



COUNCIL POLICY

Council Policy Title:	Rates Assistance to Community Groups
Council Policy ref. no:	11.1
Responsible Department:	Corporate Services
Date of adoption/review:	20 January 2016

1 INTRODUCTION

Colac Otway Shire is committed to developing and maintaining a strong and vibrant community. Community groups in all forms are an important part of achieving this outcome and in certain circumstances assistance may be required to ensure community groups remain financially viable.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this policy is to provide consistent direction and guidance for determining eligibility of community groups to receive Council assistance with the payment of rates in accordance with the relief options available for Council to consider under the *Local Government Act 1989*.

3 POLICY

Community groups may be eligible for assistance where they:

- can demonstrate payment of rates and charges would cause financial hardship, and
- have a significant local membership base, and
- provide a benefit to the local community, and
- are actively working to generate sufficient income to remain viable, or
- have been adversely affected by Natural Disaster/Emergency events.

3.1 Principles

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

- (a) the organisation should be incorporated.
- (b) the applicant must be responsible for payment of rates and charges.
- (c) the organisation must demonstrate that it is viable and will continue to provide benefit to the community.

- (d) organisations applying for assistance must be able to demonstrate that payment of rates would (or be likely) to cause financial hardship.
- (e) the organisation must not be receiving assistance under the *Cultural and Recreational Lands Act* or any other assistance from Council.
- (f) the organisation should not receive more than 30% of their income from other levels of government or other agencies.
- (g) the organisation should have "significant" local (ie: within Shire) membership.
- (h) the organisation should not be simply a branch of a larger statewide/national organisation.
- (i) the organisation would have a limited capacity to pay rates and charges (eg: rates /charges payable are greater than 20% gross income).
- (j) the organisation must be able to demonstrate that it provides "significant" benefit to the Shire, local community or a particular organisation that would otherwise be disadvantaged if the organisation did not exist.
- (k) the group should have been in existence for a minimum of 12 months and be able to demonstrate they are likely to continue their existence in the future. (eg: whether by succession plans, junior development programs etc).
- (l) organisations 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.

3.2 Implementation

Applicants will be able to apply for assistance at any stage throughout the year.

Applicants will be required to submit a formal application and provide the following supporting information:

- audited statement of accounts from the last two financial years
- membership statement
- business plan/statement

All applications will be assessed on their merits and a flexible approach will be taken assessing applications as some organisations may not be able to provide all information (eg if an organisation did not have a formal Business Plan, they would not be required to prepare one in order to obtain assistance. They will however be requested to provide the type of information that would be included in a Business Plan document).

Similarly, if an applicant does not meet the above principles/criteria but can provide overwhelming evidence why it should receive assistance, applications may also be considered.

3.3 Level of Assistance to Be Provided

Unless varied by resolution of Council the following may apply:

Non-Natural Disaster/Emergency events:

- Waiving up to a maximum amount of 50% of Council Rate and Municipal charges for the current financial year.

All organisations that receive a waste service must pay the Waste Management charge.

Natural Disaster/Emergency events:

In addition in the case of a Natural Disaster/Emergency event Council may provide additional assistance to an affected organisation by:

- Deferring the payment of rates and charges to a later date.
- Waiving Waste Management charges for the current financial year.
- Exempting the payment of interest charges. Interest may be exempted until the debt finalisation date while agreed arrangements are met.

3.4 Fire Services Property Levy

The *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* does not permit the levy to be deferred in respect of commercial, industrial, primary production, public benefit and vacant non-rateable liveable land.

3.5 Natural Disaster/Emergency Events

A Natural Disaster/Emergency event is defined as any event for which an Incident Control Centre (ICC) has been formally established.

In the case of a Natural Disaster/Emergency event Council may provide additional assistance to an affected organisation, in addition to that allowed in this policy, by resolution.

3.6 Delegation

The Chief Executive Officer shall have the delegated authority to approve applications under this policy in accordance with section 170, 171 & 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989* subject to the quantum of relief being offered having no material impact on Council's overall budget.

4. REPORTING

The amount of rates and charges waived under this policy are to be reported to Council on an annual basis in the June Quarter financial report each year.

5. REVIEW

This policy is to be implemented by Council and is the subject of periodic review.

ADOPTED/AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Policy Review Date	Reason for Amendment
24 May 2006	Adopted by Council
25 November 2011	Review
24 July 2013	Review
20 January 2016	Review