



## Council Rates FAQs

### How do I get the discount on my rates & what if I want an extension to the discount due to not receiving the notice?

The discount shown on the rate notice will only be allowed if the total net amount is **received** by Council within the discount dates (30 days for a 10% discount or 60 days for a 5% discount from the rate notice issue date). Please ensure you make BPAY payments two days in advance to enable the funds to reach Council by the due date. It is important to note that discounts do not apply to the State Governments EMFR Levy or water consumption.

Council is unable to extend the discount period due to late delivery or non-delivery of notices by Australia Post as Council is not accountable for Australia Post delivery times. Notices are posted to the address last advised by the ratepayer. Ratepayers are responsible for notifying Council of all changes of address.

The granting of discounts for payments received after the discount due date is strictly monitored by our Auditors. The only instance where discounts can be extended is where an error was made by Council.

### I cannot afford to pay the balance on my notice, can I pay it off?

Council recently split the annual water access and sewerage utility charges into six-monthly bills. This means only half the usual water access and sewerage (if applicable) utility charges appeared on your October rate Notice and the other half are included in the February notice. The decision to split these utility charges into half yearly charges was made in response to ratepayer's requests to break up annual payments into more manageable portions. We hope this will assist you to manage your annual payments.

If you are not able to pay your rates by the due/discount date, you can make an application to pay your rates by instalments. Council offers this rate instalment scheme to make rates more affordable. Interest free payment plans are available where an application is received prior to the 60 day discount date. All applications received after that date will be subject to interest of 11% compounding on daily balances. Complete the form on the back of your rate notice, download from Council's website or complete a form

over the counter at a Council Administration Centre. You will be advised of the monthly amount required to pay your rates in full before June 30. Payments are due by the 21st of each month. If you chose this option you will not receive the discount offered to those paying within 30 or 60 days.

### Can I pay my rates in advance?

Yes. Council allows you to pay as much and as frequently as you choose in order to get your assessment in credit prior to the rate notice issue date. You can do this online via Council's website either as a registered user of Online Services or by quoting the payment reference number on your last rate or water notice. You can also use the BPAY details from your last notice to set up internet banking transfers, or make advance payments at Council Administration Centres. Amounts paid in advance show as prepayments on your next rate notice.

### Will I have to pay interest on my overdue rates?

Yes. Under Section 133 of the Local Government Regulation 2012, Council charges interest on overdue rates that are not subject to an agreed instalment plan. It is important to submit your application to pay by instalments to Council before the due date to avoid interest charges. If you have not paid your rates by 4.45pm on the due date, you will forego discounts and incur interest of 11 per cent per annum, compounding daily.

### Who values my property?

The State Government's Department of Natural Resources and Mines and Energy (DNRME) Valuer-General is responsible for valuing all properties in the region. Any valuation enquiries should be directed to DNRME on 13 74 68.

### Can I get a copy of my Rate Notice?

Yes. Council's Rates section can provide you with a copy of your last rate notice, however, we recommend you store your rates/water notices carefully as they are valuable documents that can be required to prove ownership of your property or for tax returns on rental properties. We are not always able

to provide copies at short notice and can charge for multiple/back copies of notices. Via Council's website you can register for Online Services to view your history of rates charges and obtain copies of your notices. Registered users will receive an email advising the notices have been issued and will be available online in the next week.

### How do I change my mailing address with Council?

If you have changed address, or intend to change your address from that stated on your rate notice, please provide written advice to Council to ensure all correspondence is sent to the correct address. You can notify Council of your change of address by completing the form on Council's website or at Administration Centres, by completing the section on the back of your rate notice or emailing [info@gladstone.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@gladstone.qld.gov.au). Change of address details cannot be taken over the phone. Council requires all change of address in writing from Property Owners.

### What is the Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy (EMFR)?

This is an annual levy shown on your rates notice. Council is required to collect a State Government Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy (EMFR) on behalf of the government under the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011. A discount does not apply to the EMFR Levy.

### What is my water allowance and what is excess water?

Council does not work on the allowance and excess water usage system. There is a fixed water charge for your water meter/connection meters are read twice a year and you are charged for every kilolitre (1,000 litres) you use. Your average daily consumption in litres is shown on the graph on your six monthly water notice.

### I recently purchased the property, why am I getting billed for water consumption from previous months?

Your Solicitor should have performed a special water meter reading close to the settlement date. They would have used this to make monetary adjustment for water consumed by the Seller and that adjustment would have been paid to you in the settlement calculations.

### Do I have a water meter on my property?

You will need to contact Council to confirm if you have water access charges, water available for connection and any water consumption charges if you did not receive a notice or you believe it to be incorrect.

### What happens if I don't pay my rates?

Should the amount owing be short paid the remaining balance will appear as arrears on your next rate notice. Queensland's Local Government Regulation 2012 gives Council permission to sell the land if rates remain unpaid for 3 or more years for land with a dwelling or after 12 months for vacant land or commercial properties. It is Council's policy to conduct sale of land auctions on an annual basis in order to recover outstanding rates.

### I am a pensioner, am I entitled to a discount?

Ratepayers who receive a full or part pension may be entitled to receive Council and State rebates on their Rates.

The rebate of Rates is offered to financially assist eligible pensioners.

The State Government grants a rebate of 20% of rates and charges (excluding water consumption) to a maximum of \$200 per year on the pensioner's principle place of residence. To be eligible you must be a holder of:

- A current Centrelink Queensland Pensioner Concession card;
- A Veteran Affairs Gold Card; or
- A Veteran Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

Council also provides an additional subsidy of 50% of the general rates to a maximum of \$290 per year to pensioners who:

- Meet the above State Government guidelines; and
- Reside in an approved residence which complies with standard building law.

Rebates are not applicable for those with a Seniors Card, Health Care Cards, Health Benefit Cards and Repatriation Health Cards for special conditions.

If you have recently received your Pension Concession Card, or have purchased a dwelling or unit within our region and meet the eligibility criteria please contact Council.

Pension Rebate Applications received between 1 July and 31 May will be applied to the current Financial Year (pro-rata) application received in June are applied to the following financial year. Once Council has processed the applications, they will send a confirmation letter in the mail, to state the pension discount has been applied and what the new amount owing/credit is. If customers do not receive this letter by the last week of the discount period, they are to pay the amount on their notice to ensure they receive their discount, and the pension discount will be put on the account as a credit which can then be refunded to them.

### Why have the rates increased again?

Council can limit the maximum percentage increase in General Rates, under provisions of Section 116 of the Local Government Regulation 2012. This means that some categories can increase above that levied in the previous year. A rate cap is designed to reduce the impact of large valuation increases on residential, rural, small businesses, and light industrial land uses which have less capacity to absorb abnormal cost increases that may arise due to large land valuation increases. This means that irrespective of any large change to your valuation, general rates will only increase by 10% on the previous year for residential properties.

A 15% rate cap also applies to businesses and commercial and light industrial properties.

The rate cap will not apply in situations where a subdivision, re-survey or amalgamation of the lot has occurred.

### How are my rates calculated?

Despite popular belief, local government rates are not determined by a simple 'my property value' x 'general rate' = 'my bill' equation. The first step is to determine how much rates revenue must be generated in order to deliver the wants and needs of a community. The required revenue is spread across

a community according to the distribution of its properties' land values (not the value themselves). This distribution of land values across a community typically fluctuates from year to year. Some years a drop or rise in value can be evenly spread across all properties or a pocket of properties. A reduction or increase in a community's land value does not result in an equal reduction or increase in the costs of providing services to that community.

In other words, an individual property's rates bill is governed by its land value compared to other properties in the region and the fixed costs of its Council.

### I live in a unit and my property value is incorrect/Why is the value of my property so much when I live in a unit?

The rates notice displays the total complex value at the top of the notice. At the bottom of the notice is the individual unit valuation. This is what is used to calculate the rates levied.

### I want to object to my rates category?

Under Local Government Regulations 2012 Section 90 an owner can lodge a notice of objection to land categorization in writing and signed within 30 days of the rate notice issue date. The sole grounds on which the owner may object is that the land should have been included in another category. The property owners must clearly state the facts and circumstances on which the objection is made including what they consider their category to be. Objection forms are available from any council office. Please note that giving a notice of objection will not, in the meantime, affect the levy discount periods and recovery of rates. If your objection is upheld, a rate adjustment will be made at that time.

Under Section 91 the CEO must consider the objection and decide to

- A) Change the rating category for the land
  - a. To the rating category the owner is claiming it should be; or
  - b. To another rating category; or
- B) Not allow the objection

The CEO must give the owner notice of the decision and the reasons for the decision. This must be provided within 60 days of the objection being made. If the rating category is changed this will apply from the start of the period of the rate notice.

Section 93 stipulates that an appeal can be conducted under the Land Court

#### How can you contact us?



(07) 4970 0700  
Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm

STD CALLS: 1300 733 343

For those residents who currently incur STD call rates when contacting their local customer service centre



info@gladstonerc.qld.gov.au