



Council Policy

POLICY NO: 11.1 – RATES ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

PURPOSE

To establish:

- the criteria for determining eligibility of community groups to receive Council assistance for payment of rates and charges, and
- the level of assistance to be provided to eligible groups.

SCOPE

The policy will only apply to groups that:

- are responsible for the payment of municipal rates and charges for a property used by the group
- can demonstrate payment of rates and charges would cause financial hardship,
- have a significant local membership base,
- provide a benefit to the local community,
- are actively trying to generate sufficient income to remain viable, or
- provide a demonstrable benefit to the local community.

The policy will apply to groups that apply for assistance under the Cultural & Recreational Land Act 1963 in so far as the amount of assistance provided is concerned.

The policy does **not** apply to community group ratepayers directly impacted by emergency/disaster events. Assistance as a result of these events will be considered under section 170 and 171 of the Local Government Act 1989 and /or Council's "Assistance to Rates Debtors in Financial Hardship Policy " - Policy No: 11.4.

Applications will:

- be able to be lodged at any stage throughout the year,
- be assessed against the principles listed below, and
- be actioned by officers under delegated authority, and
- must address the principles referred to in this policy.

Councillors will be advised annually of groups that have been granted assistance or as part of the assessment process if deemed necessary by relevant officers.

Eligibility of groups for continued assistance will be reviewed every four years.

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DEFINITIONS

A **group** is defined as a club or group that exists for the purpose of providing a service or recreational activity for the enjoyment and benefit of the community.

An **emergency/disaster event** is defined as any event for which an Incident Control Centre (ICC) has been formally established.

Hardship is defined as being a situation where the viability and existence of the group is threatened by the financial situation of the group.

Significant benefit to the community is defined as being a benefit that could be experienced or enjoyed by many members of the community (ie: not just a select few).

REFERENCES

Section 170 and 171 of the Local Government Act 1989

Section 3 and 4 of the Cultural & Recreational Land Act 1963

Section 28 of the Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The level of assistance granted shall be a waiver of 100% of the general rates and Municipal Charge (unless directed otherwise by Council). All organisations levied with the Waste Management Charge are required to pay that charge as it is a user pays charge.

The State government's Fire Services Property Levy is required to be paid as the Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012 does not permit the levy to be waived in respect of commercial, industrial, primary production, public benefit and vacant non rateable leviable land.

The following principles should be considered when assessing an application for rates assistance:

- (1) the group should be incorporated and/or registered as a club
- (2) groups that have a capacity to pay rates and charges (ie: they generate enough income to allow them to pay rates and charges and not be adversely affected) should not receive assistance from Council.
- (3) the group must be responsible for payment of rates and charges.
- (4) the existence of the group must provide a "significant" benefit to a "sizeable" proportion of the community.
- (5) the group must demonstrate that it is viable and will continue to provide benefit to the community.
- (6) groups applying for assistance must be able to demonstrate that payment of rates or charges would (or be likely) to cause financial hardship.
- (7) the group should not receive more than 30% of their income from other levels of government or other agencies.
- (8) the group should have "significant" local (ie: within Shire) membership.
- (9) the group should not be simply a branch of a larger statewide/national organisation.
- (10) the group should have a limited capacity to pay rates and charges (eg: rates /charges payable are greater than 20% gross income) despite actively seeking to raise sufficient income.

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- (11) the group must be able to demonstrate that it provides “significant” benefit to the Shire, local community or a particular group that would otherwise be disadvantaged if the organisation did not exist.
- (12) the group should have been in existence for a reasonable period of time and be able to demonstrate they are likely to continue their existence in the future. (eg: whether by succession plans, junior development programs etc).

All applications will be assessed on their merits as it is acknowledged that applicants may not meet all of the principles/criteria. Therefore, a flexible approach will be taken in regard to provision of the required information.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Operational Procedure - Policy 11.1 - Rates Assistance to Community Groups

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy owner	Revenue Coordinator	Division	Finance
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