

Policy Title	Hardship Policy
Related Documentation	Rate Recovery Policy
Relevant Legislation/ Corporate Plan	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
Responsible Officer	Manager Financial Services

Policy details may change prior to review date due to legislative changes, therefore this document is uncontrolled when printed.

Objectives

To provide financial relief to customers of Council experiencing difficulties in meeting their commitments in Rates, Debtors and other Fees and Charges.

Policy Statement

Assessment of financial hardship to be made internally following a set of guidelines and the completion of Council's 'Financial Hardship Relief Application Form'. Criteria for income and asset values shall be determined in accordance with the Centrelink 'Pensions - Income and Assets Test' as reviewed annually in September.

1. Rates

- Write off interest charges accrued over a period of twelve months from the date of debt, subject to the debt being paid in the agreed period.
- Reduce penalty interest by one half over a period of eighteen months on ratepayer accounts where financial hardship has resulted due to significant changes in the rateable valuation of their land.
- Limited to the single property owned and occupied (jointly or not) by the applicant.

2. Debtors

- Write off interest or administration fees for debts paid within a structured payment plan geared to clear the debt within a maximum twelve-month period.

3. Fees and Charges

Waste collection charges

- Write off interest charges accrued over a period of twelve months from the date of debt, subject to the debt being paid in this period.
- Limited to the single property owned and occupied (jointly or not) by the applicant.

DATA AND DOCUMENT CONTROL

Division: Business Service
Section: Financial Services
DocSet: 2169806

Adopted Date: 1/08/2006
Revised Date: 17/03/2015
Minute Number: 37
Review Date: 31/03/2018

Other Fees and Charges

- Due to the nature of the adopted fees and charges, any reduction or abandonment of a fee due to financial hardship being incurred shall be determined on an individual basis subject to Council resolution.

Council must be satisfied that the case falls within a category of hardship, alternatively fees and charges must not be reduced unless public notice given over a twenty-eight day exhibition period.

Scope

This Policy will be available to all ratepayers and organisations within the Local Government Area. It is however anticipated to have a direct impact on less than 100 individuals at any given time.

Definitions

Date of Debt	The amount due to Council on the day an application is made including arrears and current annual instalments in any given year.
Penalty Interest	Interest raised in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act, 1993</i> and as adopted by Council within its Operational Plan.
Rateable Valuation	Land value used for rating purposes, ie net of allowances allowed by <i>Valuation of Land Act, 1916</i> and <i>Local Government Act, 1993 - Section 585</i> .
Administration Fees	Standard flat fee as adopted by Council in annual Fees and Charges.

Legislative Context

The following Sections of the *Local Government Act 1993* are included and influence this Policy:

Section 564
Section 566
Section 567
Section 601
Section 610E

Principles

The Manager Financial Services will be responsible for administering the principles and that appropriate steps are taken to maintain a level of confidentiality with data supplied for the purposes of conducting a fair and equitable assessment.

Responsibility

The Manager Financial Services may delegate their responsibility to the Revenue Accountant to ensure proper procedural documentation is maintained at a level satisfactory to Council and relevant legislation.

Effectiveness of this Policy

Key Performance Indicators

- maintain or reduce the amount percentage of outstanding debts with Council through a formal customer assistance program.
- monitor the number of successfully completed applications within the scope of this Policy.

END OF POLICY STATEMENT

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