

Media Release

17 April 2020

Rates instalment invoices sent

Northland councils are encouraging ratepayers experiencing financial hardship to contact them if they are unable to pay rates invoices being sent to property owners over the coming week.

The Far North District Council, Kaipara District Council, Whangarei District Council and Northland Regional Council acknowledge that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and response will make it difficult for some to pay their full instalment at this time.

Because of this, the region's four local authorities are urging people who may have difficulty paying their rates on time to call their local council early to discuss options.

In addition to the support central government and banks have already provided, councils are following guidance from Local Government New Zealand and working with their elected members to review rates relief options, and arrangements for paying rates for those who normally pay by EFTPOS or cash.

While the country has been in lockdown, the councils' crucial functions have been continuing behind the scenes, keeping essential services going for their local communities. This includes keeping drinking water treatment systems, wastewater systems, rubbish collection, cemeteries and the roading network operational.

Councils are asking people to pay their rates as usual to enable these critical services to keep going. Rates are used to pay for such services, that are so much a part of our daily lives they are often taken for granted.

District councils also collect rates on behalf of the Northland Regional Council. It's ongoing work includes critical environmental monitoring essential for the health and wellbeing of Northland communities; ensuring maritime navigation remains safe; monitoring and managing drought and flooding responses; and supporting regionwide Civil Defence work.

A core team of essential Northland Civil Defence staff – jointly funded and staffed by the region's four local authorities – is working to support the regional response to COVID-19. That work includes working regionally and nationally to ensure key infrastructure like telecommunications, electricity and fuel supply and distribution is maintained. All councils have also established teams of staff who are caring for their communities, helping to distribute food and medication to those who need it.

Councils are also preparing for projects that will support the recovery of their communities and the region. With central government support, they will lead projects to create employment opportunities and boost future business or tourism opportunities.

Councils are currently reviewing their annual plans carefully to explore options to reduce the rates burden, while also ensuring the economic recovery is not delayed.

The timing and level of the current rates invoices was set in June last year, when Councils adopted their annual plans and rates resolutions.

Councils will make more information available about their approach as they work through options.

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