



RATES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are council rates?

Rates are a form of property tax. Council rates are a system of taxation, much like income tax and GST, and council determines how and where they are spent.

What services do I get for paying rates?

Rates are not a fee for service, so the amount of rates paid by a person may not directly relate to the services they use. People may not use all of council's services all of the time, but they are there for everyone in the community when needed.

Why do I have to pay for services I don't use?

Council rates are a system of taxation they are not a fee for service. All residents rely on the general services and public infrastructure that council provides. They need serviceable roads, street signs, libraries, firebreaks, parks, ovals and cemeteries.

Rates are required to fund such services and facilities across the entire council area. All services and facilities are available to our entire region.

How does a council decide how much you have to pay in rates and charges?

Each council is required to determine the combination of rates, charges, fees and pricing policies needed to fund the services it provides to the community. In the Central Desert Regional Council this is called a Rates Strategy.

The Rates Strategy contains a rating structure that determines which rates and charges you will have to pay and how they will be calculated.

Councils can choose how they calculate and distribute rates among categories of rateable properties in the council area. For each category or sub-category, rates can be calculated in one of three ways. They can be based:

- Entirely on the land value of the property;
- On a combination of the land value of the property and a fixed amount per property; or
- Entirely on the land value, but subject to a minimum amount.

The Central Desert Regional Council uses a combination of these to determine its Rates Strategy. The

Council's rates are outlined in their Rates Declaration. This declaration is available from the Council's website.

How does council decide which category your property is in?

Each parcel of land must be included in one of four categories for rating purposes - residential, commercial, agricultural or mining. Council decides which category your property should be in based on its characteristics and use. Most people are charged ordinary rates under the residential category.

What can you do if you don't agree with the categorisation of your property?

Categories are important, because rates differ depending on the category of the land. So if your land is, for example, categorised as farmland you may pay a lower rate per dollar of land value than if your land is categorised as business.

If you are not satisfied with the category given to your property, you may apply to council for the category to be reviewed. If you do this, council must notify you of their decision and the reasons for that decision. If you still do not agree with the category given to your property, you may appeal.

Can council change the category of your land?

Yes. However, they must notify you of this change and advise that you can seek a review by the council if you don't agree with the category.

What if you don't agree with the land value of your property?

Councils don't determine your land value for rating purposes. Land is valued by the Office of the Valuer-General on a triennial basis.

If you don't agree with the value that the Office of the Valuer-General has applied, your objection should initially be raised with the Office of the Valuer-General. This office will attempt to resolve the issues and subsequently advise land holders of the outcome, if any land holders disagrees with the decision of the Valuer-General concerning the new valuation of their property, a further objection may be submitted to the Valuation Board of Review, a separate appeal body operating under the Valuation of Land Act.

Is there any way of knowing what your rates and charges will be before receiving your rate notice?

Every year, before the final amounts are fixed, councils must prepare a draft regional plan that includes their proposed rates strategy for the following year. This strategy includes details of all rates and charges that the council is proposing to levy on ratepayers. The draft shire plan is advertised and made available to the public.

Can you object to what council is proposing?

The draft regional plan is made available to the public to give members of the public an opportunity to comment. This usually happens around May/June each year. Councils must consider any submissions by the public before adopting the plan. This is your opportunity to raise any issues about the rates and charges for the following year. Once the rates and charges have been adopted for a particular year, they cannot be changed until the next year.

Do you have to pay a domestic waste management service charge if you don't use the service?

Yes. The Local Government Act requires councils to levy an annual charge for providing domestic waste management services on all parcels of rateable land for which the service is available, whether or not it is actually used. It is considered that all property owners should contribute to the current and future provision of waste services.

If you don't use the service, do you have to pay the same amount as those who do use it?

Councils can charge properties that do not use the service a different amount from those that do use it.

What if you cannot afford to pay your rates?

You may be eligible for a concession on the grounds of hardship. Under the Central Desert Regional Council's Rates Hardship policy. Please refer to the policy for details of how to apply. If you are having difficulty in paying your rates, you should contact Council as soon as possible to discuss the options available.

Need more information?

If you need more specific information about the rates for your property, please contact our Finance team at the main Council office on 8958 9500.