



**CORANGAMITE  
SHIRE**

**COVID-19 Economic  
Stimulus and Support  
Package Policy  
Corangamite Shire  
May 2020**

# Council Policy



CORANGAMITE  
SHIRE

## COVID-19 Economic Stimulus and Support Package Policy

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created one of the biggest challenges for Council to respond to in recent times. With forced business closures and changes to operations coupled with restrictions on how the community can interact with each other, it is essential that Council can be responsive to our resident's needs.

Through the provision of this stimulus package, Council hopes to be able to lessen the burden on the community and stimulate the local economy through a variety of different programs, initiatives and projects.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Council with guidance as to how it will administer an economic stimulus package including proposed funding received through the Working for Victoria Initiative to assist businesses and the community recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Scope

The policy relates to how Council will administer funding and support through its COVID-19 economic stimulus and support package. This includes details on Council's pending application to the State Government's Working for Victoria Initiative.

Other programs and initiatives completed by Council outside of this package (e.g. regular grant programs or funding allocations) will need to comply with current policies, guidelines and procedures.

This policy will be constantly reviewed through Council's response to COVID-19 to ensure it continues to provide the correct level of support and be responsive to the communities need during this time. This could include variations or alterations as required to ensure Council adapts to changes to situations as they arise, in consultation with Councillors.

### Definitions

- Council – Corangamite Shire Council
- COVID-19 – The current pandemic virus that has brought the need for this policy
- Working for Victoria Initiative – \$500 million funding program from the State Government to stimulate short term employment

### References

- Corangamite Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2017 – 2021
- Procurement Policy
- Rates and Charges and Collection Policy
- Special Rates and Charges Policy

### **Policy Detail**

This policy provides advice on how Council plans to administer an economic stimulus and support package to the Corangamite community in its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While a variety of support packages have been offered by both the State and Federal Government, the aim of Council's package is to provide more localised support to its residents, businesses and ratepayers and to stimulate the local economy through job creation, grant programs, fee waivers, marketing, promotion, welfare support and social connectivity.

The stimulus package has been split up into the following categories which include fee waivers, employment, stimulus and welfare/social support with details of the individual programs in each of these categories detailed below.

### **Fee Waivers**

#### *Food, Registered Premise, Accommodation and Wastewater Fee Waivers - \$100,000*

Council will provide up to \$80,000 in fee waiver relief for food, registered premises and accommodation businesses as part of their annual registration renewal process and for new businesses registering with Council in the 2020-2021 financial year.

To be eligible for this fee waiver applicants will need to meet the following criteria:

- The business must be based in and operate out of Corangamite Shire.
- All application and renewal forms and details required in those forms must be submitted correctly and within the required timeframe.
- The fee waivers will only be provided until all allocated money is expended. Any renewals or new business registrations after this period will be required to pay normal fees as per Council fees and charges schedules.

The fee waiver does not apply to inspection or transfer fees associated with the operation or sale of a business.

Council will provide up to \$20,000 in fee waiver relief to applications for a new or an alteration to an existing domestic wastewater system, within the Corangamite Shire for the 2020-2021 financial year.

To be eligible for this fee waiver, the systems must be installed in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Protection Act, Council's Domestic Wastewater Management Plan and not located within the designated reticulated sewage area.

The domestic wastewater fee waivers will only be provided until all allocated money is expended. Any applications after this period will be required to pay normal fees as per Council fees and charges schedules.

Applicants to domestic wastewater fee waivers would still be eligible for Council's Domestic Wastewater System Contribution Program subject to meeting the criteria of that program.

*Waiver/reduction in planning and building fees - \$50,000*

Council will provide up to \$50,000 in fee waivers for planning and building permit applications, as part of its approach to support local construction, projects and businesses.

This fee waiver funding is not targeted at major or complex construction projects.

To be eligible for this fee waiver, the application needs to address the following criteria:

- Submit an application with plans prepared by a draftsman or building designer from the region; and/or
- Involve the use of local builders, trades or businesses (quotes to be provided); and/or
- Support the establishment or variation of a new or existing business.
- Be a resident or be operating a business located in the Corangamite Shire.
- The value of the building works be less than \$350,000.

To apply the applicant would need to complete an online application form and address the relevant eligibility criteria, including accompanying quotes or a letter of intention.

Fee waivers will be capped at a maximum of \$2,000 per project, combined for both planning and building applications (where required).

Statutory building fees will be excluded from fee waivers under this policy.

*Waiver/reduction in non-rate fees and charges - \$170,000*

Council will provide up to \$170,000 in relief for customers of Council experiencing financial hardship as a consequence of COVID-19. Applications received for hardship will be assessed in accordance with the COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy currently under development. ABN holders are not eligible for waiver or reduction in non-rate fees and charges. Furthermore, eligible recipients must also reside in Corangamite Shire.

*Leases - commercial tenants - \$40,000*

Council will suspend and waive rental payments based on the reduction or closure in the tenant's trade during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In addition, Council will refer to the National Cabinet Mandatory Code of Conduct SME Commercial Leasing Principles and Directions for further guidance. An eligible lessee will receive a 100% waiver on rents due whilst this policy remains in force as long as the lessee remains eligible for the Federal Government JobKeeper Initiative. The lessee will also be required to prove eligibility to this initiative on an ongoing monthly basis.

*Waiver of interest on rates and charges - \$40,000*

Council will not charge interest on overdue rates and charges during the 2020-2021 financial year. Ratepayers remain liable for rates and charges and should enter into an appropriate payment arrangement in accordance with Council's Rates and Charges Collection and Hardship Policy. This applies to all ratepayers.

**Employment - \$3.7 million**

A major component of Council's Economic Stimulus and Support Policy is the creation of up to 47 short term jobs at the Council.

The total value of these new positions and associated costs is \$3.7 million which includes a Council contribution of \$1.4 million (funded through the economic stimulus and support package) and Working from Victoria funding of \$2.3 million (submission pending).

These positions will be focused around short term construction projects and COVID-19 business and community support roles.

Some funding has also been set aside for training and induction, plant equipment and hire, materials, office accommodation and other incidental costs.

Recruitment to most of these positions will be completed in line with the recommendations from the Working for Victoria Initiative (if successful) where applicants will have had to register through the online portal to be eligible for employment in the new the roles.

### **Stimulus**

#### *Infrastructure - \$330,000*

Footpath expansion projects will be delivered as an economic stimulus creating opportunities for local contractors and / or casual employment.

These projects, which will provide for walking loops and or connections to township infrastructure were identified as part of Council's 2019-2020 budget or for consideration in Council's 2020-2021 draft budget and include:

- Camperdown-Cobden Road footpath, Camperdown
- Hennessy Street footpath, Port Campbell
- Baynes Street, Austin Avenue, Cameron Street footpath, Terang
- William Street extension to school footpath, Lismore
- Mitchell Street, Dover Street to Adams Street, footpath, Cobden

These projects will be delivered with a waiving of Council's Special Rates and Charges Policy, which would ordinarily require contributions from abutting property owners.

#### *Small business funding programs - \$180,000*

#### **Digital - \$50,000**

This program will look to assist businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19 to purchase/upgrade existing digital and e-commerce technology. Details of this grant program include:

- Council to complete a \$1:\$2 grant program for businesses to complete a digital assistance package.
- Businesses contribute \$1,000 and Council contributes \$2,000 providing a maximum total of \$3,000 for a digital assistance package.
- Applications for smaller amounts of funding would still be eligible.
- Examples of works eligible as part of this funding stream would include setting up a e-commerce website/app with training, online booking software for accommodation providers, 12 months management of a website, setting up Facebook/Instagram online shops and assistance in managing or providing training in how to complete online advertising (e.g. Facebook/Google listings or targeted advertising).

- Other options presented by businesses as part of their application would be considered if focused around purchase/upgrades to online technology.
- Engagement to occur with local companies to explore different types of packages that could be offered however businesses would be able to explore the use of any service provider specific to their needs.
- To apply businesses would complete an application form as well as a quote/letter of intention of works/service proposed.
- This program would commence in May until funding is exhausted funded through savings identified in the 2019-2020 budget that contributes to Council's Economic Stimulus and Support Package.
- Guidelines would be made available as part of the application process to ensure businesses have a clear understanding of the criteria involved in applying for funding.
- Funding would be allocated on first in first served basis, with officers able to award funding without Council decision through CEO delegation if the application meets the guidelines.
- Businesses would have 12 months to use the package.
- To be eligible businesses would have to:
  - Be located in Corangamite Shire
  - Have a valid ABN
  - Have 20 or fewer permanent FTE employees
  - Have been successful in receiving funding through a State or Federal Government COVID-19 grant/subsidy program (this will make it easier for Council to ensure applicants have been financially impacted by the pandemic).
- Farming enterprises located in the Shire who meet the above criteria are eligible to apply.
- 80% of funding to be allocated if grant successful, with remaining 20% to be provided following the completion of an acquittal report.

#### Diversification - \$50,000

This program will look to assist businesses who fundamentally change/pivot their business following the COVID-19 pandemic and offer a new service or significantly change the way they do business. Details of this grant program include:

- Council to complete a \$1:\$2 grant program for businesses to complete a business diversification assistance package.
- Business contribute \$2,500 and Council contributes \$5,000 for a maximum \$7,500 project.
- Applications for smaller amounts of funding would still be eligible.
- Funding could be used for business fit outs/changes/upgrades, new equipment purchases, staff training and education.
- 50% of the grant must be spent locally where possible.
- As part of the application businesses would need to clearly demonstrate how the grant will support a change in their business operations.
- Upgrades covered in the Digital Assistance Grants Program would be ineligible.
- To apply businesses would complete an application form as well as a quote of works/service proposed.
- This program would commence in May until funding is exhausted funded through savings identified in the 2019-2020 budget that contributes to Council's Economic Stimulus Package.

- Guidelines would be made available as part of the application process to ensure businesses have a clear understanding of the criteria involved in applying for funding.
- Funding would be allocated on first in first served basis, with officers able to award funding without Council decision through CEO delegation if application meetings the policy/guidelines.
- Businesses would have six months to use the funding.
- To be eligible businesses would have to:
  - Be located in Corangamite Shire
  - Have a valid ABN
  - Have 20 or fewer permanent FTE employees
  - Have been successful in receiving funding through a State or Federal Government COVID-19 grant/subsidy program (this will make it easier for Council to ensure applicants have been financially impacted by the pandemic).
- Farming enterprises located in the Shire who meet the above criteria are eligible to apply.
- 80% of funding to be allocated if grant successful, with remaining 20% to be provided following the completion of an acquittal report.

#### Traditional Advertising - \$50,000

This program would see Council work with local advertising companies (newspapers and radio) to provide support for businesses to continue/recommence advertising locally following the pandemic. Details of this grant program include:

- Council officers to work with local traditional advertising companies (e.g. Western District News and ACE Radio through an EOI process) to complete a \$1:\$2 traditional advertising grant program.
- Businesses contribute \$1,000 and Council contributes \$2,000 providing a total of \$3,000 for a traditional advertising package.
- Applications for smaller advertising packages would still be eligible.
- Officers will work with local advertisers to develop details of what would be included in the \$3,000 advertising package that would be included in the guidelines of the program.
- This program has the benefit of assisting both local small businesses and traditional advertising companies (i.e. local newspapers who are experiencing significant downturn and loss of staff).
- This program would commence in July until funding is exhausted funded through Council's Economic Stimulus Package.
- Businesses would have 12 months to use the package from when they are successful in receiving the grant.
- To apply businesses would complete an application form as well as a quote/letter of intention of works/service proposed.
- Guidelines would be made available as part of the application process to ensure businesses have a clear understanding of the criteria involved in applying for funding.
- Funding would be allocated on a first in first served basis, with officers able to award funding without Council decision through CEO delegation.
- To be eligible businesses would have to:
  - Be located in Corangamite Shire
  - Have a valid ABN
  - Have 20 or fewer permanent FTE employees

- Have been successful in receiving funding through a State or Federal Government COVID-19 grant/subsidy program (this would make it easier for Council to ensure applicants have been financially impacted by the pandemic)
- Farming enterprises located in the Shire who meet the above criteria are eligible to apply.
- 80% of funding to be allocated if grant successful, with remaining 20% to be provided following the completion of an acquittal report.

#### Forced Business Closure - \$30,000

- The program will provide a one off grant payment of \$1,000 for any business that has been forced to close through recommendations from the Victorian Chief Health Officer that reopens following the pandemic.
- Eligible businesses would include any listed on the DHHS website (excluding government business such as libraries and swimming pools) e.g. gyms, beauty parlours, golf courses, restaurants and cafes who haven't operated a takeaway service, private caravan parks (a full list to be provided in guidelines). Other requests could be considered for businesses who have closed on a case by case basis.
- Program to commence once relevant restrictions are lifted as the business would need to recommence trading to be eligible.
- Guidelines would be made available as part of the application process to ensure businesses have a clear understanding of the criteria involved in applying for funding.
- Businesses could apply to this program before restrictions are lifted but no funding would be provided until after the business is permitted to open.
- Funding allocated on a first in first served basis, with officers able to award funding without Council decision through CEO delegation.
- To be eligible businesses would have to:
  - Be located in Corangamite Shire
  - Have a valid ABN
  - Have 20 or fewer permanent FTE employees
  - Have been successful in receiving funding through a State or Federal Government COVID-19 grant/subsidy program (this will make it easier for Council to ensure applicants have been financially impacted by the pandemic).
- 100% of the funding would be provided if the business is eligible and has re-opened following the forced closures.

Businesses will only be eligible to apply for two of the above funding programs to ensure funding can be provided to as many impacted businesses as possible in the Shire through the economic stimulus and support package.

Businesses who apply to these economic stimulus and support programs would still be eligible to apply to other economic development grant programs such as the Retail Area Façade Improvement Program and the Small Business Innovation grant programs.

#### *Marketing and Promotion - \$50,000*

This funding would be split into two parts, one focussed around building on Council's current campaign promoting residents to shop local and the other to work with neighbouring Councils, the regional tourism board and local tourism groups promoting domestic tourism when restrictions are lifted.



### Shop Local Campaign

- Similar to the work undertaken post the 2018 St Patrick's Day Fires, Council would look to develop a shop local campaign to encourage the community to support local businesses in the Shire.
- Campaign to be presented through a variety of different mediums including traditional (radio, print and TV) through to social and digital channels.
- While some of this work has already commenced, the use of this funding would allow Council to increase its efforts in this space in support of our local business community. This is something officers have heard from businesses as part of the one on one phone calls and surveys currently being completed.

### Domestic Tourism Campaign

- This funding would be used, potentially with other neighbouring Shires and the regional tourism body, as part of a domestic tourism campaign once travel bans are lifted in Australia.
- The aim will be to encourage visitation to our Shire and region by domestic travelers, an area that is tipped to boom, especially with the likelihood of low international visitation following the pandemic.
- The funding would be used in both traditional and digital promotion of the Shire/region.

### *Procurement – priority purchase from local business*

Council's Procurement Policy has regard to supporting local businesses and employment when undertaking public tenders. Whilst the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus and Support Package Policy remains in force, a 20% weighting shall be applied to all procurement by Council, public tender or otherwise, in the support of local suppliers, contractors and services.

### *Procurement – buy local made focus*

In support of the 20% weighting described above, Council should seek to procure and encourage the manufacture and/or provision of supplies and services from local suppliers and contractors that are not currently available.

### **Welfare/Social Support**

#### *Community events and activities - \$50,000*

- This funding would be used in different ways to support the community to recover from COVID-19.
- This includes Council running events and community gatherings, event support (once restrictions are lifted), providing funding to community groups outside the events and festivals program (e.g. a community group wanting to run locally focused event). This could be especially important due to the community grants program running from April to May and many groups may not apply for small event grants (up to \$1,000) due to timing.
- Increasing the allocation to the Events and Festival Grant Program if we see an increase in applications, or events trying to be held once restrictions are lifted.

- Running or supporting existing events through Council officer and funding support that otherwise wouldn't proceed (e.g. Camperdown Car and Bike Show with officers playing a much greater role in the running of the event if relevant restrictions eased. This would also allow this event to keep its spot-on annual events calendar).

*Community Groups and Volunteer Support - \$25,000*

This funding will be used to:

- support information to re-engage residents with sporting and community groups.
- support training for groups on how to continue to operate in an online environment.
- develop videos and support materials to assist groups to meet and engage in an online environment.
- consider and provide funding contributions of up to \$1,000 where required for seed funding to support groups where identified issues and needs arise in the recovery phase of Council's response.

*Grants to local charities - \$25,000*

Charities, or like organisations, are eligible to receive funding of up to \$2,000 from Council where it can be demonstrated they are responding to a community need as a consequence of COVID-19.

Eligible charities, or like organisations, must:

- Be located in Corangamite Shire
- Have a valid ABN registered in Corangamite Shire
- Demonstrate need in responding to the impacts of COVID-19 in the Shire.

To apply groups would complete an application form as well as provide a letter demonstrating how they have been responding to the communities need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Review Date**

Policy expires 30 June 2021 unless otherwise resolved by Council.

It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.