3. Environmental.
4. Buildings.
5. Finance.
6. Roads and Transport.

Council is keen to engage with stakeholders related to each the subgroups in order to learn more about the specific impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and businesses so that a tailored package of second stage relief measures can be developed in partnership with the community and local businesses. Possible second stage relief measures may include the following:

- Reductions in pedestal charges.
- Early release of refocused Community Grants Program.
- Accelerating capital works program.
- Partnerships to enhance community wellbeing.

- Consideration of extended payment terms for 2020/21 rates and levies.

As is its current practice, Council will continue to offer payment arrangements to those who are experiencing financial hardship.

Recovery Hub

To facilitate the Council's recovery activities, it is proposed to open small scale Recovery Hub Centres in both Warwick and Stanthorpe to support the community. These Hubs will operate from Wednesday, 20 May 2020 for at least a period of one month during which the Recovery Subgroup Chairs and Co-chairs (staff of Council) will be supported by Councillors to meet with stakeholders and gather facts, feedback and information on COVID-19 recovery support required.

The Community Hubs will be located at the Stanthorpe Civic Centre Supper Room and the Warwick Town Hall. Social distancing will be maintained and a booking / meeting system will be used to help facilitated individual meetings. Further information will be advertised on Council's website regarding this initiative.

Live Streaming of Council Meetings

Council is committed to ensure that openness and transparency occurs during these unprecedented times, and as a result Council will continue to live stream Council Meetings for the foreseeable future.

Budget Implications

The first stage of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Package will result in:

- Delayed cashflow into Council
- Loss of interest revenue

Policy Consideration

Rates & Concession Policy
Revenue Statement 2019/20

Community Engagement

Council seeks to support the community through offering financial support to residents of the Southern Downs who have been impacted by COVID-19. As part of the LDMG recovery activities, Council will establish Community Hubs in both Warwick and Stanthorpe as a location to engage with the community and gather feedback as to how best to support the community through the recovery process. Residents and businesses are encouraged book meeting times and attend the Recovery Hubs so that strong community partnerships can inform the final recovery plan.

Legislation/Local Law

Local Government Act 2009
Local Government Regulation 2012

Attachments

Nil