
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Financial Assistance Policy enables Wentworth Shire Council (Council) to provide for a range of financial assistance to local community groups and organisations providing services or programs to residents within the Wentworth Local Government Area.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The intent of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for the provision of Council assistance to the community.

Council is accountable to the community for the management and disbursement of its funds, and is compelled to ensure that this is done in a manner that maximises the benefits to the community. Additionally, Council's ability to make financial contributions is set out in sections 356, 377 & 610E of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act).

In establishing this policy Council is seeking to:

- demonstrate financial prudence by adopting a strategic approach to the amount allocated to financial assistance;
- to ensure that financial assistance provided to community groups & organisations is fair and equitable and undertaken within a system that fosters public confidence;
- to ensure that Council fulfils its legislative requirements under Sections 356, 377 & 610E of the Act.
- provide an application-based process to enable Council to consider all requests for financial assistance, enabling fair and equitable distribution of funding throughout the community.

2. POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to all requests for financial assistance received by Council.

3. STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Objective: 4.0 Wentworth is a caring, supportive and inclusive community that is informed and engaged in its future

Strategy: 4.1 Provide strong and effective representation, leadership, planning, decision-making and service delivery

4. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term/Word	Definition
Act	<i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)</i>
Council	Council of the Shire of Wentworth.
Financial Assistance	Includes direct financial contributions provided by Council to a group, or organisation.

5. POLICY CONTENT

It is the policy of Council that in accordance with Sections 356 & 377 of the Act, all requests for financial assistance from Council will be dealt with in the following manner:

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- an **Annual Budget Allocation** will be made by Council each year for the provision of financial assistance to the community;
- an **Application Process** will be established to enable Council to fairly and reasonably consider all requests for financial assistance that are made to it; and
- an **Annual list of exemptions** will be approved by Council each year when determining the Annual Fees and Charges, enabling named organisations to be exempt from the application process for specific nominated purposes.

Applications will be accepted from not for profit community groups or organisations operating or providing services within the Wentworth Local Government Area for activities that provide a direct benefit to residents of the Wentworth Local Government Area.

To be eligible for funding an organisation must meet all of the following:

- be a not-for-profit community based group or organisation; or
- be an incorporated body or be auspiced (sponsored) by an incorporated body; and
- offer services or activities within the Wentworth Local Government Area

The general criteria for evaluating requests for financial assistance includes the following items:

- How the request links to the strategies and objectives in Community Strategic Plan;
- How the request provides community benefit beyond a specific interest group;
- Whether the applicant has access to other funding sources or has received funding from other sources;
- Whether the applicant has received financial assistance from Council in previous years; and
- Whether the applicant will be contributing to the initiative and the quantum of this contribution.

Fee Waivers

Section 610E of the Act allows Council to waive payment of, or reduce a fee in a particular case if it is satisfied that the case falls within a category of hardship or any other category that Council has determined that fees and charges be waived or reduced.

A request for a fee waiver or reduction should be made before the fee or charge is incurred, as requesting a refund of the fee or charge at a later date creates an administrative burden.

Any approval given for the reduction or waiver of fees for any organisation will only be applied to a single event. Any future or ongoing events will require further applications to be submitted to Council for consideration.

If an application for a waiver or reduction of fees and charges does not meet the evaluation criteria but is assessed by the General Manager as a case warranting further consideration, a report will be forwarded to Council for determination.

A loss of income will be incurred as a result of implementing this part of the policy and needs to be considered when determining any application.

To be eligible for a waiver or reduction of Council's fees and charges, the applicant must be in at least one of the following categories:

- Charitable organisations;
- Not for profit organisations;

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- Community groups;
- School groups; or
- Be able to demonstrate special circumstances as determined by the General Manager or Council's delegated staff

Applicants may be required to provide supporting evidence of financial hardship with their application as Council offers substantially discounted rates for Charitable, Community and Not-for-profit organisations in their adopted fees and charges schedule.

Applications can only be made to waive or reduce fees which are not mandated under legislation and where Council has the legal ability to use discretion.

The following criteria will be used as at minimum to assess any application for a fee waiver or reduction:

- Public or community benefit gained from the request;
- Whether the decision to waive or reduce the fee has the potential to result in an increased demand from certain groups relative to others or resulting in inequitable access to Council facilities or services as a result of subsidising certain users/groups; and
- Ability of the applicant to raise funds;

Unless the adopted fees or charge is considered unreasonable or inappropriate considering the special circumstances or work required, Council will not consider applications to waive fees and charges for:

- Any profit making ventures for commercial entities;
- Any activity, event or program that contravenes Council's existing policies;
- The Bond associated with the use of Council facilities, (only the waiver of fees for an activity, event or function will be considered);
- Any organisation receiving other financial assistance under this policy for the activity, event or program for which the fee waiver is being sought;
- Any organisation that has been already been approved two fee waivers for other purposes within the current calendar year; or
- Any organisation that has an outstanding debt to Council.

Applications that do not exceed \$500 will be determined by the Director Finance & Policy under delegated authority from the General Manager.

Applications over \$500 that do not exceed \$2,000 will be determined by the General Manager as recommended by the Director Finance & Policy.

Any application above \$2,000 will be referred to Council for a resolution.

All fees and charges waived or reduced under delegated authority will be reported to Council on a monthly basis.

Waiver or reduction of fees and charges does not apply to rates and annual charges. Please refer to Council Policy AF012 – Writing Off Rates, Charges and Debt or Council Policy AF013 – Hardship.

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6. RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATION

Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*
- *Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *Health Records & Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*
- *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*

Council Policies

- GOV007 – Privacy Management Policy
- GOV008 – Public Access to Information Held by Council Policy
- GOV009 – Delegations Policy
- GOV022 – Legislative Compliance Policy
- GOV023 – Conflicts of Interest Policy

Council Document

- Legislative Compliance Framework
- Governance Framework
- Conflict of Interest Register
- Privacy Management Plan
- Records & Information Management Policy (Operational)

7. ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

8. DOCUMENT APPROVAL

This document is the latest version of the official policy of the Wentworth Shire Council, as adopted by Council on 18 May 2022. All previous versions of this policy are null and void.

This policy may be amended or revoked by Council at any time.

A PDF copy of the signed document can be accessed from Council's record management system and Reliansys.

Signed:



General Manager Wentworth Shire Council

23 May 2022

Date