
Retail water customer account assistance

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Corporate and Commercial (Geoff Ward)

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Note the applications for assistance presented in the Retail water customer account assistance report.
2. Authorise an increase of \$25,000 to the existing budget from available budget savings within the finance department.

Background

Under resolution 4/23 Council resolved that future applications of financial assistance will be determined by the General Manager under delegation dated 17 August 2022 and an information report will be provided to Council on a six-monthly basis.

7.2 Retail Water Customer Account Assistance

RESOLVED [4/23] (Cadwallader/Rob) that Council:

- a) In accordance with section 356(1) of the Local Government Act 1993 and its 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance' policy, approve financial assistance as listed in Table 1 of this report.
- b) Receive and note the 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance Report' will cease to be presented to Council.
- c) Receive and note that a bi-annual financial assistance information report will instead be presented to Council.

Four applications for financial assistance in accordance with section 356 (1) under Council's 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance' policy have been received since the resolution was made. Details of the application are set out below.

Table 1

Section 356 (non pensioner)					
Account	Date application received	Nature of leak	Original water charges due	S356 financial assistance to be approved	Adjusted water charges due after approval
10421-11000-7	24-Apr-23	Joint between pipes split, causing an underground leak. Joint was replaced.	\$12,671.44	\$8,396.46	\$4,274.98
10309-10000-5	4-May-23	Multiple leaks due to ageing pipe. Difficulty locating due to being underground. Consequently, the whole pipe was replaced to ensure all leaks were repaired.	\$7,198.48	\$4,294.08	\$2,904.40
10068-11000-5	5-May-23	Leak found on underground tee joint and pipe on the inlet of the meter.	\$4,159.20	\$2,010.72	\$2,148.48
12091-10000-3	5-May-23	An underground fitting split. Fitting has been replaced.	\$7,748.96	\$4,703.04	\$3,045.92
Total			\$31,778.08	\$19,404.30	\$12,373.78

Finance

The original 2022/23 financial year budget allocation for applications made in accordance with the 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance' policy was \$25,000. Demand for assistance has been unusually high this year with an increase in leaks reported in the aftermath of the 2022 flood events.

Additional budget funds of \$25,000 are available from within the Finance department and are proposed to be reallocated to fund this additional assistance. The revised budget is to be increased to \$50,000.

Budget Table S356/S582		
2022/23 financial year revised budget *	\$50,000.00	<u>No. of applications</u>
S356 assistance approved financial year to date	\$24,074.38	7
S582 assistance approved financial year to date	\$0.00	
S582 assistance approved since last approval	\$0.00	
Proposed S356 assistance approval	\$19,404.30	4
Proposed S582 assistance approval	\$0.00	
Budget remaining 2022/23 financial year	\$6,521.32	

Legal

Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) allows Council to 'contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance'. Section 377(1A) allows Council to delegate to the General Manager authority to grant financial assistance provided it is (a) part of a specified program (b) included in the Operational Plan (c) the program budget does not exceed 5% of Council's income for that year, and (d) the program applies to all persons uniformly.

However, this information has been presented to Council to approve the required budget adjustment.

Conclusion

The total value of section 356 financial assistance equates to \$19,404.30 by application of Council's 'Retail Water Customer Account Assistance' policy. It is proposed that Council authorise the variations to the previous budget estimates. Finance staff will then seek approval from the General Manager to grant the recommended financial assistance.