



# Appendix 13

## Hardship Policy

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 etc, 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

<b>Division:</b> Business Services <b>Section:</b> Financial Services <b>DW:2169806</b>	<b>Adopted Date:</b> 1/8/06 <b>Revised Date:</b> 10/04/12 <b>Minute Number:</b> 53 <b>Review Date:</b> 31/03/15	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 3 <b>Print Date:</b>
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## 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 *Local Government Act, 1993* and as adopted by Council within its Operational Plan.

**Rateable Valuation**            Land value used for rating purposes, ie net of allowances allowed by *Valuation of Land Act, 1916* and *Local Government Act, 1993 - Section 585*.

**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

### DOCUMENT HISTORY AND VERSION CONTROL RECORD

#### Contact for inquiries and proposed changes

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<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Revised Date</b>	<b>Authorised Officer</b>	<b>Amendment Details</b>