



COVID-19: New Amendments Affecting Councils

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On Friday 17 April 2020, the NSW Government made a number of legislative amendments to ensure that Councils can operate effectively in the new environment of COVID-19.

Amendments were made under section 747B of the *Local Government Act 1993*, which allows the regulations under the act to modify its application for the purposes of responding to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. These amendments automatically expire after 6 months, but may be revoked earlier by Parliament.

These amendments have modified the following:

- Councils may choose to delay issuing the first quarterly rates notices by one month until 1 September 2020, and extend the payment deadline by one month until 30 September 2020;
- Councils may immediately waive or reduce fees under a new “COVID-19” category without providing 28 days public notice, and at their discretion;
- Councils have the option of a one month extension to adopting their 2010-2012 Operational Plans, which includes their Revenue Policy Statements of Fees and Charges and their annual budget;
- Councils may also take advantage of one month extensions to submitting their audited financial reports, which must now be submitted by 30 November 2020, and the



preparation and publishing of annual reports, which must now be completed by 31 December 2020;

- Councils are not required to make certain documents available for physical inspection at their offices, if the document is made available electronically or published on the Council's website; and
- In an ongoing amendment in an effort to reduce costs to Councils, Councils are no longer required to advertise their notices in newspapers, but must publish the relevant notice on their website.

These amendments are designed to assist Councils through this temporary time, and allow them to continue to offer support to their communities by offering more flexible arrangements.

Matthews Folbigg has a team specialising in, and dedicated to Local Government matters. If you have any questions or would like further resources or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact a principal of our Local Government team below:

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