

COVID-19 relief package

Tamworth Regional Council recognises the pressure and uncertainty local business owners and residents are experiencing right now due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there are a range of NSW and [Australian](#) Government measures which local businesses can access to enable them to continue providing important services to our communities, Council is also establishing an assistance package to help the Tamworth region stay in business.

A proposal will be presented to Council that will seek approval to implement the actions outlined below to ensure local businesses are being supported by providing relief around rates, fees and charges to all categories of ratepayers – residential, business and rural.

This proposed plan includes:

- Waiving of fees for small business
- Initiatives for ratepayers
- Flexible enforcement and compliance
- Development application fee refunds

Council is continuing discussions about further support measures and this document will be updated as the pandemic unfolds.

Waiving of small business fees

It is proposed local businesses will not have to pay fees for any consultation with our Planning and Compliance team up until the end of the 2019-2020 financial year related to the following:

- **Footpath advertising:** No fees charged.
- **Use of additional public space to provide take-away food services.** No additional fees will be charged.

This arrangement will be reviewed every three months whilst the pandemic continues.

Initiatives for ratepayers - Hardship Policy

Whilst Council cannot waive rates, it is proposed there will be no new debt recovery action for overdue rates and charges during the COVID-19 crisis and that a 0% interest rate will apply any new overdue rates from March 31, 2020 and will be reviewed every three months.

Any ratepayer – residential, business or rural - in the Tamworth region concerned about their ability to pay their rates should call us on 6767 5555. They will be put in contact with a member of our finance team to talk confidentially about their individual situation. Contact can also be made in an email to trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au.

Council staff will assess each ratepayer's situation on a case-by-case basis. Council may proceed to enter into a formal agreement with a ratepayer who is eligible for a payment plan appropriate to their financial situation.

Flexible approach to enforcement and compliance

- Council will limit enforcement action to matters that are only of an imminent public or environmental safety risk, ensuring there is no increase to public risk and community impacts, and the expectations are managed. This will enable business operations to adapt to the changing consumer demand. However, at all times food businesses must continue to meet food safety laws requirements.

Car Parking Fees

- It will also be proposed to turn off parking meter charging in the Tamworth CBD so residents who are still attending work in the CBD have one less thing to worry about.

Development Application fee refunds

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is proposed that Council will offer a full refund of fees to any Development Application (DA) applicants wanting to withdraw applications currently under assessment. This does not include Development Applications that have already been approved.

In addition to what is proposed above Council has already implemented:

- **Restaurants transitioning to take-away:** Council is allowing restaurants not currently licenced that have development consents to undertake a take away service.
- **Delivery curfew removed for food stores:** A temporary blanket exemption from any delivery curfews has been imposed for supermarkets and shops of essential household items across the Tamworth region. This took effect on Tuesday 17 March, 2020 and will continue until further notice.
- **Click and Collect library service:** A new Click and Collect service was launched on Tuesday 24 March, 2020 and can be accessed through www.cnl.nsw.gov.au. Readers can reserve the books they want to borrow and staff at Tamworth City Library will package them in a plastic bag, check them out and deliver to the borrower at the loading dock in the laneway between the library and Parry House. When a borrower arrives, they press the buzzer and they will receive their books.
- **Free access to Grants Hub:** Funding available for community groups, sporting clubs, not-for-profits or businesses can be found through the Tamworth Grants Hub which Council has made available free to the wider community. Anyone who accesses the Tamworth Grants Hub through Council's website can register for free, search for funding opportunities, set up email alerts for new grants, create a list of favourite grants and even get tips to help with grant applications. It also has a quick list of Corona virus, bushfire, drought and disaster funding opportunities.
- **Online Development Hub:** Tamworth Regional Council is one of the first councils in the state to offer a full service Online Development Hub for residential and commercial applications of any size. Users are able to lodge applications, seek certificates, track documents, view details and pay fees remotely, with no need to enter council's Tamworth office.
- **Tamworth Region Trading Directory:** The [Tamworth Region Trading Directory](#) was launched on Monday 23 March, 2020. It is designed to provide our community with up-to-date information and about the operating capacities of businesses in the Tamworth region. Essential services listings include supermarkets and other food

stores, pharmacies, health services, service stations and council facilities. The directory can be found by visiting www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/tradingtamworth Non-essential businesses listings are linked to our partner, NBN Tamworth's [We Love It](#) community directory, where these businesses are encouraged to create a free listing.

- **Business know-how** – Council's Economic Development team has regular communications with the [Office of Small Business Commission](#), [Service NSW](#) and [Tamworth Business Chamber](#) as part of its work to support local business. Through its regular electronic newsletters, the team is working to raise awareness among local business in regards to the free resources available to develop and adapt their business.
- Free webinars are being developed that will focus on building digital capability.
- Council is in discussions with Destination NSW and Destination NSW Country and Outback as those organisations finalise their plans for workshops to assist in business recovery.
- Sign-up at trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au to receive the electronic newsletters.

Additional works

- Council is reviewing construction projects that could be undertaken using contracted services from local companies or labour hire agencies to further support local employment.
- Council will be seeking to work with State and federal agencies to maximise employment opportunities, including via shared resourcing opportunities, in the region.
- Trade Waste fees are currently being assessed with a view to assisting negatively impacted businesses.
- Review of Council's donations program selection criteria leading into the 2020/21 financial year.

Get in touch

Council will be working closely with individuals and business at this difficult time to reduce uncertainty and to lend a hand.

The above items will be presented to Council during April with the exact date yet to be determined and community feedback on these items is welcome.

Should you have any feedback, residents are encouraged to contact Council on 6767 5555 or at trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au to discuss the initiatives outlined in this document.