

---

# Policy review - Pensioner Concession policy, Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Organisational Services (Helen McNeil)

---

## Recommendation

That Council:

1. Revoke the [Pensioner Concession policy](#) dated 19 November 2014 and any policy revived as a result of the revocation.
2. Publicly exhibit the revised draft Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy ([Attachment 1](#)) for a period of 28 days, and:
  - (a) Should no public submissions be received:
    - (i) The [Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy](#) dated 17 August 2022 is revoked and any policies revived as a result of the revocation effective 19 June 2024; and
    - (ii) The revised Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy is adopted effective 19 June 2024.
  - (b) Should any public submission be received, those submissions, and the proposal in relation to the revocation and adoption of the Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy, be considered by Council at its next meeting.

## Background

Council's policies are continually reviewed for suitability and currency to promote and deliver continuous improvement and ensure legislative compliance.

The policies outlined below were reviewed as part of the ordinary review cycle or due to legislative triggers.

### 1. Pensioner Concession policy – proposed for revocation

The concessions available for pensioners in relation to rates and charges (including water charges) are regulated by and detailed in the *Local Government Act 1993* ('LG Act')<sup>1</sup>.

The pensioner concession rebate program under the LG Act is administered by councils. At the end of each financial year councils can claim back from the NSW State Government 55% of the pensioner concessions granted during the period.

To complement the requirements of the LG Act, Council maintains comprehensive [Pensioner Concession Guidelines](#) ('Guidelines') and a 'pensioner concession rebates' landing page on its website<sup>2</sup>. This information is in plain English and relates to eligibility criteria, rebate amounts, and the application process.

The Pensioner Concession policy currently in-force ([Attachment 1](#)) is a pre-Rous Water, Far North Coast Weeds, and Richmond River County Council amalgamation document. The content of the policy does not add anything further to the requirements already detailed in the LG Act and captured in a more accessible and informative format within Council's Guidelines.

For these reasons, this policy is recommended for revocation.

---

<sup>1</sup> See [Chapter 15, Part 8, Division 1 Local Government Act 1993](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://rous.nsw.gov.au/pensioner-concession-rebates>

---

## 2. Retail Water Customer Account Assistance (RWCAA) policy – proposed for exhibition

The RWCAA policy ([Attachment 2](#)) operates predominantly as an annual program of financial assistance offered by Council to its eligible retail water customers who incur high water usage due to an undetected leak or natural disaster.

This policy has been reviewed as part of its regular review cycle and remains compliant with legislative requirements and Council objectives.

It is recommended that Council approve the public exhibition of the policy.

If no submissions are received, it is proposed that the policy be deemed to be adopted as at 19 June 2024, being the Council meeting at which it was considered. If submissions are received, the policy and submissions will be reported to the next scheduled Council meeting for consideration.

### Governance

- **Finance**

A recurring, annual budget allocation of \$25,000 for the RWCAA program is adopted by Council as part of its Operational Plan/Annual Budget each year.

Approximately \$8,203.91 remains available in the 2023/24 RWCAA program budget.

- **Legal**

As the RWCAA policy operates to grant financial assistance, for transparency and to promote the objectives of [section 356](#) of the LG Act, public exhibit of this policy for a period of 28 days is recommended.

Applications for assistance under the RWCAA policy/program are granted by the General Manager under delegated authority in accordance with [section 377\(1A\)](#) of the LG Act.

### Consultation

The review of the policies outlined in this report was undertaken by Council's Finance team.

### Conclusion

The above policies have been reviewed having regard to legislative and regulatory requirements, and Council objectives. The Pensioner Concession policy is recommended for revocation and the RWCAA policy is recommend for public exhibition.

### Attachments

1. Pensioner concession policy ((**for revocation**))
2. Retail Water Customer Account Assistance policy (**for exhibition**) no changes are proposed.