



STAGE 1 COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

Warrnambool City Council's Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to lessen the financial burden impacting residents, businesses and community groups.

Council understands this is a difficult and anxious time for many members of our community who may be struggling due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As a Council we are committed to assist where we can.

This Stage 1 Response Plan builds on the various assistance measures announced by the Australian and Victorian governments, including support for individuals, families, businesses and community groups.

The measures below are in response to a rapidly changing landscape, including the ongoing release of stimulus initiatives from the Victorian and Australian governments. Council anticipates that in 2020-2021 we will need to focus on helping the community to re-establish their lives and, for some, their livelihoods.

Council will continue to monitor the range of support provided to help residents, businesses and community groups and will consider further measures over the remainder of the year and into 2021. Our 2020-2021 budget is being prepared with this in mind and will provide Council with capacity to respond to the needs of our community when the impacts of COVID-19 are better understood.

RESIDENTS

Warrnambool City Council recognises that some residential ratepayers or their tenants may have suffered from the loss of employment or a reduction in income as a result of COVID-19.

To assist residential ratepayers that may be facing current financial hardship, Council is providing the option to defer the payment of Council rates outstanding for the 2019/20 financial year. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances with outcomes customised according to the need of each case.

For those who have been affected by the impacts of COVID-19 and have applied for a deferral, no interest will be raised on residential rates from March 16, 2020, the date a State of Emergency was declared, until June 30, 2020.

All debt recovery actions currently in progress will be put on hold until 30 June 2020.





COMMUNITY GROUPS

Assistance will be extended to tenants of Council-owned buildings or facilities. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances with outcomes tailored to the needs of each case.

Council will waive the Winter Seasonal Tenancy fee for user groups occupying Council owned or managed sports grounds which have ceased operating due to COVID-19 restrictions.

BUSINESSES

Council has put in place the following Stage 1 response measures to support Warrnambool Businesses affected by COVID-19.

1. Council will be paying all suppliers as quickly as possible.
2. Business ratepayers are able to enter into a payment arrangement or apply for financial hardship consideration regarding rates. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances with outcomes tailored to the needs of each case. This also applies to payment of fines and other Council services.
3. For those who have been affected by the impacts of COVID-19 and have applied for a deferral, no interest will be raised on business rates from March 16, 2020, the date a State of Emergency was declared, until June 30, 2020.
4. For those who have been affected by the impacts of COVID-19 and have applied for a deferral, no interest will be charged for overdue rates, or other payments through to June 30, 2020.
5. Free parking in the City Centre from March 24 to June 30, 2020.
6. Assistance for business tenants of Council-owned buildings or facilities. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances with outcomes tailored to the need of each case.
7. Waiving the following permit fees for 12 months (applicable in the 2020-2021 financial year and businesses will still need to renew their permit and provide the applicable Certificate of Currency):
 - a. Outdoor Eating Facility permit fees;
 - b. Display of Goods for Sale permit fees; and
 - c. Advertising signs (A-frame) permit fees.
8. A dedicated economic response team will support Warrnambool businesses as a point of contact. A central portal provides regular updates on the types of support available. Listing and making businesses aware of all available State and Federal Business Support programs is a critical role of this resource. This resource also contains many other useful links and resources relating to health and safety information, marketing resources, managing staff and advice from peak bodies.
9. Implementation across the city of the Get Around Warrnambool marking campaign. An early component of this campaign has been to encourage our community to Think, Support, Spend Local. This campaign provides branding posters and social media collateral available to businesses to use and will be promoted across a range of social media, television, radio, print, and street and roundabout banners.
10. Regular surveying (short form) of local businesses to understand the economic impact of COVID-19 on our city. This evidence base is important to not only inform Council's response plan but also advocate for, and access any future Victorian and Australian government COVID-19 recovery programs in the regions.