

HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE COVID-19 SUPPORT

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| 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 |

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|---------------------------|---|
| 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