

# Frequently Asked Questions

[COVID-19 support package – questions answered: CLICK HERE](#)

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[Sports/Community Utilities Support Grant – questions answered: CLICK HERE](#)

[Business Grants – questions answered: CLICK HERE](#)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### **Why has Council chosen these options for your support package?**

This is 'round 1' of Council's support for the community and aims to provide immediate help for those hit hardest by the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are many locals who have lost work or had hours reduced to such an extent they can't manage their bills and these measures offer immediate financial support. The final quarter rates notices for 2019/20 are due to be distributed in May (with the due date being deferred until Friday 26 June 2020) and we want to ensure help is at hand for those doing it tough.

### **What happens if I don't have anything to show I'm in financial difficulty?**

A letter or notice from your employer that shows you have lost work or had your hours significantly reduced – or some form of communication from a financial counsellor or other relevant agency may suffice. If you are receiving Centrelink assistance due to COVID-19, the source documents used to apply for this assistance can be used. We would welcome a phone call to 8862 0800 if you need to discuss your personal situation with us. All calls are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

### **Can I apply for these support measures as well as Federal and State funds?**

Yes. Council is aware of other support measures in place and encourages people to apply for any of the grants and financial packages available to assist through these difficult times. Please always seek the advice of your financial counsellor, accountant or support agency about financial implications for you.

### **How long will Council's support package last?**

At this stage, the grant programs have an end date of 30 September 2020, while the rates remissions relate to the final quarter payments for 2019/20. Council will continue to consider support options beyond those dates.

### **What other support measures are you looking at?**

Council continues to look at other measures to support the community. Looking ahead, we are keen to provide further support measures that keep people and clubs connected in these difficult times and for other stimulus measures in the community.

### **Why not just postpone the rates payments?**

Council recognises the need to support the community as a matter of urgency – everyone is being impacted right now, including residents, community groups, businesses and industries. It will take time for people and businesses to recover from this emergency and Council felt a postponement may add an unnecessary burden down the track when we are all seeking to bounce back.

**Will this impact Council's ability to deliver services or projects into the future?**

That is not the intent. While these are unprecedented times and we cannot predict how the year ahead will play out, Council will continue to deliver its essential services to the community. We are still in the process of developing our Wakefield 2030 community plan and that will spell out the projects and activities we intend to deliver in the years ahead.

**Will I be required to sign anything?**

If you are making the application, you will be required to sign a declaration that the information provided is true and correct and that you are over the age of 18. The provision of false or misleading information is an offence under Section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1999* and can attract a penalty of \$5,000. Council will seek repayment of any sum paid to an applicant when it is found the information provided was false or misleading.

**Where can I find out more?**

Over the next few weeks Council will continue to update our website and Facebook page with information. You can also call us on 8862 0800 during business hours.

**I am feeling stressed and not coping very well with the current situation – who do I call?**

It's normal to feel stress and worry in the current circumstances. Your family and friends can also experience impacts. The important thing to know is that help is just a phone call away:

- SA COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 8am to 8pm 1800 632 753
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- Lifeline Australia 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Regional Access Program (country areas) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week 1300 032 186 <https://saregionalaccess.org.au>
- Lived Experience Telephone Support Service (LETSS) 5pm – 11:30 pm daily (a peer mental health support line) 1800 013 755 [www.letss.org.au](http://www.letss.org.au)

For people under 25 years of age the following support services can also help:

- Kids Helpline (for people between 5-25 years of age) 1800 551 800
- Headspace (for people between 12-25 years of age) 1800 650 890

**RATES REMISSION QUESTIONS ANSWERED****When can I make an application to have my rates and service charges remitted?**

Please wait until you have received your rates notice. This will contain more information for you.

**I've received my fourth quarter rates instalment for 2019/20 – what do I do?**

Please go ahead and pay your account unless you have found yourself in financial difficulty. If you are doing it tough and can't pay your notice because of COVID-19 please visit our website [www.wrc.sa.gov.au](http://www.wrc.sa.gov.au) to find out more information and make an application – or call us on 8862 0800 to discuss your eligibility.

**My partner lost his/her job due to COVID-19 but my name is on the rates notice – can I still apply?**

Yes. If your partner helps pay the bills and you can show he/she resides at the rated property you may be eligible.

**What's covered in the rates remission?**

All rates, service charges and NRM levy for the fourth quarter of 2019/20 will be remitted.

**I'm an existing hardship customer on a payment plan – what do I do?**

If you have been further impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions you may be eligible for a final quarter rates remission. Please call our Rates Officer on 8862 0800 to discuss your situation.

### **Who is eligible for a remission on their final quarter rates?**

If you are an individual, business, sports club or community group and have suffered a loss of income due to the COVID-19 emergency and do not believe you can meet your final 2019/20 rates payment, you can apply for a 100% remission on the fourth quarter rates and service charges.

### **What kind of evidence is required to be provided with my application?**

- A separation letter showing you are no longer employed as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. This will need to show separation occurred after 1 March, or;
- A letter from Centrelink, financial counsellor (or other agency) to show you are in financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19, or;
- A letter from your employer to show your hours have been reduced as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. This will need to show separation occurred after 1 March, or;
- For businesses, anything to show loss of revenue, staff impacts etc from the COVID-19 restrictions;
- For business owners who are tenants and pay the rates – a copy of your tenancy agreement or similar evidence to show you pay rates for the property, or;
- For sporting/community groups – any information that shows you have suffered a loss of income due to the COVID-19 emergency.

### **I am a tenant – if my landlord has rates remitted will that mean I pay less on my rent?**

Council cannot force landlords to pass on any savings to tenants. However, as the Federal and State Governments are urging, we encourage landlords and tenants to discuss their individual cases. If a tenant pays the rates on the property then it would seem appropriate for the landlord to pass on the saving. Every tenancy agreement is different – that's why it's important for you to discuss the situation with your landlord.

### **I paid my rates in full at the start of the year – do I get a refund?**

Council will not issue refunds for rates paid in advance. The intent is that people who are in financial difficulty right now due to COVID-19 are supported. However, if you paid your rates in advance and can demonstrate financial difficulties due to COVID-19, you may be eligible for a credit on your 2020/21 rates.

## **SPORT AND COMMUNITY UTILITIES GRANT QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

### **What grants may I be eligible for?**

Sporting or community groups that have suffered a significant impact due to the COVID-19 restrictions can apply for a Utilities Support Grant to cover up to \$5,000 for water and/or electricity costs. The bills must have been received by the club within the period 1 March to 30 September 2020.

### **What evidence would you need to show we have been impacted?**

We understand this may not always be easy. Preferably, we would like to sight something to show loss of membership, financial impacts, loss of sponsorships or closure of activities that would previously have raised funds etc. However, a written statement from the group outlining the impact that COVID-19 has had on their usual business may suffice. Information such as comparisons between incomes from a usual year compared to 2020 will assist if this information is available. For example, a sporting club may be able to demonstrate lost gate takings from a home game or loss of sponsorship due to uncertainty during these times. Other groups may have examples of loss of

income due to inability to hire out community spaces and carry out fundraisers or usual scheduled events. We are happy to discuss your individual situation.

**Our club isn't sure of the impacts of COVID-19 just yet? What do we do?**

If your season is some time from beginning or if you have not been financially impacted, then you may not be eligible. However, this is a first round of Council support and we will always seek to work with clubs and organisations if you find yourself in financial difficulty and we will continue to inform clubs of any future support. This current round of grants remain open until 30 September 2020 so you may choose to apply later in the round when more information is at hand.

**If approved for a grant, what do I do?**

Utilities grants will be pre-approved up to the maximum amount of \$5,000. Once we approve your application all you need to do is send us an invoice for the amount on the bill, along with a copy of the bill, and we will arrange a bank transfer to your club/organisation account to cover the amount. This must be for water and/or electricity bills you receive for the period 1 March 2020 to 30 September 2020. Individuals will not receive the payment. Once you have reached the \$5,000 limit we will let you know so that you carry on paying future bills.

**Currently, our invoices go to Council to pay and then we are invoiced by Council for the amount. Will that change?**

In this case, Council will not invoice you but will provide you with a copy of the bill(s) for your records. We will keep a tally and let you know when we have covered the bills to \$5,000.

**How many applications can I submit?**

You only need to submit one application. We will consider your club/organisation's position and approve or decline your eligibility. Once you have been approved, you can start forwarding us your invoices with copies of the bills.

**Why are you suspending your normal community grants program?**

Each year Council runs a community grants program where eligible groups can apply for funding to support their infrastructure projects, community activities and water use bills. This year, we want to spread funding across as many groups as possible to show widespread support during this emergency. We have been told by clubs that utility costs have the biggest impact so we wanted to focus on support in this area.

**What if my sporting club is based outside the Council area but its members are in the Wakefield area?**

Only locally based sporting clubs are eligible to apply for these grants, and only facilities within the Council area will be eligible. Please contact your local council and refer to State and Federal Government websites to find out if you are eligible for other support measures.

**My club/organisation is part of a larger group (e.g. local chapter, member club of state-wide association) – are we eligible?**

If you can demonstrate the local club pays the utility bills for the property, you may be eligible. If the head office, for instance, covers the utility costs then you will not be eligible.

**Why are you covering costs of bills received during the period 1 March 2020 to 30 September 2020?**

The COVID-19 restrictions started to impact clubs and organisations in about the second week of March. For bills received prior to 1 March, we felt the groups should have been in a position to pay.

At this stage we have chosen 30 September 2020 as an end date – for most organisations that would cover two quarters of water/electricity costs.

### **Can any club or organisation in the Wakefield region apply?**

No. To be eligible you must:

- Have been in existence prior to March 2020
- Be based in the Wakefield Regional Council area
- Be a not for profit organisation
- Own/lease/sub-lease the facility to which the utility charges apply

You must also provide some evidence to show your group has been impacted. Council reserves the right to refuse any application.

### **When does Council expect to see invoices with copies of the bills?**

Invoices with copies of the bills must be presented to Council within a reasonable timeframe.

Council will not cover late payment fees when it is found the community or sporting group has failed to pass on the invoice to Council within a reasonable timeframe.

### **My group received a water scheme grant from Council in 2019 – are we eligible to apply?**

For sporting groups that have already been awarded funding under Council's 2019/20 Water Scheme grants program: if you used the grant prior to 1 March 2020, you may still be eligible to receive further support as part of this program. If you have yet to spend the grant, then we expect you will put that amount towards your bills in the 1 March – 30 September 2020 period. In this case, you will be eligible to apply for the difference between your grant up to the \$5,000. For example: a) a club received \$2,000 towards its water bills as part of our grants program. It spent that amount in December 2019 and so will be eligible for up to \$5,000 under the scheme; b) a club received \$2,000 towards its water bills as part of our grants program but is saving that for a bill it will receive in April 2020. In this case, it is eligible for a further (maximum) of \$3,000 for water and electricity bills received between 1 March and 30 September.

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANTS QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

### **What grants may I be eligible for?**

Businesses who have suffered a significant impact due to the COVID-19 restrictions can apply for grants of up to \$5,000:

- To invest in improving their services, supply chain or assets (e.g. IT/online, shopfront, furniture etc) or repositioning their business.
- To access professional support (e.g. financial, accounting, counselling, business/staff development, marketing etc).

### **Who can I use to deliver the business improvements or professional support?**

Our strong preference is that you use local suppliers and providers as much as possible to support the WRC economy. [Regional Development Australia – Yorke & Mid North](#) has launched a support program for businesses to access expert advice and services.

### **What if my business is based outside the Council area but my customers/clients are in the Wakefield area?**

Only locally based businesses are eligible to apply for these grants. Please contact your local Council and refer to State and Federal Government websites to find out if you are eligible for other support measures.

### **What evidence would you need to show we have been impacted?**

A profit loss statement from two comparable periods is the easiest way to show loss of income or significant financial downturn. Other examples may include a letter from a financial councillor or accountant, evidence of lost contracts as a direct result of COVID-19 or proof that outlines projected income loss due to Federal and State restrictions (i.e. having to close your doors and customer numbers have fallen, if your hours of operation have been significantly reduced or if your business model has had to be significantly changed).

**What if I have just started up in business?**

The grants are available to any business operating prior to March 2020. If your business started operating after 1 March 2020 and you have been impacted, please call us to discuss your options. Businesses who have been operating for less than 12 months may be able to submit profit loss statements for a number of months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic or a letter from a financial advisor or accountant.

**If approved for a grant, what do I do?**

If we approve your application, we will require an acceptable invoice for the grant amount (including GST) and then we will arrange a bank transfer to your business account. Individuals will not receive the payment.

**How long do I have to spend the grant money?**

The funds must be fully expended by 30 September 2020.

**What do I need to provide once the grant money is spent?**

We want to keep the acquittal process as simple as possible. There is a simple acquittal form available for download or direct entry on through the business support grant portal of Council's website. Simply let us know the amount of Council funding spent and provide a copy of receipts via the portal or by follow up email. Council may seek reimbursement if the funding is used for a different purpose or not used in full.

**How many days after the grant money is spent do I have to provide you with the receipts?**

We ask that the information be provided within 30 days of you spending your grant money and, at the latest, 30 October 2020 (i.e. 30 days after the final date for you to have spent the funds).

**Do I need to repay any money not spent?**

Yes. Any grant funds you do not spend should be reimbursed to Council by 30 October 2020.

**Do I need to use local suppliers and services for the grants?**

As well as supporting businesses, these grants aim to help stimulate the local economy. We strongly urge you to seek the services and products of local providers as much as possible.

**Will my application be approved automatically?**

We are aiming to approve applications as quickly as possible but may seek further information from you. The awarding of a grant is at the full discretion of Council.

**How many applications can I submit?**

A business can make one application but you may have multiple parts to your grant (e.g. three separate items that make up a \$5,000) – just itemise those on your application.

**I am a sole trader – am I eligible?**

Sole traders are eligible to apply for the grants subject to meeting the relevant criteria (e.g. locally based, impacted by COVID-19).

**What happens if my project(s) run over budget?**

Council will not be able to supplement the grant once it is awarded. Any overspends must be met by the business.

**Where can I find other support and COVID-19 information for my business?**

Rules around business operations continue to change and, where possible, we urge you to speak to your peak representative organisations and continue to monitor the [SA Health website](#). Council will continue to update our website with links for businesses keen to find out about other support available.

To help businesses navigate through these challenging months there are a number of areas to seek advice and support:

[Regional Development Australia – Yorke & Mid North](#) has set up a consolidated page on its website with the most up-to-date information available: [COVID-19 Support](#). RDAYMN has also launched a number of new programs aimed at reducing the stress on individual business operators. For further information visit their website and look at the program details:

- [Business 2 Business Services](#)
- [Job Match Yorke and Mid North](#)

[Business SA](#) – has a range of important information on assisting local businesses.

[Economic Development Australia Recovery Hub](#) – provides funding links, resources etc focused on recovery.

[Australian Institute of Food Safety](#) – includes information about what COVID-19 means for your food business.

[South Australian Tourism Commission](#) – has resources for hotel and tourism operators.

[Restaurant and Catering Industry](#) – has a hub of valuable information

If you are unsure of the COVID-19 requirements for your business or need our support please contact our Environmental Health Officer Willbur Colaco 0407 618 057 or Compliance Officer Katie Walker 0418 846 047 who continue to work with other agencies to ensure we have the latest advice.