

ITEM 7 POLICY REVIEW - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

This report seeks approval for the adoption of two key policies relating to management of social infrastructure assets. These policies have been revised under Council's rolling review of corporate policies.

RECOMMENDATION

The following draft policies are adopted:

- a Management of Community Facilities
- b Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Facilities

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Sarah Taylor, Manager Libraries + Community Facilities

Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Management of Community Facilities
- 2 Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities

BACKGROUND

Council provides affordable and accessible social infrastructure assets, where community members and community groups meet, organise, deliver services, recreate and celebrate. Community Facilities are allocated and managed in a manner that is consistent with Council's Vision, Mission and Values and endorsed by Council at its meeting of 12 September 2022.

1. Management of Community Halls, Community Centres, Senior Citizens' Centres and Neighbourhood Centres Policy
2. Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Halls under the Direct Control of Council Policy

These policies aim to provide fair and equitable access for community groups to the hire and/or management under licence/lease, of community facilities.

These policies have been revised under Council's rolling review of corporate policies, to ensure currency and relevance. The two policies for endorsement have been renamed and now comprise:

1. Management of Community Facilities
2. Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities.

The principal purpose of these policies is as follows:

1. Management of Community Facilities

Council manages and maintains numerous facilities across the Wollongong Local Government Area on behalf of the community. The value of these assets to Council and to the community is maximised when the community is engaged in their operation and activation.

The intent of this policy is to promote a sense of community and connection by providing fair and equitable access for community groups to Council's core social infrastructure assets. It aims to achieve optimum benefit from these facilities for both the community at large and Council.

2. Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Rooms and Halls

The intent of this policy is to maximise community engagement and benefit through removing financial barriers for community use of Council's assets by providing for the reduction or waiver of fees in particular circumstances.

Proposed changes to these policies are outlined in the following table:

Table 1: Summary of Proposed Changes to Policies

POLICY	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
Management of Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated to reflect new Community Services Directorate naming configurations following the restructure in September 2023 2032 Objectives updated to reflect the current Community Strategic Plan Policy title changed from Management of Community Halls, Community Centres, Senior Citizens Centres and Neighbourhood Centres' to 'Management of Community Facilities'. Allocation/re-allocation processes reviewed and modified to streamline procedure, whilst ensuring that probity and transparency are maintained.
Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated to reflect new Community Services Directorate following the restructure in September 2023 2032 Objectives updated to reflect current Community Strategic Plan Policy title changed from 'Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Halls under the Direct Control of Council' to 'Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities'. Procedure first adopted 1 June 2021 and now reviewed.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the revised Council policies as outlined in the table above and detailed at Attachments 1 and 2 are adopted by Council.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

These policies have been reviewed by Council’s Community Facilities Team and the Manager Libraries and Community Facilities.

Relevant staff from the Governance team were consulted as part of this review.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2032 Goals 1, 3, 4 and 5. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan 2032	Delivery Program 2022-2026
Strategy	Service
1.3 Increase our resilience to natural disasters and a changing climate to protect life, property and the environment.	Libraries + Community Facilities
1.4 Work together to achieve net zero carbon emissions and reduce waste going to landfill.	
3.4 We work in partnership to reduce inequity and build on opportunities to strengthen vulnerable communities.	
3.5 Provide communities with access to quality local spaces and places to meet, share and celebrate.	
4.11 Quality services, libraries and facilities are available to communities to access and gather	
5.4 Provide a variety of quality and accessible public places and opportunities for sport, play, leisure, recreation, learning and cultural activities in the community	

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

1. Management of Community Facilities

- All Licenses/Leases issued by Community Facilities include clauses to ensure licensees manage these assets in an environmentally sustainable way
- Council manages and maintains numerous facilities across the Wollongong Local Government Area on behalf of the community. The value of these assets to Council and to the community is maximised when the community is engaged in their operation and activation.

2. Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities

- This policy contributes to the financial sustainability of community groups by providing affordable spaces for their activities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Management of Community Facilities

- The net cost to Council of management of these assets is reduced by their allocation to and management by community groups.

2. Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for use of Community Facilities

- There is an overarching expectation that the hire of community facilities will generate an income stream, which is shown within the relevant budget, and which offsets the cost to Council of operating and maintaining these assets. The outcomes of this policy are factored into revenue planning and will be delivered within the existing expenditure budget.

CONCLUSION

Policies within the remit of Libraries and Community Facilities Division due for revision under Council's three-year policy review program, have been reviewed and updated. These policies are recommended to Council for endorsement.



MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES COUNCIL POLICY

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: [TO BE COMPLETED BY GOVERNANCE]

PURPOSE

Council manages and maintains numerous Community Facilities across the Wollongong Local Government Area, acting as the custodian of these assets on behalf of the community. The value of these assets to Council and to the community is maximised when the community is engaged in their operation and activation.

POLICY INTENT

The main objectives of this policy are to:

1. Maximise the community benefit and use of Community Facilities.
2. Reduce the net cost to Council associated with the maintenance and operation of the Community Facilities.
3. Increase the sustainability of community facilities to contribute toward emissions reduction targets and maximise their resilience to climate change

WOLLONGONG 2032 OBJECTIVES

Our Wollongong 2032 outlines the community's main priorities for the future and includes strategies for achieving them. This Policy contributes toward Wollongong 2032 Objectives:

- Goal 1: We value and protect our environment.
 - 1.3 Increase our resilience to natural disasters and a changing climate to protect, life, property, and the environment.
 - 1.4 Work together to achieve net zero carbon emissions and reduce waste going to landfill.
- Goal 3: Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city.
 - 3.4 We work in partnership to reduce inequity and build on opportunities to strengthen vulnerable communities.
 - 3.5 Provide communities with access to quality local spaces and places to meet, share and celebrate.
- Goal 4: We are connected and engaged community.
 - 4.11 Quality services, libraries and facilities are available to communities to access and gather.
- Goal 5: We have a healthy community in a liveable city.
 - 5.4 Provide a variety of quality and accessible public places and opportunities for sport, play leisure, recreation, learning and cultural activities in the community.

MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

COUNCIL POLICY

POLICY

1. This policy applies to the leasing or licensing of Community Facilities where:
 - a. the existing occupancy arrangement or agreement is due to expire, OR
 - b. a building becomes available for community use through:
 - i. vacation by the existing occupant
 - ii. acquisition by Council, or
 - iii. new construction.
 - c. and it is determined to allocate occupancy to a community group.
2. Council will undertake a vigorous and transparent selection procedure to transfer the day-to-day management of buildings under the control of the Libraries and Community Facilities Division to the successful community group.
3. Conditions of occupancy vary dependent upon the building categories. Refer to building categories below for further details.
4. Council will collaborate with the community organisations that manage community facilities on our behalf to support their capacity to effectively meet their responsibilities and accountabilities under lease, licence or occupancy agreements, and in compliance with all relevant Legislative requirements.
5. Council will review and dispose of community facilities that are no longer required for general community use.
6. Council will undertake the day-to-day management of community facilities that are not allocated to community organisations, or may, at its absolute discretion, consider alternate use options.
7. Council will seek to increase the sustainability of community facilities and where relevant work and support community organisations to deliver sustainable outcomes.

This policy is not applicable to facilities:

1. controlled by a Committee of Council
2. managed by Council directly, or
3. earmarked for either 1 and 2 above.
4. where Council has determined the granting of the occupancy to be under the Leasing and Licensing Policy.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are used:

Community Facilities are Council buildings intended for wide community use, including multipurpose community meeting spaces, halls and cultural spaces, and are utilised by the community for a variety of activities. *Community Facilities* are either managed and operated directly by Council, or managed on behalf of Council by a *community group* under a lease or licence

A *community group* is any organisation, which is legally constituted, engaged in charitable or other community-based activity operating under Australian law and not established for the purpose of making a profit.

An *occupant organisation* is the body that enters into a lease or licence agreement at a community facility and in doing so takes on the responsibility for the day-to-day management of that facility.

A *tenant organisation* is a body that has an agreement with the occupant organisation to be housed and to operate from the facility on a long-term basis.

MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

COUNCIL POLICY

Building Categories

Category A – Building allocated to a community organisation for the purposes of conducting their activities. The occupant community organisation must make premises available for use/hire by other groups, organisations and the public when not being used for its' core business.

Category B – Building allocated to community childcare provider for the purposes of undertaking preschool/childcare services.

Category C – Building leased or licensed to community organisation for sole use only.

RELATED LEGISLATION

This policy complies with the following, but is not limited to:

- Crown Land Management Act (2018)
- Local Government Act
- Child Protection (working With Children) Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2018
- Child Protect (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed a minimum of once every term of Council, or more frequently as required.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Divisional Manager is responsible and accountable to ensure that this procedure is implemented in their areas of responsibility.

Middle Management/Coordinators/Supervisors will ensure that this procedure is implemented and communicated to staff responsible for conducting the allocation process as per Allocation of Community Facilities to Community Groups Procedures.

RELATED PROCEDURES & POLICIES

- Allocation of Community Facilities to Community Groups Procedure.
- Child Safety – Working with Children Management Policy
- Leasing & Licensing Policy

MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

COUNCIL POLICY

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
Responsible Division	Libraries and Community Facilities
Date adopted by Council	[To be inserted by Corporate Governance]
Date/s of previous adoptions	12 September 2022, 17 July 2017, 14 October 2013, 22 July 1986
Date of next review	[Not more than three years from last adoption]



REDUCTION OR WAIVER OF HIRE FEES FOR USE OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES (LIBRARIES + COMMUNITY FACILITIES DIVISION)

COUNCIL POLICY

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: 17 MARCH 2025

PURPOSE

This policy recognises that there may be occasions where financial circumstances limit the community's ability to hire Council's Community Facilities and provides guidelines for the application of a fee waiver or reduction for hiring Community Facilities under the direct control of Council (Libraries & Community Facilities Division).

POLICY INTENT

The main objective of this policy is to:

1. Maximise access to Community Facilities under the direct control of Council (Libraries and Community Facilities Division).
2. Recognise disadvantage and promote equitable access to Council's facilities by removing financial barriers.
3. Provide for a consistent approach which will allow the use of Community Facilities under the direct control of Council (Library and Community Facilities Division) that would be prevented from proceeding if Council's standard fees and charges were applied.

This policy is to be applied via the *Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Facilities (Libraries & Community Facilities Division) Procedure*.

WOLLONGONG 2032 OBJECTIVES

The *Our Wollongong 2032 Community Strategic Plan* outlines the community's main priorities for the future and includes strategies for achieving them. This Policy contributes towards the following *Our Wollongong 2032* objectives:

- Goal 3: Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city.
 - 3.4 We work in partnership to reduce inequity and build on opportunities to strengthen vulnerable communities.
 - 3.5 Provide communities with access to quality local spaces and places to meet, share and celebrate.
- Goal 4: We are connected and engaged community.
 - 4.11 Quality services, libraries and facilities are available to communities to access and gather.
- Goal 5: We have a healthy community in a liveable city.
 - 5.4 Provide a variety of quality and accessible public places and opportunities for sport, play leisure, recreation, learning and cultural activities in the community.

REDUCTION OR WAIVER OF HIRE FEES FOR USE OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES (LIBRARIES + COMMUNITY FACILITIES DIVISION)

COUNCIL POLICY

POLICY

Council Officers with appropriate delegation are authorised to assess & determine all requests for the reduction or waiver of fees for the hiring of community facilities applying adopted procedures as outlined in *Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Facilities (Libraries & Community Facilities Division) Procedure*. The General Manager, Manager Libraries & Community Facilities, and Manager Community Facilities may at their absolute discretion make a determination to approve a fee waiver or reduction.

To be considered for a reduction or waiver the applicant (or group) must reside, or provide services within the Wollongong City Council LGA, and must be able to demonstrate that they meet all the following criteria:

1. The function, meeting, exhibition, or other activity is determined by Council to be of value to the broader community and.
2. The payment of the standard hire fee applicable will prevent the function, meeting, exhibition, or other activity from proceeding and
3. Meet one or more of the following:
 - a. It is a non-profit organisation and/or is registered under the Charitable Fundraising Act No 69 of 1991 and that most of its revenue is received from membership fees, donations, or public subscriptions.
or
 - b. the activity will support and stimulate the local cultural economy and reflect the community goals of Wollongong City Council Strategic Plan.
or
 - c. Public appeal (excludes crowdfunding and fundraising platforms such as GoFundMe)
or
 - d. Wollongong City Council function, meeting or other activity which is determined to be of value to the broader community for which alternate funds/budget is insufficient or unavailable.

Council will not consider applications to reduce or waive fees and charges for bookings and events that meet any of the following criteria:

- An employee, supplier, or contractor engaged by, and conducting works on behalf of, Council.
- Already supported by Council via a financial or in-kind contribution.
- Organisers that receive support by means of grant funding, subsidies, or contributions for events.
- Organisers that do not attempt to become self-supporting where the potential exists through fees or other feasible income-producing activities.
- Any profit-making ventures for commercial entities, and events that are deemed to be a purely profit-making event.
- Any activity, event or program that contravenes Council's existing policies.
- Retrospective applications, including refunds.

The hirer will be required to complete a fee reduction/waiver application for Council's assessment and consideration. The amount of reduction granted, or waiver, will be determined on an individual assessment basis.

REDUCTION OR WAIVER OF HIRE FEES FOR USE OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES (LIBRARIES + COMMUNITY FACILITIES DIVISION)

COUNCIL POLICY

Fee reductions/waivers will be for a set duration only. As a base, hirers will need to pay:

1. Bond (refundable subject to standard conditions) be applied in the usual manner.
2. Any additional costs incurred, such as after hour or security call outs, cleaning, attendant duties.

Note: application of these waivers will be documented on a register and subject to independent checks.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are used:

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REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed a minimum of once every term of Council, or more frequently as required.

REPORTING

Manager Libraries and Community Facilities will monitor the scope and currency of this policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager (or authorised delegate) is responsible for assessing requests for reductions or waivers to determine whether the request meets the criteria of this Policy.

RELATED STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Reduction or Waiver of Hire Fees for Community Facilities (Libraries & Community Facilities Division) Procedure.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
Responsible Division	Libraries and Community Facilities
Date adopted by Council	17 March 2025
Date/s of previous adoptions	12 September 2022, 17 July 2017, 28 October 2013, 2 July 2005, 2 July 1990
Date of next review	17 March 2028