



Media Release

for immediate release

News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 1 May 2020 page 1 of 2



MacDonnell Regional Council COVID-19 Rate Relief

MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) has put in place special measures to assist the rebuilding of businesses and communities in and around the MRC local government area. In recognising that pastoralists, roadhouses, resorts and other tourist ventures have been severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, MRC resolved to put special measures in place to provide businesses with financial support, now and as they prepare for recovery.

MRC offers financial supports to local business operators and contractors:

1. through rates relief,
2. by applying additional weighting in its procurement process to support local suppliers, and
3. by ensuring the continued expenditure through Council operations.

MRC's special measures allow for public benefit concessions to its ratepayers and is supported by the NT Government's COVID-19 Local Government Support Package. At their meeting yesterday Council decided to grant the following rates relief for each applicable allotment of the following ratepayers:

Eligible commercial ratepayers (available upon application by businesses that are eligible for the Federal Government's JobKeeper program, which is the scheme that is open to businesses impacted by COVID-19.):

- that have paid 2019/20 rates will receive a part of rates (3 months) credit against 2020/21 rates,
- that have not paid 2019/20 rates will receive a waiver in part (3 months) of rates owing for 2019-20, and
- receive an additional waiver in part of rates (3 months) for 2020/21

All commercial ratepayers:

- receive a waiver in part of rates (3 months) for 2020/21, and

All ratepayers:

- zero % rate increase for 2020/21,
- zero % fees and charges increase for 2020/21,
- zero % interest charged on all outstanding rates from 1 March to 30 June 2020, and
- deferment of rates payment to 1 January 2021

In addition to granting rate relief, MRC decided upon further support to commercial activities in Central Australia by:

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News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 1 May 2020 page 2 of 2



- amending its procurement policy to provide additional weighting to its Buy Local criteria weighting for Council procurement; to become 10% for NT based contractors, 15% for Alice Springs based contractors and 25% for MRC based contractors (was 5% for NT contractors, 10% for Alice Springs contractors, and 15% for MRC contractors)
- ensuring that its 2020/21 capital works program budget, subject to availability of funding, will remain at the same level as in its 2019/20 budget

Finally, MRC supports the economy in Central Australia by ensuring the ongoing security of its 500+ employees:

- underpins the local economy through its 2020/21 Budget including a full complement of wages (same level as 2019/20) for all full time, part time and casual staff as required in its 13 remote communities and its Alice Springs office and workshop.

Eligibility criteria: a commercial ratepayer is eligible for rate concessions on an allotment if the ratepayer has a rates liability on the allotment for 2019-20 and / or 2020-21 and is:

- an eligible business that has business premises on the allotment; or
- a landlord that has provided an appropriate rental waiver to a tenant that is an eligible business that has business premises on the allotment.

COVID-19 Local Government Support Package: MRC acknowledge the NT Government support through a new one-off \$7.1 million non-application based grant program to be provided in 2019-20 to support business continuity for all local government councils. The grant aims to support employment and operating costs; job creation and economic stimulus opportunities; community-based COVID-19 initiatives; and COVID-19 related compliance and management costs.

MRC background

MRC delivers a wide range of municipal, essential, community and contract services across an area of 268,764 kms² (area larger than Victoria). MRC has service centres located in each of the 13 major remote communities within the Council area and also services numerous outstations.

The delivery of services across the MRC area has seen the organisation grow to be over 500 employees, with 80% being Aboriginal, working and living in their communities. The language groups of Luritja, Pintubi, Pitjantjatjara, Western Arrarnta, Central Arrernte and Eastern Arrernte are strong in the MRC area.

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