

6.2. CYCLONE JASPER FINANCIAL RELIEF MEASURES YEAR END 30 JUNE 2024

REPORT AUTHOR Tara Killeen, Chief Financial Officer

MANAGER Rachel Brophy, Chief Executive Officer

DEPARTMENT Finance and Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. Council resolves to endorse the proposed Cyclone Jasper financial relief provisions for the year ended 30 June 2024;**
 - 2. Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to administer such financial relief provisions.**
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council Officers wish to propose a suite of Cyclone Jasper financial relief measures to assist the Douglas Shire Community.

BACKGROUND

Cyclone Jasper and the associated flooding disaster event has had a significant impact on many businesses and individuals in the Douglas Shire, particularly the tourism sector.

State and Federal Government support for this disaster is rolling out, with a multitude of grants becoming available to those affected. For State Government support please click [here](#). For Federal Government support please click [here](#)

Some affected residents and ratepayers may have the ability to recover income and property losses via insurance. Council is liaising with The Insurance Council of Australia to lobby for fair and equitable insurance outcomes.

In addition to the above avenues of support, Council wishes to offer measures of financial relief to assist in supporting affected community members for the period up to 30 June 2024.

Further measures may be considered by Council up to and during the preparation of the Budget for 2024/2025.

COMMENTS

The economic impact of the Cyclone Jasper and the associated flooding disaster event on the Operating Result for 30 June 2024 is yet to be determined. This analysis will include proposed financial relief measures and the impact on revenue and expenditure due to road closures and costs of repair and recovery.

PROPOSAL

Council Officers proposed financial relief measures for the year ended 30 June 2024:

1. Promote the Rates Financial Hardship Policy and provide assistance to affected ratepayers in completing the application for assistance.
2. Remove rates dishonor admin fees from 11 December 2023 to 31 January 2024 for Douglas Shire residential ratepayers.
3. Defer insurance of Rates notices from 16 January 2024 to 30 January 2024.
4. Refund all venue hire fees, caravan park fees and ferry travel where cancellation is due to Cyclone Jasper flood disaster event is for the period of 11 December 2023 – 31 January 2024.
5. Rent relief – may be provided, on request, for Council commercial tenants suffering financial stress or hardship due to the effects of Cyclone Jasper flood disaster event, upon provision of sufficient evidence of this hardship (excluding peppercorn leases, Government entities) for the period 11 December 2023 to 10 January 2024.
6. Waive special refuse for commercial properties north of Daintree River (retrospective) 11 December 2023 to 31 March 2024.
7. Waive roadside waste collection fees for commercial properties north of Daintree River 11 December 2023 to 31 March 2024.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The total financial impact of Ex-TC Jasper is still being assessed. It is anticipated that it will take some time before the full impact of is known as the repair is underway and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk of negative financial impacts to the community if the provisions are not endorsed by Council.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: The Cyclone Jasper flood disaster will have a negative impact on the economic sustainability of Douglas Shire Council and may impact sustainability ratios. This will be closely managed by Council and mitigated where possible.

Environmental: Nil impact from the measures proposed in this report.

Social: It is the intention of the proposed financial relief measures to provide some assistance in social sustainability for affected ratepayers.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 5 - Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery

Strong governance and financial management are the foundations of the way in which Council will conduct its business and implement the initiatives of the Corporate Plan.

Goal 1 - *We will conduct Council business in an open and transparent manner with strong oversight and open reporting.*

Goal 3 - *We will make sound financial decisions by ensuring robust strategic planning, financial management and reporting.*

Goal 4 - *We will work with our communities to ensure they are informed, empowered and supported so that they are resilient to the impacts of disaster events. Through our leadership and capabilities we will plan, prepare, respond and recover from events so as to minimise the impact on people, property, the environment, and our economic stability.*

Operational Plan 2023-2024 Actions:

New project arisen during the financial year.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Advocate	Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.
Regulator	Council has a number of statutory obligations detailed in numerous regulations and legislative Acts. Council also makes local laws to ensure that the Shire is well governed. In fulfilling its role as regulator, Council will utilise an outcomes based approach that balances the needs of the community with social and natural justice.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Rates Team, Finance Team, Management Team, Acting CEO, Councillors at Council Workshop 16 January 2024

External: Nil

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This proposal will fall within the 'inform' category of Council's Community Engagement Framework.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil