

Port Phillip Council announces \$2.5 million emergency relief package

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Rates, rebates and rent relief are at the heart of a \$2.5 million Port Phillip Council emergency package to help support its community - and local economy, through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Lightening the load for our community and local businesses is a priority for our Council at this hugely challenging time," Mayor Bernadene Voss said.

"We are implementing this package immediately as we know many are hurting from this unprecedented change and disruption."

The relief package, adopted at last night's Special Council meeting, includes:

- **Parking:** 30 minutes' grace before parking enforcement applies for timed parking on local streets / parking meters; temporary fee waivers (while retaining time restrictions) to be considered
- **Rates:** Ratepayers assessed as being in financial hardship will be able to defer rates payments for six months with no interest charges; zero interest for permanent rates deferment by self-funded retirees; up to six month rates deferral for eligible small businesses (significantly affected by COVID-19) with a no interest 12-month payment plan; increased pensioner rebate to be considered
- **Rent relief for Council commercial and community tenants and licensees, including at South Melbourne Market, sporting organisations and community run childcare:** Those significantly affected by COVID-19 and which pay rent, licence fees and/or building levies above peppercorn amounts can receive fee waivers of up to 100 per cent between 1 April and 30 June, 2020. The amount depends on how long they were able to operate or were closed. Some organisations may be able to seek loan repayment deferrals for up to six months, with no interest, on a 12-month repayment plan to help preserve cashflow
- **Homelessness:** Up to \$500,000 in the social housing fund to go to services supporting people experiencing homelessness
- **Commercial recreation and personal trainers:** Refund of fees paid in advance while social gathering restrictions are in force
- **Libraries:** An expanded home library service and online storytime sessions while they are closed; more online resources added to the extensive collection already there
- **Trader rebates:** Eligible organisations to receive three month rebates for Food Act registration and footpath trading permit fees; footpath trading enforcement to facilitate takeaways/deliveries
- **South Melbourne Market:** Click and collect service for food; funds to enable for website improvement and online stores
- **Community group grants:** Funding maintained unless they stop delivering services and funding is well above closure costs.

The emergency support measures will cost Council an estimated \$2.5 million by 30 June 2020.

Council will consider other initiatives, aimed at assisting those most affected by the health emergency, as the 20/21 Budget is developed.

"COVID-19 developments are moving incredibly quickly. We are committed to identifying gaps in assistance from the Australian and Victorian Governments which our Council can fill, while ensuring we retain the financial ability to deliver essential and vital services," Cr Voss said.

Find out more information about Council's response to the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.