



Council's COVID-19 Hardship Policy and \$2M Community Support Package

South Gippsland Shire Council has adopted a new Hardship Policy to assist residents and businesses that are experiencing difficulty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The policy applies to all rateable properties in South Gippsland and allows for the deferral of rates up to 30 June 2021 – however the establishment of a specifically tailored payment plan is encouraged in the first instance.

Importantly, ratepayers do not need to have their hardship qualified by a financial counsellor to apply for assistance and no interest will be charged on deferred rates.

South Gippsland Shire's Chair Administrator Julie Eisenbise hopes that the new policy will provide additional support for residents.

"This policy provides a range of options for people who are experiencing difficulty paying rates. These options include the ability to defer rate payments - without any interest being charged. There are also a range of other options available. We urge anyone who is experiencing hardship to contact our rates department so that they can work with you to reach a good outcome.

"Council is working hard to support our community in a variety of ways so that residents and business can effectively recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Council's proposed \$2M community support package will provide a range of support mechanisms, and options for supporting residents and businesses having difficulty paying rates is just one part of this package.

"The support package will also include an expanded grants program that will include business grants, subsidised flu shots, waiving of some business permit fees and the development of a community outreach program in partnership with key agencies to provide community support. We expect that the package will evolve as the impacts of the pandemic are determined and the level of support required in different areas of our community becomes known," said Ms. Eisenbise.

Council's COVID-19 Hardship Policy application form can be viewed at <https://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/rates>. Community members are encouraged to speak with a member of the rates team prior to completing the application on 5662 9200.

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