

HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE COVID-19 SUPPORT

Date Adopted:	8 July 2020
Adopted By:	Council
Review Due:	N/A
Responsible Officer:	Manager Finance
Directorate:	Community & Corporate Services
EDRMS No:	D/20/64543

PURPOSE

The Purpose of this Policy is to provide specific support to ratepayers, debtors and several groups of Council customers with hardship assistance and/or support during and post the 2019-2021 COVID-19 Pandemic.

REFERENCES

This Policy is for a specific purpose and seeks to expand on the current operational Hardship Policy which deals with general hardship circumstances.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This policy applies to specific types of hardship circumstances as defined in General and Specific Provisions sections.

Any circumstances outside this scope will be dealt with in accordance with the Operational Hardship Policy.

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on 30 January 2020 and a State of Emergency was declared in Victoria on 16 March 2020.

This Policy is applicable from the date of adoption, however, where cited may be retrospectively applied.

Applications received under this Policy, will be administered for their defined term under this Policy, however at the expiration of their defined term, will revert to the conditions under the Operational Hardship Policy.

The Policy will cease on 30 June 2021.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the Section 7 Instrument of Sub-Delegation by CEO – Miscellaneous and Administrative Powers, the Manager Finance has been delegated specific roles and responsibilities together with the operational responsibilities for the application of this policy.

The Director Community and Corporate Services and Co-Ordinator Rates have also been allocated specific roles and responsibilities under the Section 7 Sub-Delegation to ensure operational efficiency.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Manager Finance has the responsibility to arrange and document all COVID-19 Hardship applications.

The Manager Finance has the responsibility to report to Council quarterly on the total amount by type of applications received and granted.

Type of Assistance	Reimbursement of Permit Expense
Target Sector	Businesses – Food Premises, Hairdressers etc
Rationale	Businesses pay to Council an annual Health Act Registration fee to operate certain types of businesses. Many of these businesses have been significantly impacted or not able to operate for several months.
Action	Council can reimburse the annual fee paid by the business
Basis of Assistance	Annual fee must have been paid in full for the 2020 calendar year.
Evidence required	Proof of assistance being received from another level of government
Type of Assistance	Rate Relief – 2019/20 Year (Final instalment)
Target Sector	Ratepayers – private and business
Rationale	Some ratepayers are requesting assistance for inability to pay the final instalment of their rates – due 31 May 2020
Action	Council can provide a write-off of interest accrued on the final instalment of rates
Basis of Assistance	All other rates and charges on the property were paid in full as at 3 March 2020.
Evidence required	Proof of assistance being received from another level of government
Type of Assistance	Rate Relief – 2020/21 Year All instalments
Target Sector	Ratepayers – private and business
Rationale	Some ratepayers will request assistance due to inability to pay rates during the financial year.
Action	Council can provide a reimbursement equivalent to 2% of the total rate bill for the 2020/21 financial year. (This would equate to 4% if the ratepayer paid the account in full by 30 September). Excludes the State Government's Fire Services Property Levy.
Basis of Assistance	All other rates and charges on the property were paid in full as at 3 March 2020.
Evidence required	Proof of assistance being received from another level of government
Type of Assistance	Economic Assistance - Landlord
Target Sector	Property Owners – business

Rationale	Some property owners tenant out their properties. Some of these owners have granted their tenants substantial discounts or entered into reduced payment arrangements to enable the tenant to continue occupation. Some have had their tenants vacate and are now left with empty premises.
Action	Council can provide a reimbursement equivalent to 2% of the total rate bill for the 2020/21 financial year. (This would equate to 6% if the ratepayer paid the account in full by 30 September and was eligible for ratepayer hardship). Excludes the State Government's Fire Services Property Levy.
Basis of Assistance	All other rates and charges on the property were paid in full as at 3 March 2020.
Evidence required	Statutory declaration outlining specific circumstances, property details etc.
Type of Assistance	Existing Customers in arrears
Target Sector	Individual residents, ratepayers, businesses and other organisations which already have arrears, written arrangements with Council or under legal action.
Rationale	Case by Case basis
Action	Various based on individual circumstances
Basis of Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Within the delegations approved by Council to the CEO ➤ Within the delegations approved by the CEO to Director Community & Corporate Services and Manager Finance
Evidence required	Dependent upon circumstances.
Type of Assistance	Not elsewhere included
Target Sector	Individual residents, ratepayers, businesses and other organisations
Rationale	Case by Case basis
Action	Various based on individual circumstances
Basis of Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Within the delegations approved by Council to the CEO ➤ Within the delegations approved by the CEO to Director Community & Corporate Services and Manager Finance
Evidence required	Dependent upon circumstances.

IMPLEMENTATION & COMMUNICATION

This Policy is applicable from the date of adoption by Council, however some provisions will be retrospectively applied.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

It is considered that this policy is compatible with the relevant human rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

REVIEW

This Policy will not be reviewed and will cease operation on 30 June 2021.

END