

Media Release



15 December 2023

Compassionate Approach to Ratepayer Hardship

In recognition of the growing financial pressures on households, Barunga West Council is committed to leading by example with a compassionate response to ratepayer hardship.

Understanding the burden of the rising cost of living, Barunga West Council stands as a beacon of best practice in managing financial hardship among ratepayers. Council pledges to adopt the role of a model litigant, should the situation escalate, but maintains that collaborative solutions are the first and preferred approach.

"Too often, ratepayers feel isolated in their financial struggles. We want to change that," said Maree Wauchope, CEO of Barunga West Council. "Our approach is designed to ensure no one feels they are battling alone."

Barunga West Council offers various solutions tailored to individual needs, including payment plans, help with securing government assistance and concessions, waivers, and deferrals. Some of these options are especially geared towards supporting victims of family violence and those grappling with mental health. The goal is to facilitate easier rate payments and provide access to financial counselling services.

"Punitive measures are largely a thing of the past," Ms Wauchope said "They exacerbate financial strain and can lead to greater societal costs. We urge residents facing difficulties to have a conversation with us. We are here to listen and to assist."

Harsh measures like the involvement of debt collectors or legal actions resulting in the sale of properties for rate recovery will be the last resort, and only if a ratepayer in debt refuses to engage with the provided options.

"We understand the multitude of challenges our community faces, which is why we encourage open dialogue. Let us help you," Ms Wauchope said. "Council is adamant about distributing the rate burden equitably while ensuring those in hardship are not pushed further into debt."

Ratepayers facing short-term or long-term financial challenges are urged to contact Council for a confidential discussion regarding their rates:

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Phone: (08) 8635 2107
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