

Office of Local Government



COVID-19 COUNCIL UPDATE

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30 July 2021

Financial assistance

Some councils may wish to provide rates relief or other forms of financial assistance to residents impacted by restrictions imposed by the Public Health Orders.

Councils considering this are reminded that under the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act), they cannot use restricted funds, which includes monies collected from levying a charge for water, sewer or domestic waste management services, for a reason other than the purpose for which it was levied. Any financial assistance provided must be sourced from general funds as per section 356 of the Act.

Such assistance should be included in Council's adopted hardship policy, or it will need to be placed on exhibition for 28 days.

To assist councils, OLG has published Debt Management and Hardship Guidelines which includes practical, easy-to-understand information about good debt management and hardship. The guidelines are available [here](#).

Election webinar

OLG and the Electoral Commission ran a webinar yesterday for interested local government participants. The well attended webinar was hosted by Kiersten Fishburn Coordinator General – Planning Delivery and Local Government. Both OLG and the Electoral Commission presented at the webinar and responded to questions from participants. A recording of the webinar will be available on the website shortly.

Updated COVID guidance

Councils are reminded that a number of changes to the Public Health Order for Greater Sydney came into effect at midnight last night, including guidance about mask wearing outdoors and travel from home restrictions for those in Local Government Areas of Concern, including Blacktown, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool and Parramatta. Please check [here](#) for the most up to date guidance on Covid rules.

IP&R and postponement of the election.

The postponement of the elections does not impact councils' IP&R cycles. More guidance for councils on this will be coming next week.

Councils encouraged to keep rehoming services operating

As people look for companionship during this pandemic, there has been a spike in interest in pet dogs and cats. To meet this need, the Government encourages councils to maintain their rehoming efforts throughout the current temporary restrictions where they can do so in a COVID-safe manner.

Public Health Orders do not require animal adoption services to cease. Pounds and shelters can remain open to the public. This includes for pound staff who live in one of the eight locked down LGAs, as they work in the area of "animal welfare, care and accommodation services" and are therefore defined as "authorised workers".

Accordingly, prospective new owners should still be encouraged to "adopt not shop", consistent with NSW Health advice. To maintain this crucial service for their community, councils may wish to consider alternative arrangements such as:

- Allowing prospective owners to inspect an animal via video call
- Adoptions by appointment, either at the shelter or at a local park or other location conducive to social distancing requirements
- Home delivery via ranger services

Councils are reminded of their statutory obligations under the *Companion Animals Act 1998* and in particular the welfare of animals in their care. Councils are encouraged to continue to work with rehoming organisations and volunteers to care for animals, where that can be undertaken consistent with NSW Health advice.

For further information on companion animal responsibilities, please refer to OLG's [COVID-19 guidance document](#) which is updated regularly.

Keep checking the OLG website

We are continuously updating information on the developing COVID-19 situation on our website. Resources are being added almost daily, including webinars and FAQs. Please continue to check the website for updates that are relevant for you.

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