

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP (RATE RELIEF) POLICY

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1. OBJECTIVE

Council acknowledges that due to exceptional circumstances ratepayers may at times encounter difficulty in paying rates and service charges as they fall due.

It is not the intention of Council to cause hardship to any ratepayer through the Council's recovery procedures and consideration will be given to acceptable arrangements to clear any debt, where possible, prior to the end of the current financial year.

Council recognises there are cases of genuine extreme financial hardship where the interest on outstanding rates will cause the ratepayer further hardship. The guideline below outlines the scope and criteria for assessing applications of cases of extreme financial hardship and to write off interest of up to \$500 on outstanding rates.

2. GUIDELINES

Delegation 1.8 provides authority to the Chief Executive Offices under s6.12(c) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to write off monies owing in cases of hardship, which includes interest on outstanding rates.

The following conditions are all required to be met for a write off of interest on outstanding rates:

- the ratepayer is experiencing extreme and genuine financial hardship;
- the ratepayer had either no outstanding rates from a previous financial year or the ratepayer has an approved payment arrangement and continues to adhere to the terms of that agreement;
- the ratepayer's circumstances are supported by an original hardship letter from a qualified financial counsellor (i.e. a fully accredited member of Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia);
- the ratepayer is not a corporation or trustee;
- the ratepayer is not bankrupt or subject to a bankruptcy petition;
- no revenue is being derived from the property the subject of the application,
- the maximum interest amount to be written off is \$500,
- write-offs are applicable to interest on the ratepayer's principal place of residence only,
- the property is a residential property; **AND**
- the applicant must be the owner of the property and liable for payment of rates and charges.

3. CONSEQUENCES

This policy represents the formal policy and expected standards of the Council. Appropriate approvals need to be obtained prior to any deviation from the policy. Elected Members and Employees are reminded of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct to give full effect to the lawful policies, decisions and practices of the Council.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Applications for Financial Hardship Assistance must be made on the Financial Hardship (Rate Relief) Application form which is can be obtained from the City website or by contacting Customer Service on 08 9186 8555.

Applications including original copy of an extreme hardship letter from a financial counsellor must be submitted to the Rates section.

Upon receipt, Council Officers will assess the application and the ratepayer will receive notification of the outcome of the application generally within 21 days.

5. REFERENCES TO RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Local Government Act 1995*
- City of Karratha Delegations Register

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This Policy takes effect from the date of adoption by Council and shall remain valid until it is amended or deleted.